



**P.O. Box 8
Chapel Hill, North Carolina 27514**

June 17, 2024

Dear UNC-Chapel Hill Chancellor Search Committee Members,

In its two years of operation, the [UNC Alumni Free Speech Alliance](#) has closely monitored the University's progress on critical issues related to its academic mission and free speech climate. Our Board of Directors, [composed](#) entirely of UNC alumni, wishes to express its thoughts and recommendations on this critical chancellor search.

Recent events at UNC and across the nation demonstrate that having a chancellor with both a principled commitment to free speech and the fortitude to enforce laws and policies against violators is essential to a university's success. At many universities, leaders have floundered as students have shouted down events, responded to speech with violence, and trespassed on or destroyed university property. Too many chancellors and presidents have capitulated to mobs rather than standing by their principles. UNC's next chancellor must commit to the enforcement of UNC's own policies, and he or she must put principles first—ensuring that free speech, academic excellence, and the rule of law are never compromised for pacificatory reasons or out of mere convenience.

At a public university such as UNC, the chancellor must be committed to the full scope of the First Amendment's free speech protections. The chancellor must understand that the university cannot compel students or faculty to espouse preferred viewpoints, cannot punish speech merely because it is offensive or unsettling, and that the university ought to remain neutral as an institution so that debate can flourish on campus. Too many universities have chilled speech with mandatory DEI statements and trainings, bias response teams, and speech-policing language guides. UNC's next chancellor must staunchly oppose such incursions against expressive liberties.


However, promoting free speech goes beyond policy. In an era of intense polarization, it is critical that UNC's chancellor ensures a campus culture conducive to free speech, academic freedom, and viewpoint diversity. At UNC, initiatives such as the Program for Public Discourse and the new School of Civic Life and Leadership are excellent tools for exposing students to diverse viewpoints, building skills in constructive discourse, and creating a culture of free speech.

The next chancellor should wholeheartedly support these efforts, and he or she should devise new strategies, whether through orientation, ongoing campus programming, or otherwise, to educate students about free speech policies and the First Amendment. Above all, establishing a diverse and world-class marketplace of ideas at UNC should be his or her mission.

UNC placed a dismal 174th in the Foundation for Individual Rights and Expression's latest campus free speech rankings. 84 percent of surveyed UNC students indicate feeling pressure to avoid discussing controversial subjects in class. Perhaps their fear is unsurprising, as 16 percent of students responded that it is "sometimes" or "always" acceptable to use violence to stop a campus speech. Remedying this crisis is mission-critical for our state's flagship university. It will require strong and principled leadership to ensure that UNC's policies, culture, and curriculum foster a campus climate in which discourse can flourish, researchers feel free to pursue truth, and students are prepared to face the challenges of a world in desperate need of light and liberty.

Thank you for considering the input of ourselves and our many alumni members.

Sincerely,


John Bruce


Frank Hill


Robert Poitras


Kendall Williams


John Cohen


Maggie Horzempa


Jenna Robinson


Harrington Shaw,
Managing Director


Allen Corey


Steven Long


Blair Shwedo


David Frost


Doug Monroe


Bill White