

21 May 2021



For Immediate Release:

Since 1992, the Employee Forum’s mission has been to continually improve the quality of life at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill for its staff, faculty, and students through mutual understanding, recognition of employee contributions, and respect for the worth of the individual.

Today, in furtherance of that mission, we, the undersigned, stand in solidarity with the views expressed in the [UNC Hussman Faculty Statement on Nikole Hannah-Jones](#)—as well as those expressed by [UNC Faculty Council Chair Mimi Chapman](#), the [Carolina Black Caucus](#), and the [Undergraduate Executive Branch](#)—regarding the offer of a tenured appointment to Nikole Hannah-Jones.

The Board of Trustees’ choice not to act on the Provost’s tenure recommendation for Nikole Hannah-Jones—a recipient of the Pulitzer Prize for Commentary, a Peabody Award, and a MacArthur Foundation “Genius Grant” (a distinction she shares with Chancellor Guskiewicz) as well as a UNC 2019 Distinguished Alumna—violates [long-standing academic processes](#) and [Knight Chair precedents](#). When the Board of Trustees fails to follow the recommendations of senior University leaders, external reviewers, the dean and the faculty tenure review committee of the Hussman School of Media and Journalism in a timely manner, it [undermines academic freedom](#), [stifles free speech](#), creates distrust, and sows discord across the University that touches all faculty, students, and staff. When staff members witness this treatment of the faculty, it sends a message that the Board of Trustees’ commitment to diversity and inclusion, as put forth in the Strategic Initiatives of [Carolina Next](#), is disingenuous.

We echo the sentiments of our esteemed colleagues in calling on the Board “to reaffirm its commitment to the university; its faculty and time-honored norms and procedures; and its endorsed values of diversity, equity, and inclusion.”

Given the [recent comments delivered to the media](#) by Richard Stevens, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, that a decision has not yet been made, we look forward to the Board—after further review of Hannah-Jones’ impressive credentials and achievements—approving her tenure on the faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

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