Dear Colleagues:

We finished off 2015 in fine fashion by congratulating nearly 3,600 brand new graduates at our 70th commencement ceremonies in Halton Arena on December 19.

Each of our new graduates has a unique story to share. Perhaps the most amazing was that of Shella Hollowell, age 76, who completed her undergraduate degree in history after having attended various colleges over a period of 56 years, fulfilling a promise that she had made to her late father.

Of course, we had a number of younger graduates as well. Three of them, in particular, came through our Army ROTC program and have now been commissioned into the Army in what happens to be the 100-year anniversary of the Army ROTC program. We also awarded a degree to one Air Force ROTC cadet in the winter ceremonies.

So, welcome to 2016! I hope that you all had the best of holiday seasons and took some time to recharge your batteries. And now, here we are, ready to jump right back into another semester at UNC Charlotte. Before we get too far into the New Year, I always enjoy this opportunity to update all of our friends on the events of the past semester and to preview the upcoming few months. Of course, if you would like more information on any item covered in this newsletter, please contact my executive assistant, Shari Dunn. You can also check the Chancellor’s Outbox on the Chancellor’s Office website for additional information.

By far the most important news of the fall concerned the election of Margaret Spellings by the Board of Governors as the next president of the UNC system. We look forward to her officially assuming that critically important position in March.
Ms. Spellings is the fourth UNC president during my tenure as chancellor. As the former U.S. Secretary of Education under President George W. Bush, she is no stranger to UNC Charlotte. It was on our campus, in 2005, that she announced the formation of the U.S. Secretary of Education’s Commission on the Future of Higher Education. That body was charged with developing a comprehensive national strategy for postsecondary education to meet the needs of the nation’s diverse population, along with the country’s economic and workforce needs. We look forward to welcoming President Spellings to UNC Charlotte once again this year and showing her, firsthand, the breadth of opportunity and access that are at the core of our leadership in the enrollment growth of the entire UNC system.

As of today, we are working with the UNC General Administration staff to plan President-elect Spelling’s visit to UNC Charlotte on March 14-15. More details on the specific elements of her orientation to our campus will be released as they are developed.

**Legislative Update: 2015 Report from the General Assembly**

The 2015 session of the NC General Assembly resulted in several positive outcomes for UNC Charlotte, most notably the full funding of our enrollment growth and passage of legislation authorizing the Connect NC bond referendum.

We are particularly proud and appreciative of the Forty-Niners in the legislature for their tireless work to support the needs of our campus. Strong backing came from legislative leaders and UNC Charlotte alumni Rep. Bill Brawley ’78, Rep. Jason Saine ’95, Rep. Tricia Cotham ’01, Rep. Mike Hager ’87, Sen. Bob Rucho ’94, and Rep. Dean Arp ’99, resulting in the most favorable state budget the campus has seen in more than ten years.

In addition to the $18 million enrollment growth funding received this fiscal year, UNC Charlotte will receive $1 million for an economic modeling initiative that will provide data analytics to help state policy-makers assess the likely consequences of possible changes in public policy for taxation, highway funding, economic development and other areas.

One of my top priorities for the first quarter of 2016 will be educating the university community and the Charlotte region about the Connect NC bond proposal. The proposed bond measure includes $2 billion for UNC system campuses, community colleges, public safety, water and sewer grants, state parks, and agriculture. UNC Charlotte’s interest in the bond measure is a proposed $90 million science facility that is crucial to ensuring our continuing ability to respond to ever-increasing demand for enrollment among well-qualified freshmen and transfer students.

We welcomed Governor Pat McCrory and several other statewide leaders to campus in October for a ceremonial signing of the Connect NC bond bill that now goes to the public for a statewide vote on March 15. The Governor had previously visited campus last April as he was launching the public conversation about the need for a major statewide bond measure.

A large crowd packed the atrium of the PORTAL building and included members of the NC General Assembly, local elected officials, members of the Boards of Trustees of sister UNC campuses, representatives from the UNC Board of Governors, faculty, staff, and students. Students
from the Charlotte Engineering Early College (the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools’ magnet high school located on our campus) attended the ceremony to help reinforce the message that the future of science education must continue to be supported in our region.

In November, I began traveling across the Charlotte region touting the benefits of the bond package, joining Rowan-Cabarrus Community College President Carol Spalding before the RCCC Boards of Trustees and Foundation, local elected officials, and community supporters. Next stops include Gastonia, Mooresville, Monroe, and Charlotte. Investments in the Charlotte region include $40 million for seven community colleges and funding for improvements at three popular state parks: Crowder’s Mountain, Morrow Mountain, and Lake Norman State Park.

For UNC Charlotte, there is definitely a sense of urgency concerning this bond initiative. Enrollment at UNC Charlotte has grown by 142 percent since the current science building (Burson) was built in 1985. UNC Charlotte accounts for over 63 percent of the enrollment growth in the entire UNC system since 2009. Over 50 percent of our students with declared majors are in STEM-related fields, and 15,000 students take laboratory courses each year. The new science facility is crucial to ensuring continued growth and to meet strong demand for talent by Charlotte region employers.

The business case for the bond package is straightforward and strong: NO tax increase is needed to pay for the bonds, the debt service level is below the recommended amount to maintain the state’s triple-A bond rating, interest rates are at historic lows, and the costs of construction will surely be less today than tomorrow.

What can you do?

First, learn more about the Connect NC Bond. Two websites have been created by outside entities to provide resources and detailed information about the bond. Visit www.connect.nc.gov to learn more about the bond legislation and funding allocations proposed for specific projects. You can also check out www.ConnectNCForHigherEd.com for advocacy information.

Next, be sure to register to vote or to update your voter registration.

Third, take note of key election dates for the March presidential primary and bond vote:

- Absentee voting begins – January 25
- Last day to register to vote – February 19
- Early Voting – March 3-12
- Election Day – March 15

Finally, make sure you vote!
Salary Adjustments for Faculty and Staff

The challenge of maintaining UNC Charlotte as a high-performing institution is no different than what is known to be true for many other organizations and businesses. To be successful, we need to identify, recruit, develop, reward, and retain the best talent we can find to serve on our faculty and staff. Although the General Assembly did approve one-time payments of $750 for each employee at the very end of 2015, we knew that this would not be sufficient to address the market disparities that have come to exist in the continuing salary levels of our faculty and staff. This year, careful planning and a very healthy budget associated with our continuing growth in enrollment enabled us to support almost $3 million in market adjustments for many of our classified employees and about $6 million in adjustments for permanent members of the faculty.

Although the action we took with respect to salaries has been viewed very positively on our campus, it is a matter that requires continuing attention over time. Our competitors in the public and private sectors, both in higher education and other lines of work where our faculty and staff have marketable talents, are certainly not standing still. We hope to work closely in 2016 with President-elect Spellings, the Board of Governors, and the General Assembly to ensure adequate state funding to help us remain competitive in finding, rewarding, and retaining the best people possible.

Academic Affairs

We continue to see a high demand for undergraduate and graduate education at UNC Charlotte. Overall, enrollment from fall 2014 to fall 2015 rose by 745 students, with 227 of those new students at the graduate level. Our official total enrollment for 2015-16 is 27,983. We are projecting an overall enrollment increase of 726 students from fall 2015 to fall 2016, including targeted growth of 59 more freshmen in the fall 2016 class.

Over the past decade, the number of annual admissions applications has risen by 73 percent. For 2015, UNC Charlotte received more than 23,000 applications.

A greater number of applicants means greater demand for campus visits and tours. In 2014, nearly 11,000 guests attended our organized tours and nearly 9,500 others visited the admissions office in Cato Hall for other reasons. To relieve some of the demands for physical space, planning is now underway for the design and construction of a building dedicated to the Admissions Office and a new University Visitors Center. The building will be located across from the South Village Dining Hall, at the front of campus where tennis courts are currently located.

We also instituted a wonderful new 49er tradition to welcome newly admitted freshman and transfer students in the fall semester. The New Student Convocation, held on the first day of classes, was a campus-wide initiative to formally induct our new students into the UNC Charlotte academic community. A ceremony in Halton Arena featured a large contingent of faculty members, dressed in their regalia, and a program that highlighted the University’s mission and the legacy of our founder, Bonnie Cone. The Convocation also gave Trustee Mike Wilson, Alumna Cameron Young Hurst (’08), Faculty Council President Jeff Leak, faculty speaker Gregg Starrett,
Student Government President Mitch Daratony, Provost Joan Lorden, and me a chance to share with our new students the tremendous opportunities that will mark their journey as members of the UNC Charlotte community. Our deans also hosted welcome events in their colleges, which helped make the Day of Convocation a great success. We look forward to the growth of this new fall tradition.

**International Festival Reaches Milestone**

This October marked the 40th anniversary of what has become one of our region’s enduring traditions. The annual UNC Charlotte International Festival brought a one-day audience of more than 20,000 guests to campus to enjoy performances, food, crafts, and a marketplace. More than 60 nations were represented by a combination of UNC Charlotte student clubs and groups from throughout the Charlotte region. The University’s live streaming video coverage of the festival was viewed in 40 countries at 2,700 locations.

**Recruiting and Graduating Talented Students**

We are always delighted to hear when our graduates leave UNC Charlotte to accomplish great things in the “real world.” We learned this fall that recent School of Nursing graduate Kailey Filter was named the U.S. Air Force Cadet of the Year for her accomplishments in UNC Charlotte’s Air Force ROTC. Filter is currently a medical-surgical unit nurse at Travis Air Force Base in California. Of more than 16,000 AFROTC and Air Force Academy cadets, 2nd Lt. Filter was singled out as the best of the best, and we are very proud of her recognition.

Speaking of student talent, we are in the midst of recruiting our next class of 20 Levine Scholars. By the time the newest class graduates, we will have 80 Levine Scholars on campus—and that will mean an even larger impact on the campus and the community. The competition to become a Levine Scholar is getting even tougher. We’ve had 2,700 nominations this year from high school counselors around the country and have almost 1,100 completed applications, representing an increase of 20 percent over last year. To clarify, that is 1,100 applications received for just 20 scholarships to be awarded! There is no question that when students are properly supported, we truly can recruit the best and the brightest to UNC Charlotte.

The expansion of the Levine Scholars Program, which was initiated in 2009, was made through the generosity of Leon and Sandra Levine. Through the Leon Levine Foundation, they have contributed more than $18 million to the growth and development of our premier scholarship program. In recognition of their support, we broke ground this past spring on Levine Hall, a new residence hall dedicated to housing students of the Levine Scholars Program and the Honors College. In addition to being home to more than 400 students, Levine Hall will house the administrative offices for the Levine Scholars Program and the Honors College, and will include student work-study areas, faculty work stations, private small meeting spaces, adjacent seminar spaces that can be combined for large functions, and overnight accommodations for visiting faculty or lecturers. Levine Hall is scheduled to open late in the fall of 2016.
Opening Opportunities for Veterans

We also seek the very best students at the graduate level. The Graduate School has launched a new program to help recruit exceptionally talented military veterans into full-time graduate programs of study. This program provides a graduate assistantship (teaching or research) for two academic years, full tuition support, and health insurance to newly admitted graduate students (doctoral or masters). The first three veterans to receive this fellowship all began master’s degree programs at UNC Charlotte starting in fall 2015: LaKeysha Sawyer (Army), Social Work; Nathan Lambert (Army), Mechanical Engineering; and Tracy Valero (Air Force), Health Administration.

Notably, for our efforts to facilitate the transition for undergraduate and graduate veterans, UNC Charlotte was one of 125 four-year institutions to earn the Military Times’ “Best for Vets: Colleges 2016” rankings. An annual survey in its sixth year, the Military Times rankings provide the most comprehensive school-by-school assessment of veteran and military student services and rates of academic achievement.

Notable News in the College of Computing and Informatics

I try to use this space to brag upon the work of our faculty and staff across the range of disciplines in our seven academic colleges and our interdisciplinary programs. As it so happens, this past semester was a particularly busy and successful one for the College of Computing and Informatics.

Sen. Richard Burr, chairman of the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, delivered the keynote address and applauded the University’s leadership during the College of Computing and Informatics 16th Annual Cyber Security Symposium in mid-October.

Speakers from around the country addressed the latest issues in cyber crime and what is being done globally to combat daily reports of cyber attacks. For the second year in a row, the symposium was a sellout with more than 600 attendees.

Burr commended UNC Charlotte for creating and becoming a leader in cyber security academic programs and research. “I am encouraged,” he said, “that students are interested in this field of study as we need our nation’s best and brightest working on these issues within the government and in the private sector.”

The College also launched the Women in Computing Initiative in the fall. This ambitious effort tackles head-on the field’s gender diversity issue: only 26 percent of information technology professionals in the United States are women. The Initiative’s goal is to increase the number of women undergraduate CCI majors to 450 female students in five years and proportionally increase the number of women graduates.

Finally, the dean of the College, Dr. Yi Deng, recently received the Charlotte Business Journal’s 2015 CIO Award for Academic Leadership. Deng was recognized for “using information technology in innovative ways to optimize business processes, enable growth, create competitive advantages and improve customer experience.” Since joining UNC Charlotte in 2009, Deng has guided the College of Computing and Informatics through a period of strong enrollment...
growth and increased partnerships with business and industry. With more than 2,000 students seeking degrees, up from 900 only six years ago, the College now has the largest technology program in North Carolina and one of the largest in the United States.

**Research and Economic Development**

**Research Growth on Many Fronts**

Our faculty members continue to generate a large and diverse collection of research and creative works. Books, performances, scholarly papers, and other works all contribute to the national reputation that we are building as a research university. Much of their work is funded by government, corporate, and institutional partners. Here are a few of the many projects that have been funded recently:

- Mary Lou Maher, professor and chair of the Department of Software and Information Systems in the College of Computing and Informatics, received a $2 million grant from the National Science Foundation to fund “The Connected Learner: Design Patterns for Transforming Computing and Informatics Education.” Mary Lou’s work looks at how to reorient undergraduate computing and informatics education to focus on student learning that connects to peers, the profession, and the community.

- Faculty members in the College of Liberal Arts & Sciences published 30 scholarly and creative books in 2015 that represented subjects as diverse as the College itself. Most of the books are intended primarily for classroom use or as resources for further research, but several are intended for general audiences. The books range from collections of essays to research findings on a variety of topics including bioethics and biopolitics, the science of meetings, religion in a post-sacred society, second-language learning, Spanish for the professions, medieval romance, scattered field imaging, and reading and teaching early modern English texts.

- Professor James A. Grymes, chair of the Department of Music, served as curator of the Violins of Hope exhibition at the Maltz Museum of Jewish Heritage in Cleveland, Ohio, where he has given multiple lectures and educational workshops, including a program with national classical music radio commentator Martin Goldsmith. Known as Jay to most of us, he is the author of Violins of Hope: Violins of the Holocaust—Instruments of Hope and Liberation in Mankind’s Darkest Hour. This book won a 2015 National Jewish Book Award and was the result of the 2012 Violins of Hope Charlotte project, which was led by UNC Charlotte and brought the violins with Holocaust histories to North America for the first time.

- Kim Jones, assistant professor of dance, is in the midst of a major research project that will result in the reconstruction of a lost work by renowned modern dance master Paul Taylor. The work, “Tracer,” will premiere at UNC Charlotte in fall 2016 as part of a three-week educational residency of the Taylor 2 Dance Company.
Groundbreaking research by UNC Charlotte psychologists Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun continues to influence other researchers and to help people navigate contemporary challenges such as terrorism, natural disasters, deaths, and other crises. Tedeschi and Calhoun identified a concept they called Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), used to characterize “positive change experienced as a result of the struggle with a major life crisis or a traumatic event.” With colleagues in the Post-Traumatic Growth Research Group, Rich and Lawrence explore the relationship between PTG and resilience and other related concepts. They have published widely on the topic, including books, articles, papers, and conference presentations. Their work has been cited in recent weeks in major media, including:

- The New York Times (two articles)
- The Washington Post
- Huffington Post
- Scientific American
- Stars and Stripes
- Forbes
- The Wall Street Journal
- TIME
- The Dallas Morning News

Richard Lambert, professor of educational leadership in the College of Education, received a $2 million grant from the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to fund “Evaluation of the Implementation of the K-3 Formative Assessments.”

Jessica Schlueter, professor of bioinformatics and genomics in the College of Computing and Informatics, received a $1.4 million grant from the National Science Foundation to fund “Sequencing of the hexaploid oat genome.”

PORTAL Facility Thriving: Sealed Air, Ventureprise

The Charlotte Research Institute (CRI) on the UNC Charlotte campus offers a nationally competitive research and development environment for our faculty and students and also for corporate partners. Recently, Sealed Air Corp. announced that it will lease temporary research and development (R&D) space at the University in our PORTAL facility, a building we opened in early 2014 to house University-industry partners. Sealed Air, which employs approximately 24,000 employees serving customers in 175 countries, recently announced the relocation of its headquarters to Charlotte. The partnership with UNC Charlotte will enable the company to accelerate that move, while it completes the construction of the Sealed Air campus in south Charlotte.

Our agreement with Sealed Air is a great example of the value we offer to our R&D partners. Companies like Sealed Air come to UNC Charlotte because of our R&D environment and easy entry and access to our facilities, services, and infrastructure. In addition, our partners benefit from high-touch access to the talent found in our faculty, staff, and students, and from the CRI’s decade of experience supporting companies that locate on campus.
Also to be found in PORTAL is our business incubator, Ventureprise, which is growing in many different ways with campus and community partners:

- This year, UNC Charlotte was selected and funded as a NSF I-Corps Site in a nationally competitive solicitation by the National Science Foundation. So far, Ventureprise has supported 20 additional teams of students and faculty on startup and innovation projects.

- City Startup Labs is establishing a Center of Excellence (CoE) for Entrepreneurial Competency, Innovation and Leadership at UNC Charlotte, in association with Ventureprise. This Center will focus on reimagining young black men as entrepreneurs and will teach entrepreneurship and leadership.

- The Ventureprise 49er Foundry worked with a number of partners to host RECESS, a music and ideas festival, at UNC Charlotte in early October. This two-day event, which is presented at a small, select group of universities, included a full day of learning, business experiences, and entertainment, followed by a concert. The Pitch competition offered five student teams an opportunity to pitch new business start-up ideas to a panel of national experts, and the winning team received an all-expenses paid excursion to Los Angeles to compete with teams from other universities and to connect with mentors and investors.

University Partners with County

UNC Charlotte and Gaston County are working together on an effort to protect and monitor a key portion of the county’s water supply. Funded by a grant from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the “Healthy Wells” program will establish a public digital database of the county’s wells and promote the protection of private well water supplies.

The Gaston County Department of Health & Human Services (DHHS) will receive nearly $670,000 over the course of the five-year grant. Faculty and students from the UNC Charlotte Departments of Public Health Sciences and Geography and Earth Sciences and the Center for Applied Geographic Information Science will work closely with DHHS environmental health specialists to carry out the core functions of the Healthy Wells program.

Student Affairs

Diversity and Inclusion Forum Scheduled for January 25

Universities across the country have been challenged by a range of issues over the past year that have contributed to instances of highly publicized unrest. At UNC Charlotte, we remain committed to taking a proactive approach to matters of diversity and inclusion, and it continues to be our practice to build a systemic culture of diversity throughout the University community. On Monday, January 25, from 7-9 p.m., we will host a “Dialogue with University Officials on Diversity and Inclusion” in McKnight Hall. Joining me in the forum will be Provost Joan Lorden, Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs Beth Hardin, and Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs Art Jackson. We invite the campus community to share thoughts on the current scene across the nation and to engage in an open dialogue about our own university culture. To learn more about our
diversity-related initiatives, see our Plan for Campus Diversity, Access, and Inclusion and read information about our Faculty Affairs and Diversity Office, known as UNC Charlotte ADVANCE, on the web.

**Belk Gym Renovations Complete**

Belk Gym has reopened after being closed since June 2014 for renovations. The project added 8,407 square feet to the facility and resulted in a number of significant improvements, including a more open floor plan, a resurfaced swimming pool, an updated air conditioning system, and new aerobic exercise areas. Belk Gym has been a campus fixture since it opened in 1970. Stop by and take a look when you are on campus; you will not recognize the place! The project was funded by a variety of state and non-state funding we pulled together to renovate the academic home of the Department of Kinesiology as well as that of Recreational Services.

**New Counseling Center Programs**

The Counseling Center launched a new series of programs this fall aimed at helping students develop resiliency and coping skills when faced with loss, disappointment, or failure. Six “Counseling Center Talks” lectures and discussions were offered in the Student Union theatre on three evenings this fall, and six additional programs will be offered this spring. These lectures were recorded and will be posted on the Counseling Center website.

Meanwhile, design continues on a new Counseling Center facility which will be built adjacent to the current Student Health Center. The space that will be released by the Counseling Center staff in the Atkins Building will be reassigned and remodeled for an expansion of the University Career Center. The new Counseling facility should be open for business by approximately July 2017.

**Student Food Pantry Continues Service**

In its second year of service, the Niner Student Food Pantry has relocated from space in Colvard to a house acquired by the University on nearby John Kirk Drive. The pantry, which was launched with a grant from Food Lion, is a service to students in need. In its first year, the pantry served 825 students. UNC Charlotte is one of 13 universities in the UNC system with similar food pantries.

**Development and Fundraising**

**Niblock Gives Back to Belk College of Business**

Robert A. Niblock, chairman, president and chief executive officer of Lowe’s Companies, Inc., has donated $2.5 million to UNC Charlotte’s Belk College of Business. His gift supports the Student Center for Professional Development in the Belk College, which will be named the Robert A. Niblock Student Center for Professional Development. Mr. Niblock received his bachelor’s degree in accounting from UNC Charlotte in 1984. His support will make a tremendous difference for our students, many of whom are first-generation and many of whom are working while studying
in order to afford their education. Mr. Niblock’s gift provides students with personal and career
guidance and resources that can prepare them for lifelong success.

**Gift Strengthens Center for Real Estate’s Regional Service**

Don Childress and Fred Klein, managing partners at Childress Klein, a commercial real
estate firm, donated $2.5 million to [UNC Charlotte’s Center for Real Estate](http://www.unc.edu), which is now named
the Childress Klein Center for Real Estate. The gift funds a new endowed professorship, master’s
student professional training programs, and faculty fellowships related to research on real estate
and urban economics topics. With an expected match from the State of North Carolina for the
professorship, the total impact of the gift will be $3.2 million. Klein, previously a member of the
UNC Charlotte Foundation Board, was recently appointed by Governor Pat McCrory to serve on
the University’s Board of Trustees.

**Giving Green Campaign Tops Previous Record**

The University’s annual [Giving Green Campaign](http://www.givinggreen.unc.edu) raised a total of $194,698 in one-time
gifts and payroll-deduction pledges to benefit the Arts & Science Council, the State Employees
Combined Campaign, and the UNC Charlotte Foundation.

Malin Pereira, executive director of the Honors College, and Jim Hoppa, associate vice
chancellor for student union, activities and recreation, served as the 2015 Giving Green Campaign
co-chairs. Beyond an increase in overall donations from 2014, this year’s campaign resulted in
more donors; 745 employees participated, representing a 9 percent gain.

In addition to monetary support, many of our employees volunteer during the Giving Green
Campaign. Because the University often asks the community for support, it is important that the
public sees UNC Charlotte employees giving back to the community. This year nearly 100 faculty
and staff served eight community organizations through Giving Green volunteer opportunities,
saving the nonprofits about $3,700 in labor costs.

**Chancellor’s Speaker Series Featured Bernstein and O’Rourke**

Each year, the Chancellor’s Speaker Series brings to the University nationally known
speakers to discuss timely topics. [This year’s guests](http://www.unc.edu), the Washington, D.C.-based duo of journalist
Carl Bernstein and satirist P.J. O’Rourke, gave two presentations on September 24: one on our
main campus for 400 students, and an evening event at UNC Charlotte Center City for an audience
of about 300 community leaders. The University also live-streamed the evening presentation.

**Athletics**

**Highlights Accompany First Football Season in Conference USA**

Although our inaugural football season at the FBS level in Conference USA was a difficult
one on the field for Coach Brad Lambert and his team, 2015 brought many additional “firsts” for
the 49ers football program, including the debut of the “Pride of Niner Nation Marching Band.” The
marching band’s inaugural performance was September 12 as the 49ers hosted Presbyterian College. We also officially opened the Vickie and Gene Johnson Marching Band Center on campus, adjacent to Robinson Hall. The 6,700 square foot building houses a conference room, music library, and four offices for the band staff. It also includes restrooms, a storage room for drums and color guard equipment, and ample space to store musical instruments and uniforms for the entire marching band.

One of the many ways 49er Football has helped bring our community together is the ever-popular pre-game tailgating. This past season, we saw crowds of about 3,000 enjoying campus before the Niners took the field in Richardson Stadium, and the addition of the David and Nancy Hauser Alumni Pavilion has added a terrific setting for the fun. We also saw the potential for bringing together the extended UNC Charlotte community with successful tailgating on the road, both at Kentucky and at the season opener with Georgia State in the Georgia Dome in Atlanta.

Student attendance at the games continues to be a disappointment, but this is a national trend and one that is difficult to overcome when television coverage is so readily available in the comfort of one’s living room. Participation in the pre-game tailgate did not seem to suffer, however, as a virtual “tent village” was created within a few hundred yards of the stadium. Working closely with our Department of Police and Public Safety, our student leadership has ensured a safe and enjoyable experience for our students. Our Student Affairs and Athletics staff are brainstorming some additional ideas to promote student attendance at the games.

Another highlight of the football year was the announcement this past August of a $2 million gift from Hunter (’88) and Stephanie (’86) Edwards to support 49er Football. The Hunter & Stephanie Edwards Promenade houses the university box, coaches’ boxes, and TV and radio booths. The gift is the largest made by alumni directly to the football program.

“Let Me Play” Goes Over the Top

The Athletic Foundation's 12th Annual “Let Me Play” Luncheon exceeded its goal in raising $167,000 for the 49ers women’s athletic programs in October. The event, chaired and energized by Theresa Drew, managing partner of Deloitte & Touche LLP and a member of the UNC Charlotte Board of Trustees, drew 430 attendees to the Charlotte Convention Center and raised the second-highest total since its inception. Former 49ers women’s softball player Andrea (Wilkerson) Howard spoke on the importance of teamwork and how college athletics can impact female students.
Men’s Soccer Success Continues

The nationally ranked 49ers men’s soccer program made its fifth straight NCAA Tournament appearance this past fall. Striker Kyle Parker was named Conference USA’s Offensive MVP and earned the Golden Boot Award after leading the league in scoring. The 49ers’ successful run has taken them to the NCAA Tournament in six of the last seven years. This was their 11th trip overall, and a school-record fourth trip for head coach Kevin Langan.

Women’s Golf Program Ready

The 49ers have added women’s golf as the program’s 18th sport. Holly Clark, who served as associate head coach at Vanderbilt, was named the program’s first coach. Clark starred at Tennessee during her playing days and helped lead the Volunteers to the 2006 NCAA East Regional Championship. The women’s golf team will begin competition in 2017.

Information and Technology Services

I try not to use this space to share too much “inside baseball” about the operations of the University, but visitors to campus should notice significant improvements in the condition of our information technology infrastructure. Last spring, Information and Technology Services (ITS) was actively investigating an improved WiFi solution for our 31,000+ campus users. After vetting several vendors, two finalists installed their products in specified areas and were compared based on performance indicators including coverage, device connection speed, and reliability. Aruba Wireless was selected and now more than 1,200 new Aruba Wave 2 Access Points (that’s “APs” in tech-speak) are being installed in 31 buildings across campus. We have high hopes that more buildings can be upgraded as funding becomes available.

Similarly, cellular telephone service on campus should be noticeably better. The tall, weird-looking pole standing between Belk Gym and the West Deck is our new cell tower. Admittedly, it may not provide the most appealing view, but the old adage holds true: it’s what’s inside that counts. Raised November 11, the tower provides improved cellular coverage and capacity on campus and currently hosts T-Mobile and AT&T as its carriers. We are also in the very early stages of exploring how to enhance cellular performance at Jerry Richardson Stadium.

A Final Word (or Two)

My newsletters always afford the opportunity to tell you about additions to our campus, and this one is no exception. But this time around I also note the subtraction of a longtime campus landmark, the Belk Tower, which marked our central gathering place and free-speech area since the 1970s. The tower was funded with a gift from Irwin (Ike) Belk and his three brothers—John, Thomas, and Henderson. Over time, the tower’s sectional design made it susceptible to structural deterioration and, given a repair estimate approaching $1 million, we decided, in consultation with the Belk family and with the support of a unanimous Board of Trustees, to dismantle the tower. That work took place over the recent holiday recess.
To plan the next chapter for the area of campus we will now call Belk Plaza, I have appointed a campus-wide committee comprised of fourteen individuals representing faculty, staff, students, alumni, and the community to work with Charlotte architectural firm LandDesign on the development of concepts that can be incorporated in a major landscape renovation that we can accomplish over the next year or so. The project will be informed by a series of open forums for our extended university community. Please follow the scheduling on “Inside UNC Charlotte” and lend your voice to the plan we will present to our Board of Trustees in July. Campus landscape architect Peter Franz will chair the Belk Plaza Redesign Committee.

One of the things that I’ve asked of Peter and the Design Committee is to evaluate options for memorializing the presence of the tower in some way. One option is to incorporate a portion of the tower in the design of the Plaza itself. Another is to place a portion of the tower behind the Harris Alumni Center. A third might include the creation of a “ruins garden” within the campus gardens. We are also evaluating the question of whether small pieces of the tower can be made available as personal mementos to those wishing to purchase them; details will be forthcoming once we’ve figured this out. We do not view this as a fundraising event, so the price of such mementos will be set at a level necessary to recover only the costs of production and distribution.

The impact of the Belk family, of course, remains visible in many ways across our campus. Just this fall, we dedicated another beautiful piece of public art given to us by Ike Belk. The sculpture “Aperture” now enhances the setting of our recently re-engineered and beautified Hechenbleikner Lake.

Finally, I am frequently asked about the status of work on the CATS Lynx Blue Line Extension of light rail to the main campus. That work is continuing apace, with an anticipated opening in August 2017. The Light Rail Coordinating Committee led by Beth Hardin, vice chancellor for business affairs, and Betty Doster, special assistant to the chancellor for constituent relations, has been addressing issues including construction, public safety, ridership, coordination with the campus-wide shuttles, and communications. Representatives of the group traveled to the University of Utah to learn from the experiences of a highly integrated urban public transit system.

Clearly, this is an exciting time to be a 49er. There is much to do and much to celebrate. Thank you for the part that you play in ensuring our continued success. I wish for you and yours all the best in 2016.

Go Niners!

Philip L. Dubois
Chancellor