

Dear Members of the Board of Trustees,

It is my privilege to bring you greetings on behalf of the faculty at ECU. Since I will not have an opportunity to address you before the holidays begin, I would like to extend to all of you and your loved ones the faculty's warm wishes for a season filled with health, relaxation and joy. Next time we see each other it will be 2022. By then, two of my favorite things in life will have taken place: I will have celebrated Thanksgiving with my friends, and I will have spent Christmas with my mom and my family in Madrid. This year, with all those I call dear fully vaccinated, I am grateful to be able to return to a more normal way of celebrating the holidays. I look forward to my husband's always perfectly cooked turkey and my friend Andrew's delicious pecan and pumpkin pies. I know Dale, my husband, cannot wait for my mom's traditional roasted baby goat. The anticipation of joyful days to come has had me in great spirits for the past 10 days or so. And when I look at us, at ECU, I see reasons for cautious optimism. A glass can be half empty or half full. Today, I see it half full, and I am thankful for it.

I am thankful that ECU has been healthy this semester. As the weeks progressed, we kept seeing lower numbers of infections in our dashboard and higher vaccination rates. As of right now, our overall vaccination rate is 78%. For on campus students the rate is 75%. For residential students 73%. For employees 85%. The percentages, which started if I am not mistaken, around 49% at the beginning of the semester, demonstrate that this community, through social media, conversations in class, appropriate disciplinary measures, has embraced safety and health over dissension and separation.

We stayed in the classroom, as students, administrators and faculty wanted. I consider this a perfect example of how Senior Administrators and Faculty Officers can effectively work together. During the first few weeks of the semester, we remained joined at the hip, with constant communication about what was happening on campus. The administration listened and acted on our concerns and recommendations. Honesty and transparency were the key elements of our collaboration. Happy with this semester's result, but aware that we must remain vigilant, all of us have agreed to meet later this month to finalize plans for Spring 2022. We have the foundations to ensure yet another successful semester: vaccines, testing, masks. I know we all want to put this nightmare behind, however we are not there yet. The faculty has an unequivocal position about next semester: masks for all, mandatory weekly testing for those who choose not to be vaccinated, appropriate disciplinary measures for people who refuse to see that this is not about themselves but the common good.

Another example of collaboration that I am thankful for, just took place in the past 10 days. I talked to you in April about revisions the Faculty Senate was doing to certain parts of the Faculty Manual to offer appropriate professional advancement and more job security to our non-tenure track faculty, those who are not tenure eligible. Chancellor Rogers suggested substantial edits to the Faculty Senate recommendation over the summer. The need to have a fruitful dialogue about the edits and the reasons behind them let the Vice Chancellors and the Faculty Officers to a new way of interacting with Faculty Senate recommendations. I am happy to report to you that just this Wednesday an agreement was reached, and a final recommendation was sent to the Chancellor.

This is yet another testimony of how mutual respect and dialogue are the tools to advance common goals.

The most ambitious common initiative that ECU has right now has one of you as co-chair at the helm, Trustee Smith. The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Commission started its work on October 1st. We already have a rather large stack of literature to review and tentative drafts of possible members for the Student Success Subcommittee making the rounds. I am excited about what the data and our collective wisdom will bring in terms of concrete DEI measures for this campus.

It is quite likely that none of you remembers that the University of South Carolina used to be one of our aspirational peers. I am glad that they are not anymore. I am grateful that this Board of Trustees selected a Chancellor the faculty can trust, contrary to what happened with the 2019 appointment of a president in South Carolina. I am hopeful that the results of our DEI Commission will not become a [“name-change charade”](#) as happened there, according to reports from the Chronicle of Higher Education. I know Trustee Smith will not let that happen. None of us can let that happen, because recruiting and retaining a diverse group of students, faculty and staff are key to the sustainability that the RBK Group consultants talked about yesterday.

It is true that in September we were not able to win the football game against South Carolina. Despite that, I am thankful for the football games this Fall. It is not because I love football, or soccer or sports in general. I don't care about them at all. I am grateful because they have given me the opportunity to get to know many of you as people, not as inhabitants of Olympus. You might be surprised to

hear this: faculty view Trustees as all powerful and distant gods and goddesses. But now, I see all of you differently. Trustee Burt 's husband took me to the appropriate tailgating spot during my first football game. I have seen Vice Chair Poole and Trustee Furr celebrate each play. Chair Shook has taken me to see the game from his favorite spot in the stadium. I have met Trustee Flanning's beautiful family. I can attest to the fact that Trustee Isey knows his way around little kids. Before all that, Trustee Moss and I chatted about our busy and rewarding summer, filled with family activities. And all the way, we have talked about ECU, and we have gotten to know each other as people, beyond titles, degrees, political affiliations or accomplishments. We have shared our common objective: ECU's future.

I am thankful but not stupid. None of us are. All of us present in this room know that we must confront formidable challenges in the not too distant future. In the past ECU always counted on enrollment growth to finance projects. Vidant and Brody used to think that being frenemies was OK. At some point it was decided that ECU needed to be a player in national collegial sports. Many continue to think that divisions between sides of campus are the way to go. We used to be leaders in distance education. We are taking steps toward a more realistic approach to our reality. I am certain that I represent the faculty in my next remarks: we can't map all the steps, but as pirates, we know where the map is hidden and know how to read it. The first clue is quite clear: hire the right Provost. The Chancellor knows exactly who the faculty wants. Trust us.