

From: On Behalf Of Margaret Spellings
Sent: Wednesday, August 23, 2017 12:27 PM
To: Tom Fetzner
Cc: Current Board of Governors

Dear Colleagues:

Thank you for your letter and the opportunity to address the specific issues you raised.

Like you, we want what is best for the University and the State-the safety and security of our students, faculty, and staff; the stewardship of resources; and the protection of our historic institutions all in our care. Above all, we want to enable every North Carolinian access to a world-class educational experience in order to allow them to fulfill their dreams. As University leaders, we are entrusted with an important role in fulfilling these duties, and each of us strives to fulfill those duties every single day, often under trying conditions and with great urgency.

Such was the situation this past week. When we learned over the weekend of the growing threat to the UNC-Chapel Hill campus and community, specifically the Silent Sam statue, we convened the Board's seven committee chairs to discuss the situation. With a 28-member Board, it is essential that we use our formal committee processes and Board leaders to garner advice and counsel-and this was certainly such a time.

During the call, UNC-GA's Associate Vice President for Safety and Emergency Operations Brent Herron briefed us on the developing situation at Chapel Hill and read the attached letter from UNC-Chapel Hill's Chief of Police Jeff McCracken. We then consulted with UNC-GA's General Counsel Tom Shanahan to fully understand the applicable laws related to the statue. We then discussed sending a letter to Governor Cooper to inform him of what we knew with respect to upcoming protests and potential threats, and the options in keeping with the law. We believe the law does not empower the University to act.

With respect to Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), last year, we formed a working group shortly after the appointment of Chancellor Thomas Conway, to develop a plan to deal with their chronic and longstanding issues. The group was comprised of officials from the UNC System and ECSU, and included Governors Long and Smith. The group worked for several months and developed a plan to enhance the financial stability and academic strength of the institution. That work resulted in a legislative request that was adopted by the Board and supported by the General Assembly. Over the recent past, we have worked to enhance enrollment, and ECSU just welcomed its largest freshman class in five years. In addition, we continue to provide resources and support from throughout the System to take the necessary steps to address the management and financial challenges, and we are monitoring fall enrollment numbers daily; final census figures will be available soon. We have kept the working group and other Board leaders apprised of the situation-with regular updates during this critical period and look forward to discussing these issues at our upcoming meeting.

As for the death of the young child, great care must be taken in surfacing information related to an active investigation. It can be said now, that the child was murdered with a knife by his own mother following a domestic dispute with her husband. While events such as this are tragic, we encounter suicides, assaults, and many other crimes and tragedies in this large enterprise and we strive to keep the Board as informed as possible. Often, the media is alerted via social media or other means in real-time. Such was the case this past week with the outcry over Silent Sam and further developments in the sexual assault investigation at NC State.

We do recognize that there is dissatisfaction with the approach to information flow, and we plan to reserve time at the next Board meeting to discuss steps we can take to make improvements.

These are challenging times in American higher education. We have a growing, changing population of students and citizens to serve-some 230,000 students, and we manage and oversee a 10-billion-dollar enterprise-employing more than 50,000 faculty and staff.

Thank you for your service to the University and our State. Please reach out with any questions.

Chairman Lou Bisette
President Margaret Spellings