



December 16, 2018

It has been a very contentious and challenging semester, and stress has been high. As we approach today's commencement activities and potential protests on the campus, we support your acting in ways that are consistent with your conscience and values. These are volatile times, and we are concerned for your safety. We say this not because there are specific threats, but because emotions are on edge for many.

Be alert and watchful, and do not go where you are uncomfortable. Our buildings will have additional security assistance today, and members of our community and their families on campus this weekend are welcome at the Gillings School. Many of us will participate in the commencement activities, and we will not be swayed by bullies.

BOG decision regarding Silent Sam. On Friday, the UNC Board of Governors (BOG) met to respond to the plan regarding the disposition of the Confederate statue, referred to as Silent Sam, submitted by Chancellor Carol Folt and the UNC Board of Trustees (BOT).

The BOG rejected the proposed plan. The chairperson said he would constitute a 5-person working group to meet with Chancellor Folt and others to develop an acceptable plan by March 15. UNC-Chapel Hill tweeted in response:

The UNC System BOG vote today gives Carolina more time to review relocation options for the Confederate Monument and offer a revised recommendation. An off-campus solution remains our strong preference and we will work until March 15 to more fully explore this option. <https://twitter.com/UNC>

In a statement issued by Chancellor Folt, she said:

We are the only university in this state that has anything closely resembling this statue... Put here more than one hundred years ago, our community is carrying the burden of an artifact, given to us by a previous generation in a different time. The burden of the statue has been and still is disproportionately shouldered by African-Americans. No university today would even consider placing such an artifact on their campuses. <https://uncnews.unc.edu/2018/12/14/statement-from-university-of-north-carolina-at-chapel-hill-chancellor-folt-regarding-the-board-of-governors-vote-on-the-confederate-monument/>

Most encouraging was her statement:

As we work with the Board of Governors, our work will include more fully exploring off-campus options as put forward in the report. This was the stated and strong preference that the Board of Trustees and I made in our proposed plan because we learned from our analyses that relocating

off campus, for example to the N.C. Museum of History, was the best way to ensure the safety and security of our people and campus and was more feasible and cost-effective.

While this isn't the end of Silent Sam on campus, these are strong statements that focus the campus on finding off-campus solutions for disposition of Silent Sam. A planning group that includes BOG members is an opportunity for the BOG to understand what the statue means to those on campus.

UNC-Chapel Hill leaders have stated that the statue does not belong on this campus. We are gratified by the strength of the chancellor's message and by her commitment and that of her leadership team to work with people across campus to find solutions and learn from our collective history, even when it is painful. We strongly encourage that planning efforts include faculty, staff, students and relevant others, including community members, especially descendants of those affected by Jim Crow laws and other forms of racism that persist.

Gillings School leaders respond. On Friday morning, before the BOG meeting, a group of Gillings School leaders convened to discuss possible outcomes of the meeting and begin mapping a plan for how we would respond, as a school, to possible decisions.

This statement represents consensus agreement from the [Dean's Council](#).

It is a good thing that the Board of Governors rejected the plan proposed by UNC-Chapel Hill leaders. Now, we can move forward to find appropriate solutions. We are encouraged that the BOG's decision may open doors to full consideration of what it means to have a Confederate statue anywhere on our campus. We are optimistic that the delay will provide time to explore off-campus options for the statue.

At the same time, we were surprised that the board also voted to have its governance review policies on student, faculty and staff conduct with the intent of proposing changes that provide for possible sanctions, including "suspension, termination and expulsion," for those who engage in conduct that impacts safety. From what we have observed, current campus policies are sufficient. This review and the potential for additional sanctions create an environment that heightens fear and suppresses free expression.

We must continue speaking out respectfully and knowledgeably about the issues until there is a clear, positive resolution. Actions listed below will evolve, with input from faculty, staff, students, alumni and friends of the Gillings School.

We agree on the following.

1. **The statue has no place on this campus.** We must and will continue to advocate for the statue's complete removal from UNC-Chapel Hill. With this position, we are aligned with UNC-Chapel Hill's leaders. We uphold the principle of creating an environment in which students, faculty, staff members and others feel safe, supported and free – from intimidation, fear and discrimination – to thrive. We seek to uphold the Gillings School mission to improve public health, promote individual well-being and *eliminate health inequities across North Carolina and the world*. The statue conveys a message of racism, inequity and exclusion. These messages are powerful contributors to stress, division and, ultimately, poorer health. Thus, having the statue on our campus is a core public health issue.
2. **We aim to focus our community on positive actions** that will make a difference and help achieve outcomes we all wish for this campus and beyond. When we say community, we use the term inclusively, to mean faculty, staff, students and alumni. By positive actions, we mean productive steps, such as working to change the law and

enable removal of the statue from this campus. It also includes speaking out against attempts at retaliation against faculty, students and staff who engage in peaceful forms of protest. We will use a public health frame, using our mission and values as the foundation to address institutionalized racism as a fundamental determinant of poor health.

3. **We will speak as a unified school.** We are One Gillings, with shared mission and goals. While departments and other units may amplify messages, we aim to speak with a consistent voice. It makes us stronger. At the same time, we are not a homogeneous community. There are many perspectives among us, and this school must continue to be a place where many voices can be heard.
4. On January 8, in the afternoon (exact time TBA), **we will hold what we are calling a Silent Sam Action Session**, where all Gillings School faculty, staff and students are welcome. We will provide more details soon, but the purpose is to give all who wish to speak an opportunity to communicate their recommended actions and solutions regarding the statue, underlying issues of institutionalized racism and other, related concerns.

This will be an action-oriented session in which people will share ideas we could act on as a school, in small groups and/or as individuals, that would be most effective in preventing the statue from returning to our campus and in achieving larger diversity, inclusion and equity goals.

The meeting will be held in 133 Rosenau Hall, with the BCBSNC auditorium as an overflow room (Zoom available for digital attendance). After the meeting, the [Gillings School's Dean's Council](#) (which includes department chairs, deans, directors and student representatives), will review all suggestions and develop an action plan, a living plan that will evolve as circumstances and needs change.

5. **We will offer advocacy training sessions this spring** to anyone interested — faculty, staff and students. We welcome your recommendations for individuals who are experts in advocacy training, including many people in the school. The goal is to enhance our public health advocacy skills so that we all become more effective agents for positive change. We will identify specific advocacy efforts we can adopt as a school. The Gillings School voice can be powerful!
6. We will offer an **anti-racism training session** for faculty, staff and students in spring 2019.
7. Depending on action steps at the university level, **we may undertake, with Assistant Dean Kauline Cipriani's leadership, a process of inquiry to examine the university's and school's past and present regarding race, inequities**, and related issues and develop concrete steps to achieve a better future, one where all people experience the Gillings School as diverse and inclusive.

Closing thoughts. As Americans, we have a right to peaceful protest. People from across our School are angry, for good reason, and many want to engage in forms of protest that can make an impact. We support those efforts. At the same time, we encourage our students, faculty and staff to make informed decisions about actions they might consider with regard to the statue. These actions are most likely to be effective if they are strategic, that is, they have the potential to influence decision-makers, in this case the BOG and our state legislature.

As we have said before, while we may be able to speak on behalf of those arrested for nonviolent actions and take up private collections, once a person is arrested, they are in the legal system, an area we do not control. The situation is similar for Honor Court violations. To be clear, we do not believe that more policing or stronger statements and policies from BOG about student, faculty or staff behavior are needed. What's needed is continued open dialogue leading to specific action in how we move forward.

We are in this together as One Gillings. At the Gillings School, we sometimes describe ourselves as a community filled with practical idealists. We know we can create a better world, and we study and practice ways to create that change. We will need creativity, energy, focus, discipline, leadership, commitment and follow-through from people in all parts of our school to make an impact. If we work together to focus on positive, constructive actions that can achieve our collective goals, we can be leaders for positive change on campus and will emerge stronger as a school, university, town and state. We have the opportunity to achieve something momentous.

Thanks in advance for your dedication to being a positive force for change here at the Gillings School and on campus.

Our best wishes to you for a healthy, peaceful and restorative holiday season.

Gillings School Dean's Council and student leaders

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Warmly,



Barbara K. Rimer