

2018-19 Faculty Meetings Themes

President Andy Feinstein met with faculty members in each of UNC's 41 academic departments and schools between September 25, 2018, and April 30, 2019. The meeting schedule is Attachment A.

Four significant questions consistently emerged from the meetings:

1. How will the UNC address its financial concerns?
2. What should be the role of research at UNC?
3. What is the appropriate mix of undergraduate and graduate programs for UNC?
4. What is UNC's distinct identity among Colorado's public universities?

The most common themes discussed were student success, financial concerns and UNC's identity. Research, faculty workload and university leadership were also topics at well over half of the meetings. Compensation and UNC marketing came up at almost half. UNC's mix of undergraduate and graduate programs, the Greeley community, and instruction-related concerns (class size, classroom space, staffing) were discussed by more than one-third of departments/schools. Concerns about state support or fundraising were raised by approximately one-quarter. Attachment B is a word cloud showing the emergence of these themes.

Percentages noted above reflect the approximate number of meetings in which topics were discussed (not the number of faculty who addressed them) and are meant to provide a general sense of the interest level on common themes. This work did not follow standard conventions for collecting or analyzing data. There is nothing scientific about this report.

Student success

Most discussions addressed student success generally rather than specifically. University-wide practices were not apparent. A number of faculty mentioned the importance of supporting UNC's diverse student population, including a commitment to serving first-generation students and interest in becoming a Hispanic Serving Institution. Advising was discussed frequently, with several departments expressing a strong preference that faculty, not professional staff, advise students. There were also widely varying perceptions of the value of the Student Success Collaborative platform in advising.

Financial concerns

Financial discussions focused on revenue generation, cost savings and how university resources are allocated. Suggestions for growing revenue primarily addressed targeted student recruitment, program expansion and partnerships with other institutions. Much of the discussion about cost savings focused on fairness of decision-making.

UNC identity

Faculty talked about class size, meaningful student-faculty interaction and individual attention as differentiators for UNC. They have a strong connection with and appreciation for UNC students, who are also part of the university's identity. Comments included:

- Physics professor: "I would teach those two classes even if I didn't get paid."
- Philosophy professor: "UNC is fulfilling a social justice mission very directly."
- English professor: "I really like my students. There's an earnestness that's distinct."

- Art professor: “We teach students to take risks. They’re afraid to fail when they get here.”
- History professor: “I was a first-generation college student and I remember showing up and feeling totally unprepared; I love addressing this when advising.”

There were numerous comments about the need to clarify UNC’s identity beyond these factors.

Research

Efforts to secure external funding for research seemed to be concentrated in a small number of departments. There were several comments about the need for grant-writing incentives and widespread frustration with reduced support for UNC-funded research and travel. More than a dozen faculty members also noted lack of support from the Office of Sponsored Programs.

Faculty workload

There was considerable overlap between discussions about research and faculty workload, particularly as it relates to teaching load. Several College of Education and Behavioral Sciences faculty noted that they serve on more than a dozen doctoral dissertation committees. Questions and concerns about the timeline for filling vacant faculty positions came up in numerous meetings. One faculty member cautioned that the push for efficiency in administrative offices sometimes drives more work to faculty.

University leadership

Faculty members expressed both anxiety about the future and hope. Comments ranged from, “It feels like the apocalypse is just around the corner,” to “People are more hopeful; it’s a breath of fresh air.” Whether optimists or pessimists, faculty voiced a keen desire for more communication and transparency. One professor urged: “Transparency is the way to go; people can see through rhetoric.”

There was also a desire for better university-level coordination and collaboration. “We don’t do a good job of strategically working together toward priorities—across campus at all levels,” one professor explained. At the same time, faculty are looking for some college and departmental autonomy. As one professor noted: “There’s a gap between micromanagement and you can do whatever the hell you want.”

Compensation

Many of the comments and questions about compensation focused on the possibility of raises. Several departments noted that salary levels make it difficult for them to recruit new faculty. There were also concerns about the university’s investment in faculty salaries relative to administrative salaries as well as increasing health insurance costs.

UNC marketing

Marketing discussions generally focused on perceptions that UNC’s marketing efforts are inadequate, particularly for undergraduate programs. There was significant overlap between discussions about marketing and UNC’s identity. One faculty member noted: “Repositioning the university is a much bigger problem than the structural deficit.” While a few faculty members complained that they are increasingly asked to help market their program, most want to be more involved.

Undergraduate and graduate program mix

There were numerous questions about the cost of graduate programs and interest in ensuring that graduate program costs are not considered in isolation when departments also offer undergraduate programs. The funding and role of GA/Tas was also a common theme.

Class size and/or classroom space

Several faculty members raised concerns about the use of adjunct faculty, particularly for introductory courses. There were also concerns that large classes prevent faculty from giving students adequate individual attention. There is a perception (which may or may not be accurate) that too few 65-student classrooms are available during hours identified as prime time. One department noted that its classes offered at 8 a.m. or after 3 p.m. have higher DFW rates than prime time classes, even when taught by the same professor.

Greeley

Several departments talked about involving students in community engagement work and a few mentioned working with School District 6. Faculty members echoed student complaints that Greeley is boring but acknowledged that this is improving. There was a general sense that it is important for UNC to connect with the community.

State support

Almost all of the discussion about state funding focused on lobbying legislators to increase funding for UNC.

Fundraising

Similar to the conversations about state support, fundraising was viewed as an insufficiently tapped funding source.

Attachment A — Meetings Schedule

09/25/18 Department of Applied Statistics and Research Methods
10/01/18 School of Music
10/03/18 Gender Studies Program
10/09/18 School of Special Education
10/09/18 Department of Modern Languages
10/10/18 Department of English
10/12/18 School of Biological Sciences
10/16/18 Department of American Sign Language and Interpreting Studies
10/16/18 Department of History
10/22/18 Department of Economics
10/26/18 Department of Finance
10/31/18 Department of Human Services
11/02/18 School of Sport and Exercise Science
11/07/18 Department of Sociology
11/09/18 School of Theater Arts and Dance
11/12/18 Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies
11/13/18 Department of Applied Psychology and Counselor Education
11/14/18 Department of Earth and Atmospheric Science
11/16/18 Department of Physics and Astronomy
11/28/18 Department of Community Health Education
11/28/18 Department of Geography and GIS
12/05/18 Department of Anthropology
01/22/19 School of Mathematical Sciences
01/23/18 University Libraries
01/28/19 Department of Audiology and Speech Language
01/30/19 Department of Criminology and Criminal Justice
02/04/19 Department of Political Science and International Affairs
02/05/19 Department of Philosophy
02/11/19 School of Teacher Education
02/12/19 Department of Nutrition and Dietetics
02/14/19 Africana Studies Program
02/14/19 Department of School Psychology
02/18/19 School of Art and Design
02/22/19 School of Nursing
02/24/19 School of Communication
03/01/19 Department of Marketing
03/18/19 Department of Management
02/27/19 Department of Hispanic Studies
04/17/19 Department of Accounting and CIS
04/23/19 Department of Chemistry and Biochemistry
04/30/19 School of Psychological Sciences

Attachment B

