

**OPEN SESSION MINUTES**

December 5, 2025 | 9:00 a.m.  
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

**TRUSTEES PRESENT**

\*Denotes voting Trustee

\*Graydon Pleasants, Chair  
\*John Wigodsky, Vice Chair  
\*Nia Patterson, Secretary  
\*Jonah Bokaer  
\*Eric Flow (via Zoom)  
\*Jerri Irby  
\*Peter Juran  
\*Trey Mazza, Student Body President  
\*David Neill  
\*Kyle Petty  
\*John Michael Schert

**TRUSTEES ABSENT**

\*John McConnell  
\*Ches McDowell  
Tom Kenan, *emeritus*  
Sandi Macdonald, *ex officio*  
The Honorable Pam Cashwell, *ex officio*

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Dara Folan, Foundation Board  
Representative

**STAFF PRESENT**

Brian Cole, Chancellor  
Patrick Sims, Ex. Vice Chancellor and  
Provost  
Jim DeCristo, VC and Chief of Staff  
Laura Dean, VC and General Counsel  
Lissy Garrison, VC for Advancement  
Karen Beres, Vice Provost and Dean of  
Academic Affairs  
Amanda Balwah, AVC and University  
Secretary (via Zoom)  
Ryan Belanger, IT Audio Visual Support

Anthony Hromada, IT Audio Visual Support  
Steve LaCosse, Faculty Council Chair  
Laurel Donley, Assistant Dean of Student  
Affairs  
Kory Kelly, Vice Chancellor for Strategic  
Communications  
Ginger Caston, Ex. Assistant to the Chief  
of Staff  
Michael Kelley, Dean of Design &  
Production  
Steve Martin, AVC for Facilities  
Management

Rich Whittington, AVC for Advancement  
Krystyna Puc, Interim Dean of Division of Liberal Arts  
Angela Mahoney, Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Human Resources Officer  
Saxton Rose, Dean of Music  
David Sigman, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management  
Cindy Liberty, Executive Director of the UNCSA Foundation  
Sarah Emery, Director of Development  
Liza Vest, Associate Director of Finance and Operations, Kenan Institute for the Arts  
Wendy Emerson, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration  
Brenda Daniels, Associate Dean of Dance  
Martin Ferrell, Headmaster and Dean of High School Academics  
Deborah LaVine, Dean of Filmmaking

Cloey Davis, School of Filmmaking Student  
Endalyn Taylor, Dean of Dance  
April Horton, Director of Development  
Tamar Pandi, Chief Information Officer  
Melanie Nuckols, AVC for Finance  
Angela Mahoney, Chief Human Resources Officer  
Cory Billings, Internal Audit Manager

**STAFF PRESENT VIA ZOOM**

Marla Carpenter, Senior Communications Manager  
B. Afeni McNeely Cobham, AVC and Vice Provost of Institutional Engagement  
Heidi Mallory, Assistant Vice Chancellor for University Budget Management and Chief Budget Officer  
Krista Hopkins, Ex. Assistant to the Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration  
Kevin Bitterman, Ex. Director of the Kenan Institute for the Arts  
Latonya Wright, Staff Council Chair

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## **CONVENE OPEN SESSION**

Chair Graydon Pleasants convened the December 5, 2025 meeting of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts Board of Trustees at 9:02 a.m. A quorum was confirmed. Chair Pleasants reminded all members of the Board of their duty under the State Government Ethics Act to avoid conflicts of interest and appearances of conflicts as required by this act.

## **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**The open session minutes from the Campaign Planning Workshop on September 24, 2025, and the full board meeting on September 25, 2025, were made public. There were no objections or edits and the minutes were approved.**

## **REPORT FROM CHANCELLOR COLE**

Chancellor Cole welcomed the Trustees to the second meeting of the 2025-2026 academic year, highlighting the performances of the holiday season, including UNCSA's beloved Nutcracker and UNCSA's partnership with the Dance Theatre of Harlem, which will include an international tour and a stop in Paris in February 2026

With the calendar year coming to an end, Chancellor Cole provided updates on numerous projects and initiatives, including comprehensive campaign planning, the American Roots Institute, personnel infrastructure and faculty salaries, tuition and fees, the SACSCOC reaffirmation process, and Stevens Center Phase II.

He concluded his presentation with a thorough report of UNCSA's global connections across the arts in all conservatories, walking the board through the history of international engagement at the school. Highlights include:

- Design & Production connections with Shanghai Disney, Cirque du Soleil, Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines, and Disney International
- Film connections in Hong Kong and Dean LaVine recently serving as an adjudicator for an animated film festival
- Drama's presence at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh
- School of Dance forging a relationship with the Hungarian Dance Society in Budapest
- Music students' participation in international festivals, Kevin Lawrence as a faculty Fulbright Scholar, and Dean Saxton Rose establishing partnerships in China

UNCSA currently has 64 international students from 20 countries. Chancellor Cole concluded his report with the inspiring story of the Olusemire twins, Nathan and Stephen, who studied at UNCSA's School of Music. The brothers, from Nigeria, saw a YouTube video of faculty member Maria Serkin, a prominent French Horn player, warming up, which inspired them to find out more about UNCSA. Nathan and Stephen studied bassoon and French horn and are now performing internationally and teaching in their home country.

## GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Jonah Bokaer, Committee Chair, reported that the Governance Committee met on December 4, 2025 and a quorum was present. The committee reviewed its charge and the terms of the members of the Board of Trustees. There are no vacancies among voting members currently. Without any unanticipated changes, the next vacancies will occur in July 2027.

The Committee reviewed the terms of the six board members whose terms end July 1, 2027. All these board members are available for reappointment for one more term. The board must approve nominations to fill these six slots by the conclusion of the December 2026 meeting to begin the process of appointment or reappointment by the BOG or the Legislature.

## FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

David Neill, Committee Chair, reported that the Finance Committee met on December 4, 2025 and a quorum was present. Wendy Emerson, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, shared the FY26-27 All Funds Budget process and timeline, provided an update on the FY26 State Budget, and the UNC System Personnel Cap. Ms. Emerson also presented the following proposal from the UNCSA Tuition and Fees Committee:

[1] Increase resident tuition for new undergraduate students by \$194, and increase resident graduate and nonresident high school, undergraduate, and graduate students' tuition by \$600 for FY26-27. The increase would address Faculty salary compression at the full-professor rank.

[2] Increase the Educational & Technology Fee by \$23 for FY26-27 to address inflationary cost increases of contracts associated with cybersecurity, network switches, and Wi-Fi security.

Mr. Neill reported that these tuition and fee increase proposals were approved by the Finance Committee.

**MOTION: The Finance Committee moved to approve the Tuition and Fees Proposal for FY26-27 as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.**

These recommended increases will be presented to the UNC Board of Governors for subsequent approval.

Steve Martin, Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities Management, provided an update on UNCSA's Capital Projects. Ms. Emerson and Mr. Martin also presented a request to dispose of three properties by demolition:

- 1803 Sunnyside Avenue

- 1809 Sunnyside Avenue
- 1811 Sunnyside Avenue

All three properties have been identified by the North Carolina Department of Insurance (DOI) as safety hazards requiring demolition. Forsyth County Property Records have been utilized to populate the value but considering the condition of the properties and DOI's assessment, the value could be \$0.

**MOTION: The Finance Committee moved to approve the demolition of three properties on Sunnyside Avenue as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.**

The request will now be submitted to the NC Department of Administration's State Property Office.

## **ENDOWMENT FUND BOARD REPORT**

Graydon Pleasants, Board Chair, reported that the Endowment Fund Board met on December 4, 2025 and a quorum was present.

Wendy Emerson, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, reviewed the UNC Management Company Flash Report and the UNCSCA Endowment Fund Investment Summary as of September 30, 2025. Ms. Emerson stated the UNC Management Company Report reflects an overall net return of 6.1% for the 2026 fiscal year to date. Likewise, UNCSCA's investments had an increase with an overall net return of 6% for the fiscal year to date.

## **REPORT FROM THE ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE**

Kyle Petty, Committee Chair, reported that the Advancement Committee met on December 4, 2025 and a quorum was present.

Vice Chancellor Lissy Garrison gave a staffing update, explaining the impact of the hiring caps on the team, as well as the creative strategies they are employing to maintain momentum and success. She introduced UNCSCA's new Campaign Coordinator, Allison Pardue, and the new Director of Development, April Horton, who have accepted temporary contract positions in their important roles.

Vice Chancellor Garrison provided updates on the campaign, including exciting progress on big ideas. Campaign fundraising to date is \$62 Million. UNCSCA's last campaign raised \$75 Million, and the school is still in the silent phase of this campaign, so UNCSCA is on track with campaign plans.

Vice Chancellor Garrison and her team provided updates on fundraising to date. Nearly \$14 Million has been raised so far this year and the projected fundraising total is over \$21 Million

by fiscal year end, which may be a record for the university.

The Advancement team provided updates about pipeline development, encouraging all board members to provide referrals of prospective supporters for campaign ideas. The team also provided updates from the Alumni Engagement and Events teams.

Vice Chancellor for Strategic Communications, Kory Kelly, shared that recruitment efforts showed strong early results through a new Hybrid Media partnership, generating 150 leads in six weeks and preparing a TikTok expansion. The 'Rise to Greatness' campaign entered its third year with a refined focus on collaboration, skills, affordability, and arts economy benefits.

Retention initiatives advanced with the "Take Five!" relaunch, refreshed branding, and campus-wide events like Take Five! Night at the Dash. The new Hello UNCSA campaign (currently under consideration) will close communication gaps and highlight campus life, while a Student Content Creator framework is in development.

Performance Marketing planning for the 2025–26 UNCSA Presents season is underway, featuring curated performance packages, pricing policy reviews, a new season brochure, and early donor presales. 'The Nutcracker' sales launched strongly, outpacing last year by nearly \$100K.

Creative Services strengthened brand ownership through updated signage, newsletter templates, approval forms, and expanded brand resource planning. New campus activations tied to Take Five! increased student engagement.

UNCSA gained major visibility in media with Top 10 global rankings, alumni award wins, and national press for faculty, students, and institutional milestones. Coverage included The Hollywood Reporter, NPR, The New York Times, and national trade outlets.

Digital media engagement remained strong, with over 199K web users, 314K social media impressions, and 29K campus app sessions.

Mr. Petty also reported that written reports were provided by the UNCSA Foundation and the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts.

## **REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

Peter Juran, Committee Chair, reported that the Academic and Student Affairs Committee met December 4, 2025 and a quorum was present.

Student Body President Trey Mazza provided an update on the work of the Student Government Association (SGA). He reported on SGA's collaboration with numerous areas of the Administration including Academic and Student Affairs, Advancement, Admissions, and Strategic Communications, as well as planned partnerships with Community Engagement and Residential Education.

SGA Leadership has been involved with the Tuition and Fees Committee, DLA Dean Search Committee, and the Excellence in Teaching Award (Adjunct) Committee. Mr. Mazza served as Co-Chair of the Tuition and Fees Committee alongside Chancellor Cole.

Mr. Mazza also presented updates from the University of North Carolina Association of Student Governments (UNC-ASG), including an update from the October and November conferences of the 54<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, which included meetings with NC Lawmakers to lobby for UNC System Priorities. Mr. Mazza concluded his report with more details about the “State of the Student Body” Assessment, and major themes to explore regarding the student experience.

Faculty Council Chair, Steve LaCosse, reported that a motion on Academic Freedom was put forth to the BOG by the faculty assembly to address feelings on the new policy. The All-School Faculty Meeting was well attended, and there were several great reports given on faculty salaries, SACSCOC updates, the comprehensive campaign, in addition to other useful information. UNCSCA has passed and approved a faculty search committee process, which was a collaboration between faculty and administrators, and it will be implemented in Fall 2026. Faculty communication is becoming more efficient by using a Team channel for individuals and committees to house minutes and reduce the number of emails sent to each faculty member.

Dr. B. Afeni McNeely Cobham, Associate Vice Provost for Institutional Engagement, reported that she has been working on a SWOT analysis for the global footprint at UNCSCA, studying strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. UNCSCA is facing declining international student applications and enrollment but are continuing to work on retention efforts. Immigration policies are moving quickly. There were eleven students who were admitted but could not come this fall as the visa process was delayed. They are considered admitted, and they may come at any time once their documentation clears.

Clarisse Davis, Emergency Manager & Clery Compliance Coordinator, reported on the Clery Compliance Report for 2025. She reported that UNCSCA had to develop a hazing policy and training for all students – this comes as part of a requirement from the Stop Campus Hazing Act. There are specific crimes publicized on our website, and UNCSCA has seen decreases in rape, fondling, and car theft. In general, UNCSCA’s statistics are extremely low and remain similar in incidents year over year.

Nick Gawlik, Director of Student Conduct & Community Standards, reported that many of our conduct violation statistics are on a downward trend, but we are seeing some rise in Title VI areas. He explained that UNCSCA is working on prevention to keep students from being charged with infractions. After training on threat assessments, Nick explained that UNCSCA is now using a procedural method to decide if students can stay on campus during a threat assessment. He also reported that UNCSCA has updated the Title IX process and has recently moved to a single adjudicator to help speed up the process. Student engagement with Student Conduct is increasing while cases are decreasing, which means students are coming in and working ahead of time to resolve issues before

they go into minor or major infractions.

Vice Provost for Student Affairs, Laurel Donley, reported that Student Affairs conducts assessments every other year with focus groups to solicit student feedback. UNCSA's new Medical Director, Yoland Enrich, started full-time. Medical provider appointments are increasing, but the number of athletic training appointments have gone down. This is attributed to the hard work and planning to help focus on dancer health and safety, which has decreased dancer injuries. Counseling appointments this year are already over one hundred more than all last academic year. Psychiatry appointments are on the rise, but student affairs is working on more prevention. Uwill continues to be an asset for our students in real time. Case management lost a full-time case manager in January and has been reduced to one full-time case manager and one part-time case manager with another part time person overseeing the Pickle Pantry.

Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, Dr. Karen Beres, reported that in fall of 2026, UNCSA will have a new, fully engaged, integrated schedule. She updated the Board on the four working committees of the integrated schedule initiative. The Bridge Day Committee is working on developing programming to engage students on the fall Bridge Days by designing experiential, cross-disciplinary projects. The Capstone Week committee is designing a structure where every class gets linked to a 2-hour culminating experience in each of their classes, which could be used for exams, final presentations, etc. The Scheduling Committee is working on ensuring that students have a broad array of opportunities for course registrations and the SPOT (shortened part of term) Committee is working in careful collaboration with the Registrar and Financial Aid to develop a pilot set of shortened courses that may run in the first or second half of the term. Lastly, Dr. Beres reported that in an age of AI there are many conversations around how students are not writing as well as they used to – but the writing center was able to imagine programming that engaged 10% of our student body this fall.

David Sigman, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, reported that fall recruitment has grown significantly and UNCSA has almost doubled visits this fall over last fall with visits to 14 states with 5 counselors. He reported a change in strategy to bring people to campus by separating the 2025 College Preview Day and the 2025 High School Preview Day. High School parents were ecstatic that they got more specialized attention. Mr. Sigman reported UNCSA's early application volume is down, which is not consistent school over school. Admission decisions went out this year before Jan 1<sup>st</sup>, and each conservatory has worked on establishing enrollment goals. There are several audition events happening over the weekend, application deadlines are January 8<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, and Admissions is prioritizing the student experience.

Vice Chancellor and Provost, Patrick Sims, commended the hard work of Mr. Sigman and his team on their work to establish good processes to help support the institution. He also commended Elizabeth Davis and Sarah Iler, who have moved mountains to ensure all were supported during the reaccreditation process. UNCSA has received the off-site report, which resulted in 13-18 findings that need more documentation. Our SACSCOC liaison is happy with UNCSA's progress, and the School is in good shape for the upcoming visit. Lastly, Provost Sims explained that UNCSA is having conversations and

engaging in planning to build programs and initiatives rather than only responding to crises. It has been amazing to see this transformation and celebrate the amazing work from the team.

## **REPORT FROM THE AUDIT, RISK, AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE**

John Wigodsky, Committee Chair, reported that the Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee met on December 4, 2025 and a quorum was present. Laurel Donley, Vice Provost of Student Affairs, provided an update on the University's student mental health and wellness initiatives, including Take5!

Tamar Pandi, Chief Information Officer, reported that the 2025 Cybersecurity Tabletop was recently conducted to examine processes, workflows, and supporting technologies to identify gaps that could impact the University's ability to respond quickly and effectively to an incident. The comprehensive report is currently being finalized. Additionally, to strengthen the University's cyber security posture, IT is conducting a full NIST Cybersecurity Framework assessment, as well as implementing a comprehensive set of IT Security Standards.

Clarisse David, Emergency Management Coordinator, shared the results of UNCSCA's 2025 Annual Safety and Fire Report, also known as the Clery Report. She also provided key updates related to Clery compliance.

Jim DeCristo, Vice Chancellor for Economic Development and Chief of Staff, updated the committee on UNCSCA's mandatory sexual harassment prevention training plan for 2025-2026.

Laura Dean, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Integrity and General Counsel, reported that one new regulation was added to the UNCSCA Policy Manual and another was updated. Regulation 809, High School Faculty and Staff, adds to UNCSCA's existing policies and regulations, specifically addressing UNCSCA's high school community. This regulation outlines University expectations about appropriate boundaries between High School faculty and staff, and high school students, many of whom are minors. Regulation 121, Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment, and Related Misconduct, was revised to align its procedures with UNCSCA's current Title IX Regulation.

Wendy Emerson, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, reported that the NC Office of the State Auditor is conducting the University's financial statement audit for FY2025. On-site fieldwork is complete and the results of the audit are expected by the end of December. The University's associated entities are required to be audited annually by CPA firms. The UNCSCA Housing Corporation, UNCSCA Program Support Corporation, and the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts Supporting Organization have completed their audits. The result of all three was an unqualified opinion, which means the audits were clean with no findings or issues to report.

Rod Isom, Chief Audit Officer, and Cory Billings, Audit Manager, provided updates on

Internal Audit (IA) activity. The annual P-Card and T-Card Regulation Compliance review was completed, and IA did not identify any observations or instances of noncompliance with the Regulation.

## **MOTION TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION**

**John Wigodsky moved that the board go into closed session to:**

**Prevent the disclosure of information that is privileged or confidential under Article 7 of Chapter 126 of the North Carolina General Statutes or not considered a public record within the meaning of Chapter 132 of the General Statutes.**

**Prevent the premature disclosure of an honorary degree, scholarship, prize, or similar award.**

**Consult with our attorney to protect attorney-client privilege**

**Jonah Bokaer seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.**

## **REPORT FROM CLOSED SESSION**

Chair Pleasants reported that the Board went into Closed Session to consider a naming opportunity and to hear a legal updated from General Counsel.

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### **2026-2027 Board of Trustees Meeting Dates**

Chair Pleasants reviewed the proposed meeting dates for 2026-2027, noting that they align with the meeting schedule this current academic year. The proposed dates are:

- July 15, 2026 (virtual)
- September 24-25, 2026
- December 3-4, 2026
- March 4-5, 2027
- April 29-30, 2027

**MOTION: David Neill moved to approve the proposed 2026-2027 Board of Trustees meeting dates as presented. John Wigodsky seconded and the dates were unanimously approved.**

## **UNCSA Email Addresses**

Laura Dean, Vice Chancellor for Institutional Integrity and General Counsel, announced that the University will move to utilizing school-issued email addresses for all Trustees to conduct University business as a best practice that aligns with Open Meetings Law and

Public Records. Established Trustees already have uncsa.edu email addresses and new Trustees will be issued email addresses in the coming days. All Trustees will receive additional information and instructions on how to access the uncsa.edu email addresses.

### **Board of Trustees Self-Assessment Survey**

Chair Pleasants thanked all Trustees who completed the Self-Assessment Survey in September. Overall, Trustees are happy with how the Board is operating. A couple of Trustees noted their desire to move to a Wednesday/Thursday meeting schedule, but most are happy with the Thursday/Friday schedule. Everyone is pleased with the time dedicated to the meetings and the materials that are shared. Most feel they are kept informed about UNCSEA happenings and issues.

The Board engaged in conversation about ways to improve communication and understanding between the Board and the University. Two action items were presented and agreed upon by the Trustees:

1. Follow-up emails from Chancellor Cole after each Board of Trustees meeting that will provide an additional opportunity to ask questions and see additional information for clarity.
2. Regular reporting from each of the arts conservatories during the breakfast hour. The reports are to include updates from the deans, as well as students. The Trustees emphasized that they love engaging with the students and would like additional opportunities to see and hear about student work.

### **CLOSING REMARKS AND ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Pleasants wished everyone a wonderful holiday season. The new Board of Trustees meeting is scheduled for March 5-6, 2026.

With no further business to discuss, the December 5, 2025 Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 10:53 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:

Amanda G. Balwah

Associate Vice Chancellor and Assistant Secretary of the Board of Truste





