

“Imagining the Future Together: Our Mission, Our Place”

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

State of the Campus 2013

Chancellor Linda P. Brady

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## **Community Commitment**

Welcome to the 122<sup>nd</sup> opening convocation of The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. It is a pleasure to be here with you as we embark upon another exciting academic year.

UNCG is a special place, rich with history and tradition. **Our mission** is to educate, create and share knowledge, and serve. **Our place** is in this community, this region, and this state. It is with this community in mind that I begin today’s address.

North Carolina’s economic recovery following the Civil War and Reconstruction began with a renewed commitment to public higher

education. In 1891, the North Carolina General Assembly established UNCG, then known as the North Carolina State Normal and Industrial School. However, without a physical home and only \$10,000 in funds committed by the state, the school's future remained uncertain.

Committed to a belief in the power of education to transform economies and revitalize communities, the citizens of Greensboro tripled the state's commitment in an effort to convince state leaders to locate the school in Greensboro. Following the passage of a bond referendum by a vote of 771 to 0, Greensboro became home to North Carolina's first public institution of higher education to educate women.

Today, as our economy continues its recovery, our community is breathing new life into our mission, understanding the role education will play in accelerating our region's economic growth. Each day we recommit to serving the people of this community and the state.

### **Acknowledgments**

Our people represent the foundation upon which we build. I'd like to recognize the faculty and staff members joining UNCG this year. May I please ask all new faculty members to stand and be recognized? If you

are a new member of our staff, please also stand to be recognized. Thanks to all of you for choosing UNCG. We stand ready to support you. And we will need your ideas, your energy, and your commitment to address the challenges we face and take advantage of the opportunities that emerge in the years ahead.

I also want to recognize Professor Patricia Sink, chair of the Faculty Senate, and other members of the Faculty Senate who may be with us this morning. In addition, please join me in welcoming Betty Betts and Lee Odom, Co-chairs of the Staff Senate. We will rely heavily on your leadership and creativity to achieve the goals of this university.

I want to take a moment to personally thank members of the Deans Council and my Executive Staff for their leadership and hard work. Please join me in acknowledging two academic leaders who are new to this campus: Dean Peter Alexander of the School of Music, Theatre and Dance, and Dean Robin Remsburg of the School of Nursing. I also want to welcome our new Vice Chancellor for University Advancement, Dr. Janis Zink. We are so pleased you have elected to become part of the UNCG family. Welcome!

I am also pleased to welcome members of UNCG's Board of Trustees. Led by Chair David Sprinkle, this Board works hard on behalf of the university and guides us as we continue to address challenges and explore new opportunities to serve our students and the citizens of North Carolina. Chair Sprinkle and Board members Linda Carlisle, Ward Russell, Susan Safran and Crystal Bayne are with us today. May I please ask all of you to stand and be recognized?

In addition, dedicated volunteers, members of the UNCG Alumni Association, Excellence Foundation, Board of Visitors, and many advisory boards support the work of this University across the campus. I want to recognize Jeff Collins, president of the UNCG Alumni Association and thank each and every one of you for your service.

I would like to recognize members of the North Carolina General Assembly who are here today, including Representative Jon Hardister. I also want to extend a special welcome to Greensboro Mayor Robbie Perkins and Greensboro City Council Members Ms. Nancy Hoffman and Mr. Zack Matheny. We value our partnership with this city and this state. Thank you for your service and for joining us today.

## Today's Focus: Our Mission, Our Place

Today I want to focus my remarks on our **mission**, our **place** and our **future**. From State Normal and Industrial School to Woman's College to present day UNCG, our institution has changed greatly since its inception in 1891. But at our core we have always maintained our commitment to:

- Empowering students to succeed by providing access and opportunity in a challenging and supportive environment;
- Creating, sharing and translating knowledge into solutions for the problems we face, locally, statewide, nationally and even globally;
- Contributing to the public good, enriching quality of life and enhancing economic development through our research and engagement.

Throughout our history the way in which we have fulfilled our mission has been linked to a belief in our responsibility to serve as stewards of place. In the last century, faculty, staff, and students of Woman's College joined with their counterparts at North Carolina A&T State

University and Bennett College to advance civil rights in this community, beginning a movement that reverberated across this nation. Today, UNCG faculty, staff and students support the needs of students in K-12, new North Carolinians, and the business and non-profit organizations in this community.

Let me illustrate with several examples of the amazing work UNCG students, faculty and staff are doing in support of our mission and our community.

### **Empowering Students to Succeed**

During the past three years, faculty and staff at UNCG have worked together to support our **UNCG Guarantee Scholars**. As you know, this program provides academically qualified North Carolina residents from economically-challenged backgrounds with an opportunity to graduate in four years or less with little or no debt.

Many of you here today, faculty, staff, and alumni and friends of the university have taught these students, mentored them, and assisted them with career development plans, undergraduate research, and study abroad opportunities.

Because of your efforts, we congratulated our first Guarantee graduate, Tyshea Lewis, at commencement in May. With the help of the Guarantee, Tyshea graduated in just three years with majors in psychology and human development and family studies. She is headed to graduate school with aspirations of a career in higher education.

Increasing the number of students that graduate on time, or early as in Tyshea's case, remains a top priority for this institution. Just last month, UNCG was one of only five schools nationally cited by the Education Trust, a research and advocacy group, for closing the college completion gap between underrepresented minority students and White students.

We are committed to maintaining our leadership role in enrolling and graduating diverse student populations, including adult students and military-affiliated students, and ensuring all of our students are empowered to succeed.

## **Creating, Sharing and Translating Knowledge into Solutions**

Not only do we prepare the next generation by providing access to education, we translate our spirit of discovery and inquiry into remedies for the problems we face as individuals and as society.

Whether it is through the deployment of virtual reality to help patients rehabilitate injuries or the collection of oral interviews to educate the public about Greensboro's textile history, UNCG faculty provide our students and our community with opportunities to better understand our past so as to inform our future and discover new ways to solve old problems.

At UNCG teaching, research and service are inextricably linked. Take Dr. Jan Rychtar and Dr. Stan Faeth for example, both recipients of 2012-13 Research Excellence Awards. In addition to being some of the best and brightest in their fields (mathematical biology and plant ecology, respectively), they fuse scholarship and teaching to create an environment for students that fosters curiosity, creativity and a commitment to making an impact.

One of Dr. Rychtar's federally funded Math-Biology Fellows once recounted how she did not realize how unique her experience had been as an undergraduate researcher at UNCG until she started visiting graduate schools. The undergraduates she met, who were also planning to attend graduate school, were in awe of her what she had already accomplished.

Graduate students involved in the federally funded GK-12 Project, led by Dr. Faeth and several other UNCG faculty, have described how serving as resident scientists alongside Guilford County School teachers has taught them how to effectively communicate their research to a wide variety of audiences and motivate elementary, middle and high school students to become excited about science.

UNCG will continue to support, invest in, and recognize research, scholarship and creative activity that make a difference, locally, nationally and globally -- enhancing the educational experience of students and improving quality of life for us all.

## **Enriching Quality of Life**

The research, scholarship and creative activity that our faculty and students conduct to enhance the quality of life transcends disciplines and reinforces our commitment to this community.

Since 2007, UNCG faculty and graduate students as well as musicians from the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra have offered private tutoring and group lessons to children at Peck Elementary in Greensboro through the Beginning Strings Program. Peck Elementary School teachers note better grades, attendance, and behavior, as well as improved critical thinking skills among students who participate in the program. Four of these students are currently performing in the Greensboro Youth Symphony Orchestra. The efforts of our faculty and students have enriched their lives, and now these students are enriching ours.

As part of the North Carolina New Schools Project, the Middle College at UNCG was launched in August 2011. This fall, the Middle College will enroll 150 freshmen, sophomore, and junior high school students with an interest in health and life science-related careers. These students are enrolled in classes taught by both UNCG faculty and high school

teachers and can earn up to two years college credit while meeting their high school graduation requirements. What distinguishes this program is the opportunity for students, beginning as freshmen, to learn about careers in the health fields through experiential opportunities in the Cone Health system and with local health practitioners. To date, these students are performing well above the benchmark, and we look forward to recruiting a number of them to UNCG upon graduation.

Just this past Monday afternoon, faculty, staff and students from across the entire campus gathered at Well Spring Retirement Communities for the first UNCG College Fair Day. Our faculty, staff and students had an opportunity to showcase UNCG's health and wellness programs, along with our arts offerings, business and policy expertise, and other educational opportunities. Residents learned about the wide range of lectures, exhibits, concerts, recitals, theatre performances, athletic events, and other activities, as well as information about enrolling in or auditing classes.

We hope that Well Spring residents will volunteer to serve as mentors or volunteers for student and community activities, and share their life experiences with our students. We can learn as much from Well Spring

residents as they can from UNCG, and we believe this partnership can be a model for retirement communities and universities across the country.

These are just a few examples of the many programs and activities reflecting our commitment to enhancing quality of life in this community.

### **Our Opportunity**

This university has an incredible opportunity to build on our history and expand our reach and impact in the coming years. Let me suggest a starting point for our dialogue.

We will maintain our focus on access and student success, while adjusting to changing demographics and utilizing technology to enhance learning. We will continue to identify and implement innovations that will simultaneously lower costs and improve quality.

We will make a more compelling case for the value of a research university education. We will define areas for investment that leverage our strengths and address compelling needs. And we will reinforce our

commitment to the role of scholarship in the humanities and the arts as a fundamental part of our research mission. We understand that the major challenges facing us cannot be addressed without the wisdom of the humanities and the inspiration of the arts.

We will move beyond the physical boundaries of the campus to serve student and community needs. Our shared value as a campus community is to do something more with what we teach, learn, and discover—something that impacts those beyond our borders. This is what motivates us. And this is how we define success.

Last year I spoke of breaking down traditional, physical walls—in the creation of new learning environments in our residence halls. Now I believe we must take the next step and eliminate physical and virtual obstacles and boundaries between the campus and those we serve, including many of our own students. We all have a role to play in our evolution as an engaged community.

### **The Way Forward: Imagining the Future Together**

Significant budget challenges remain for our state and for our university. I recognize these are challenging times and pledge to

remain in close communication as I work with the Budget Sounding Board and others throughout campus to allocate state budget reductions recently approved by the General Assembly and UNC Board of Governors. Please continue to check [budgetcentral.uncg.edu](http://budgetcentral.uncg.edu) and your e-mail inboxes for updates.

Despite the immediate fiscal challenges we face, we must continue to plan for our future. This fall we will launch a strategic visioning process. Our goal will be to work together, across all of our constituencies, to establish a strategic vision for UNCG that will provide a framework within which the details of the next strategic plan can be developed. This will be a collaborative process that will set the direction for our collective future.

To our staff, please accept my thanks and gratitude for your efforts over the past several years, as we have confronted budget cuts and uncertainties. You have been asked to do more with less, and you have stepped up to the plate, working together across boundaries to provide support for our students and faculty.

To our faculty, despite threats to academic quality you have continued to embrace the mission of this university—to provide a challenging,

high quality education to our students and to engage in research, scholarship, and creativity that advances your disciplines and makes a difference to the communities we serve.

To our friends and alumni, you have remained steadfast supporters of UNCG. We will continue to engage with you to better serve the people of this community and this State.

I ask that we all—faculty, staff, students and alumni and friends—continue to work together to further solidify this great university’s mission and our place in this community.

## **Conclusion**

Thank you for being here today, and for all you do on behalf of this great university. Best wishes for another successful academic year.