




June 21, 2021

To: UNC Board of Trustees
From: Barbara Turpin, PhD 
Chair, Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering
Re: Nikole Hannah-Jones Tenure Case

As Chair of the Department of Environmental Sciences and Engineering, I support the [open letter](#) sent to the Carolina Community by Dr. Mimi Chapman, Chair of the University Faculty, regarding the tenure of Ms. Nikole Hannah-Jones.

I implore the Board to take appropriate action and approve Ms. Nikole Hannah-Jones' tenure without delay.

Failure to act erodes confidence in the Board's commitment to academic freedom and undermines our mission. Faculty governance is a core tenant of academic freedom, designed to protect the institution and individual faculty members from political interference on the right and the left and to protect against the silencing of diverse scholarly voices.

At this moment, anything short of definitive support for faculty governance will have a chilling effect on our ability to attract and retain the best faculty, staff, and students in all departments, including mine. As scientists, we have an ethical responsibility to report in an unbiased manner the results of our research regardless of what we find – regardless of the implications to the sponsor, university donors or the legislature. We must be able to do that free from fear of retribution.

The potential impact on the diversity of voices at the university, particularly scholars of color, is particularly troubling to me. We are a department of scientists and engineers that has been working to address public health problems for 100 years. The history is clear. The health of all of us depends on the health of each of us and success requires diverse voices.

The reputation of Carolina's flagship is at stake. I stand with my colleagues in the School of Journalism and with Black scholars. Please respect the long-standing appointments and promotions process of the university and approve Nikole Hannah-Jones' appointment with tenure.