



UNC
COLLEGE OF
ARTS & SCIENCES

THE UNIVERSITY
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at CHAPEL HILL

DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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August 9, 2021

Dear Chancellor Guskiewicz:

FRANK R. BAUMGARTNER
Richard J. Richardson Distinguished Professor

The Campus Safety Commission was convened at your request in April 2019 to address the “crisis of trust” between the University administration and members of the community. We have worked with unwavering commitment in the ensuring two years on that mission, and we are proud of the real progress we have made in many areas. Thank you for appointing us and for giving us this opportunity.

At this juncture, however, we can no longer continue in this work. The crisis of trust was generated by numerous actions, particularly those related to the Confederate memorial, so long a prominent feature on our campus. We have talked, listened, facilitated communications, hosted meetings, and made recommendations for two years. Other units on campus have debated, studied, talked, listened, and made recommendations, as well. During this same time, other actors in the UNC governance structure, including prominent actors in the UNC System office, in our Board of Trustees, and in our Board of Governors, have taken actions. These actions have undermined our efforts to build trust. Actions speak larger than words.

We have played virtually no role in the most significant threat to campus safety in a generation: University response to the Covid pandemic. We have been completely uninvolved in decisions to remove the Chief from the UNC Police Department, though our initial creation specified “building relations with campus police” in the very first sentence of the letter you sent asking us to join the commission. We stand by as we witness an accelerating stampede of faculty and staff of color decide that Carolina is not a hospitable place for them to pursue their talents and they move on to greener pastures.

We know that the work we have done during the past two years has been valuable. Marginalized students and community members who have not felt welcomed at Carolina have found a voice with us. It was this space that most closely aligned with the vision and mission of our Commission, cultivating trust, safety, and a welcoming space for students who made the decision to make Carolina their “home away from home.” The question begs an answer: Are we fully engaged and committed to doing what we say we do, “Building Community Together”? We are confident that the Campus Safety Commission demonstrated to each and every student that they deserve full membership in the Carolina family. But the Commission’s hard work in listening and talking cannot provide a counterpoint to harmful actions of other actors on campus and beyond.

Our University’s governance structure is in crisis. The University is not limited to our campus administration, of which you are the leader. It also incorporates the broader governance structure. Many actors within the campus community and your administration have tried, many times

valiantly, to work for the goals of inclusion that we share. Mostly, however, this has been with words. We cannot resolve the issue with words.

Trust must be earned by those responsible for the governance of the University. We cannot listen, study, and debate our way through this crisis. We cannot work only with your administration here at the Chapel Hill campus in order to resolve the issues of trust that plague us. But we have no access to nor influence over the actors who are nonetheless part of the UNC governance structure and whose actions have created the crisis of trust that is only deepening. As the problem is greater than our campus, so the solution must be as well.

Trust can easily be earned when people see actions that merit trust. Trust can easily be broken when people see actions that merit distrust. Such actions generated the crisis of trust that inspired our Commission's work in the first place. The time has come to stop talking and to take action, not study and recommendations, if we really want to earn back the trust of members of the community who feel betrayed, marginalized, and unwelcomed. You may or may not have the power to take those actions. But we can't do our work until those actions occur.

We have sincerely appreciated the opportunity to work in this effort over the past two-plus years. But our work is impossible so we ask you to bring it to an end, and spend your efforts getting those who have the power to take the actions needed to restore campus trust to do so. Therefore, and for all the reasons laid out above, we ask you not to reappoint the Campus Safety Commission, whose term expired on June 30, 2021, and not to reestablish it in another form.

Regretfully,

Frank R. Baumgartner
Richard J. Richardson Distinguished Professor of Political Science
Co-Chair, 2019-21

DeVetta Holman-Copeland, PhD
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