

TO: UNC-CH Board of Trustees<sup>1</sup>  
FROM: Daniel Gitterman, Chair, UNC Public Policy  
DATE: June 25, 2021

The Board of Trustees’ refusal to act on Nikole Hannah-Jones’ tenure dossier does great damage to our aspiration to be a leading global public university.

The actions and inactions of the last two years—the [Silent Sam deal](#) and the Nikole Hannah-Jones tenure case—are deeply concerning. The lack of transparency and disparate treatment of the Nikole Hannah-Jones appointment sends a clear signal that free speech and thought diversity remain at risk and too many of our talented faculty, staff, and students question their future at (or whether to come to) Carolina.

As public policy scholars, my colleagues and I research and teach about the challenges of our times, such as the impact of racial inequality on our economy, politics, and society. Our faculty and students now question their academic freedom, including their freedom to think and write about structural racism, racial wealth inequality, a racially and economically inclusive recovery, and racial gaps in educational opportunity and attainment. The reputational damage caused by the perceived and real lack of support for the individuals who teach, learn, and work at Carolina, especially Black faculty, students, and staff, is undebatable.

For many of us, the phrase “the University of the people” evokes Carolina’s devotion to pursue *lux et libertas*—light and liberty—across the state and beyond. As light and liberty dim at this moment, we must reaffirm UNC-CH’s commitment to academic freedom and to build a “student-centered” community together. These priorities can include:

1. Prioritize resources for students from diverse backgrounds, including the [Carolina Covenant](#); [C-STEP](#), a pathway for community college students to transfer to and graduate from Carolina; [Project Uplift and Uplift Plus](#), a summer enrichment and college access program designed to promote and increase access to higher education for all outstanding students, especially those underrepresented in post-secondary education, and the [Carolina Advising Corps](#), which helps low-income, first-generation, and underrepresented students find their way to colleges that will serve them well.

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Y. Stevens; R. Gene Davis Jr.; Teresa Artis Neal; David L. Boliek Jr.; Jefferson W. Brown; G. Munroe Cobey; Haywood D. Cochrane, Jr.; Charles G. Duckett; Kelly Matthews Hopkins; Allie Ray McCullen; Ralph W. Meekins Sr.; John P. Preyer; Lamar G. Richards

2. Deliver on the prior [commitment to provide](#) space in the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for use by African American students and their organizations to gather and hold meetings and events.
3. Prioritize resources for the [Institute of African American Research](#), including [IAAR-SLATE](#), which engages undergraduates in a critical understanding of race, racism, and racial equity, especially as they concern African Americans. The program provides students with novel learning opportunities in research, coursework, and community-led experiences.
4. End the “pause” and allocate resources to expand the [VITAE Hiring Program](#) for the 2021-22 academic year and beyond. Expand the size and reaffirm the commitment to [The Carolina Postdoctoral Program for Faculty Diversity](#).
5. Support efforts to establish a new interdisciplinary Program on Racial Inequality and Public Policy in the College of Arts & Sciences (CAS). As national philanthropies express concern about any additional funding for Carolina, we will need to identify other sources of private support.

**Together, we can no longer wait to act upon the values and priorities that “bind us to this place as to no other” and to serve as the University of all our people.**