UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SCHOOL OF THE ARTS

MEETING OF THE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

OPEN SESSION MINUTES
September 25, 2025 | 10:00 a.m.
Winston-Salem, North Carolina

TRUSTEES PRESENT
*Denotes voting Trustee

*Graydon Pleasants, Chair
*John Wigodsky, Vice Chair
*Nia Franklin Patterson, Secretary
*Jonah Bokaer
*Jerri Irby (via Zoom)
*Peter Juran
*Trey Mazza, Student Body President
*John McConnell
*David Neill
*Kyle Petty
*John Michael Schert
Sandi Macdonald, *ex officio*

TRUSTEES ABSENT
*Eric Flow
*Ches McDowell
Tom Kenan, *emeritus*
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
Steve LaCosse, Faculty Council Chair
LaTonya Wright, Staff 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
B. Afeni McNeely Cobham, Associate Vice Chancellor and Vice Provost of Institutional Engagement
Krystyna Puc, Interim Dean of Division of Liberal Arts
Kevin Bitterman, Executive Director of the Kenan Institute for the Arts
Angela Mahoney, Associate Vice Chancellor and Chief Human Resources Officer
Saxton Rose, Dean of Music
David Sigman, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management
Shannon Wright, Senior Director of Development
Rod Isom, Chief Audit Officer
Cindy Liberty, Executive Director of the UNCSA Foundation
Melissa Upton-Julio, Senior Digital Content Producer
Allison Pardue, Advancement
Sarah Emery, Director of Development
Liza Vest, Associate Director of Finance and Operations, Kenan Institute for the Arts
John Langs, Dean of Drama

CONVENE OPEN SESSION

Chair Graydon Pleasants convened the September 25, 2025 meeting of the University of North Carolina School of the Arts Board of Trustees at 10:00 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.

He welcomed Dr. John McConnell, Mr. John Michael Schert, and Mr. Trey Mazza to their first in-person Board of Trustees Meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MOTION: Peter Juran moved to approve the open session minutes from May and July 2025 as presented. John Wigodsky seconded and the minutes were unanimously approved.

REPORT FROM CHANCELLOR COLE

Chancellor Cole welcomed the Trustees to the first meeting of the 2025-2026 academic year. He noted that September 21st marked the 60th anniversary of the first day of academic classes and arts instruction at UNCSA. The campus has transformed from one building to a 72-acre campus with state-of-the-art facilities and gorgeous grounds. Chancellor Cole noted the hard work and persistence of students, faculty, staff, and supporters to get UNCSA to where it is today.

Enrollment hit a record breaking 1,385 students at census. The largest incoming class in school history began this fall. UNCSA has also welcomed 25 new faculty members, Jolene Cole, University Librarian, and Laura Dean, our new Vice Chancellor for Institutional Integrity and General Counsel.

Chancellor Cole went on to notice the passing of Robert Franz, Music Director of UNCSA's Symphony Orchestra. The September 13th symphony concert was dedicated to him. Chancellor Cole discussed the upcoming performance season, including the return of the Chamber Music Festival, and both new and classical plays/productions.

Three priorities for this fiscal year were highlighted:

- Comprehensive Campaign Planning
- Personnel Infrastructure
- Reaccreditation through SACS COC

Chancellor Cole discussed comprehensive campaign planning and the first ever joint planning session of the Board of Trustees and Foundation Board that occurred yesterday. Many big ideas were presented during the workshop, including eliminating financial barriers for emerging artists beginning their careers, and UNCSA serving as a national model for art, wellness, and education. He went on to highlight the $5.3 million gift from Mike and Joy

Rave to support the Library, which was celebrated at the reception last night.

Chancellor Cole continued his report with information about multi-year initiatives including the expansion of the high school and his establishment of the Chancellor's Generative AI taskforce. He concluded with a deep dive into the big idea of UNCSA as an incubator of new work. He highlighted new artistic pieces presented at the Fringe Festival in Edinburgh, Scotland and Joe Mantello's Creative Catalyst Fund within the School of Drama.

REPORT FROM ADVANCEMENT

Lissy Garrison, Vice Chancellor for Advancement, gave a brief fundraising report. She noted that last year UNCSA raised $16.7 M, which was 111% of goal, and the second highest fundraising year, only behind the launch of the last comprehensive campaign.

This year's goal is $25M, and $13M has already been raised to date.

She also noted that the Advancement Committee did not meet due to yesterday's joint campaign-planning workshop with the Foundation Board.

Rich Whittingon, Associate Vice Chancellor for Advancement, presented the Chancellor's UNCSA Foundation Discretionary Account and the UNCSA Foundation Advancement Division Operating Account. These accounts are reviewed by the Trustees annually each September.

The UNCSA Board of Trustees recognizes the need for the Chancellor and the Advancement Office to have access to Foundation funds to be able to support the activities of their offices and of the School, as well as to be able to actively engage in donor cultivation, entertainment, media exposure and promotion, alumni activities, and fundraising activities.

MOTION: Peter Juran moved to approve the Chancellor's UNCSA Foundation Discretionary Account and the UNCSA Foundation Advancement Division Operating Account as presented and outlined in official document. Jonah Bokaer seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

REPORT FROM THE PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

Chair Pleasants reported the following from the Personnel Committee:

The Personnel Committee met September 24, 2025. Updates were presented by Angela Mahoney, CHRO and Latonya Wright, Staff Council Chair.

Dr. Mahoney reported that there have been 27 new hires since the May 2025 meeting. Key new hires include Krystyna Puć, Interim Dean of Liberal Arts, and Laura Dean, VC of Institutional Integrity and General Counsel. There were 26 separations since the May meeting.

Internal Audit performed an advisory review with no reportable observations. However, the opportunity for improvement was noted as talent management can be a valuable tool contributing to strategic success and risk mitigation for the university.

Dr. Mahoney presented proposed revisions to EHRA Recruitment Policy 609. This policy was updated to better align with current practices among peer institutions, including shifting authorization for waived searches from the BOT to the Chancellor and Chief Human Resources Officer. The proposed revisions were approved in committee.

MOTION: The Personnel Committee moved to approve the revisions to EHRA Recruitment Policy 609 as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

Dr. Mahoney went on to report that the annual open enrollment period is October 13 – 31, 2025. Premiums will increase in 2026 and rates will be based on employee salaries. HR will hold Zoom and in-person sessions to assist employees making their 2026 benefit elections.

Employee Appreciation week will be held September 30 – October 2. Plans are underway for activities including an employee breakfast, Benefits and Wellness Fair, Flu Shot Clinic, a talent gala, as well as games and activities for employees to enjoy in a carnival atmosphere.

Staff Council Chair, Latonya Wright, reported that the Staff Council meetings are underway for this academic year, with the executive team meeting in July to plan events including projects within UNCSA and the greater Winston-Salem community.

REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC AND STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE

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

Student Body President Trey Mazza provided an update on the work of the Student Government Association (SGA). He introduced his new Student Government Leadership Team:

- Rachel Owens (4th Year producer) School of Filmmaking Executive
- Kiley Mullins (3rd Year Stage Manager) School of Design & Production Executive
- Audrey Shepherd (3rd Year Stage Manager) – School of Design & Production Executive
- Jacob Burnette (4th Year Composer) – School of Music Executive
- Lilly Harlett (2nd Year Ballet) – School of Dance Executive
- Shelby Smith (3rd Year Actor) – School of Drama Executive

Mr. Mazza went on to share priorities for the 2025-2026 academic year, which include enhancing the student experience and student wellbeing, improving campus connection and communication, standardizing and centralizing program structures, expanding committees and partnerships, and expanding the Associate Staff Program.

SGA is currently in the process of updating its constitution and will continue to partner and collaborate with the UNC Association of Student Governments.

Mr. Mazza also provided updates on initiatives and campus programming, the student time audit, production evaluation survey, orientation, the annual safety walk, and town halls scheduled for this academic year.

Mr. Juran reported that following Mr. Mazza, the committee heard from:

- David Mailman, Graduate Student Council President, who introduced the new GSC team and highlighted their initiatives and goals for the year.

- Lila Bell, the High School Student Body President, who introduced the new officers on her team. She explained this year's initiatives and goals and talked about upcoming events for the High school.

Faculty Council Chair, Steve LaCosse, introduced all the Faculty Council officers and reported on the success of the shared governance summit, which included a discussion about the faculty search process and the comprehensive campaign. He provided updates on the next steps the faculty will be taking to review and provide updates to the faculty grievance process. He then explained the goals for this year's Faculty Council, which revolve around community building and shared governance.

The Vice Provost for Student Affairs, Laurel Donley, reported that we are at 92% of capacity in Artist Village, 100% in Center Stage, and 93% in the high school dorms. She went on to talk about the significant maintenance plans, including planning for routine maintenance and building repairs. She provided updates on the Wellness Center and the impact it has on students.

Vice Provost of Academic Affairs, Dr. Karen Beres, reported that UNCSA has 12 new multi-year faculty this year who began their work with new faculty orientation. This included working with the Teaching and Learning Center, writing staff, and others across campus to ensure a smooth onboarding process. She also reported on the New Faculty Workload Report which requires approval from the Board.

MOTION: The Academic and Student Affairs Committee moved to approve the Faculty Workload Report as presented. The motion was unanimously approved.

David Sigman, Vice Provost for Enrollment Management, provided his report from enrollment management. He was excited to share that we currently have 1,385 students enrolled, and the target was 1,370. He explained that 71% of those students are undergrads. He then shared details for enrollment per school as well as the growth they have had since fall 2021.

Provost Sims then took the floor to share great news about the new Integrated Schedule (formerly known as CSI) – a calendaring initiative 4 years in the making and decades of conversation. The new Integrated Schedule has a series of features, including enhanced schedule flexibilities, a comprehensive academic calendar, a new time for Wednesday's intermission, bridge days, and faculty enrichment & student wellness days. Provost Sims went on to say the new Integrated Schedule will be implemented in the Fall of 2026.

Lastly, Provost Sims reported on SACSCOC and the good work our APIR team has been doing. We submitted our SACSCOC report on September 8th , we will get feedback from the offsite visit on November 17th, and our onsite visit will be February 16-19th of 2026.

REPORT FROM THE AUDIT, RISK, AND COMPLIANCE COMMITTEE

John Wigodsky, Committee Chair, reported the following from the Audit, Risk, and Compliance Committee:

Jim DeCristo, Vice Chancellor for Economic Development and Chief of Staff, provided updates on the systemwide campus risk register and alignment with UNCSA Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) priorities. Key ERM risks across higher education include financial pressures, talent leadership, regulatory compliance, reputation, and cybersecurity.

Wendy Emerson, Vice Chancellor for Finance & Administration, provided updates on external audits and reviews. The NC Office of the State Auditor is conducting the University's financial statement audit for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025 and is expected to be completed in December. The university associated entities are required to be audited annually. Bernard Robinson & Company, LLP is conducting the FY 2025 audits for the UNCSA Housing Corporation, UNCSA Program Support Corporation, and the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts Supporting Organization. The audits were recently completed during the preparation of this board meeting, and the results will be shared at the next board meeting. Forvis Mazars, LLP recently completed the UNCSA Foundation's financial statement audit for FY 2025. The results of the audit were an unqualified opinion (clean audit), with no findings or issues to report.

Rod Isom, Chief Audit Officer, and Cory Billings, Audit Manager, provided updates on Internal Audit (IA) Activity. IA's Annual Report on the unit's activity and performance metrics was discussed. Since the previous ARCC meeting, **3** reviews related to Talent Management, Third-Party Systems, and IA Monitoring of Outstanding Observations have been completed and recommendations have been provided to management. The results of the Third-Party review were discussed in Closed Session to protect IT security matters. The audit plan was updated and approved with one new project added related to a required peer review of another state agency.

REPORT FROM THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON EQUALITY WITHIN THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

John Wigodsky, Chair of the Subcommittee on Equality within the University of North Carolina, met yesterday and a quorum was confirmed.

Chancellor Cole reported the second compliance report for policy recertification was submitted to the Board of Governors. The report is posted online on the UNC System website. We received no feedback.

Chancellor Cole asked the committee if there is any additional information they would like to receive or future topics they would like to discuss in the committee. He asked them to let him know and we will respond.

REPORT FROM THE ENDOWMENT FUND BOARD

Chair Pleasants reported that the Endowment Fund Board met yesterday and a quorum was present. Wendy Emerson, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, reviewed the UNC Management Company Flash Report and the UNCSA Endowment Fund Investment Summary as of June 30, 2025. Ms. Emerson stated the UNC Management Company Report reflects an overall net return of 11.6% for the 2025 fiscal year. Likewise, UNCSA's investments had an increase with an overall net return of 11% for the fiscal year.

REPORT FROM THE FINANCE COMMITTEE

David Neill, Committee Chair, reported that the Finance Committee met earlier in the day and a quorum was present. Wendy Emerson, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration provided an update on the FY26 state budget. Ms. Emerson discussed the annual Tuition and Fees guidance and process for proposing adjustments to FY26-27 Tuition and Fees. Recommendations for any proposed changes will be presented to the UNCSA BOT Finance Committee and the UNCSA Board of Trustees at the December 2025 meeting for approval and submission to the UNC System Office and the Board of Governors.

Steve Martin, Associate Vice Chancellor for Facilities Management provided an update on the many Capital Projects (Major and Minor) that UNCSA is working on.

MOTION TO GO INTO CLOSED SESSION

Peter Juran moved that the board go into closed session:

To consider the qualifications, competence, performance, or condition of appointment of a public officer or employee or prospective public officer or employee; and

To prevent the premature disclosure of an honorary degree, scholarship, prize, or similar award.

John Wigodsky seconded and the motion was unanimously approved.

REPORT FROM CLOSED SESSION

Chair Pleasants reported that the Board went into Closed Session to consideration a nomination for Emeritus Status.

OTHER BUSINESS

Chairman Pleasants thanked the board for their flexibility and attendance at the joint campaign workshop with the Foundation Board.

He reported that the results of the self-assessment survey were distributed and reported that a discussion of that survey will take place at the December meeting, scheduled for December 4-5, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

With no further business to discuss, the September 25, 2025 Board of Trustees meeting adjourned at 11:08 a.m.

Respectfully submitted by:
Amanda G. Balwah
Associate Vice Chancellor and Assistant Secretary of the Board of Trustees