

North Carolina State Conference of the AAUP

February 18, 2009

Chancellor Holden Thorp
Office of the Chancellor
103 South Building
UNC-Chapel Hill
Chapel Hill, 27599-9100

Dear Chancellor Thorp:

We, as leaders of the North Carolina Conference of the American Association of University Professors, are writing to express our concern about your February 12 e-mail to faculty and staff, informing them that the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill will be using Bain & Company, a global business consulting firm, to conduct a study in the spring on streamlining operations and finding savings at the university.

You note in your email, “The UNC-Chapel Hill Foundation is funding the study, which is made possible through a restricted gift from a Carolina alumnus.” It is our understanding, through subsequent media coverage, that the donor’s name, his or her connection to Bain & Company, and the amount of the donation itself are not being made public.

The lack of public information—why this particular firm was chosen, who made that choice, and how the firm’s mission and experience are appropriate to helping a large, public research university find savings—troubles us. Your e-mail notes that Bain & Company represents “a great opportunity to bring in outside experts who can take an objective look at how the University currently operates.” That may be the case, but we believe the university should fully inform faculty, staff, and the public about the process, including how the decision was made. We are not dealing with proprietary patent knowledge in this case; we are dealing with how most effectively to cope with restricted budgets—something that directly affects not just all faculty and staff on campus, but also North Carolina taxpayers.

While we are well aware of the critical need to move expeditiously in these difficult economic times, and to use both innovative and responsible ways to find savings and efficiencies, we also believe that transparency is equally critical.

UNC-Chapel Hill mission is transmitting knowledge in an environment of free inquiry and personal responsibility. Its role as a flagship for other campuses across the state is clear, and the model that it provides may well be emulated.

We are aware that shared governance can be challenging in these parlous times. But our sense is that faculty, as a group, both understand the seriousness of this particular budget picture and can move nimbly and effectively in making difficult and strategic choices. Shared governance means more than communicating decisions—it means that transparency in

budgeting and decision making and active, meaningful involvement of faculty in that process are critical to the university's long-term success.

As AAUP General Secretary Gary Rhoades has recently noted, patterns of resource allocation and decision making, which in recent years have increasingly focused on nonacademic matters, have been driven by managerial initiative; they are partly responsible for the current situations at colleges and universities. "Now, more than ever," he writes, "the collective wisdom of the faculty is important. Now, more than ever, deliberation about the wisdom of various patterns of expenditure and investment is needed."

We hope that you, as chancellor of UNC-Chapel Hill, will provide faculty, staff, and the public with information about the decision-making process behind the choice of Bain & Company as an important first step toward transparency and meaningful engagement.

Please feel free to contact any of us. One of the things that the AAUP is perhaps less widely known for—but should be—is its close work with university administrators across the United States. We are dedicated to strong faculty governance, and any university's ability to maintain a sound system of governance is based on a close and collaborative relationship with administrators.

Sincerely,



Professor Martha McCaughey, President, Appalachian State University
Associate Professor Cat Warren, Immediate Past-President, North Carolina State University
Associate Professor Steve Wing, Vice-President, UNC-Chapel Hill
Professor Janet Land, Secretary, Gardner-Webb University
Professor Emeritus Glenn Howze, Treasurer
Associate Professor Purificación Martínez, Member-at-large, public institutions, East Carolina University
Professor Kent Blevins, Member-at-large, private institutions, Gardner-Webb University

cc: Professor Carl Ernst, President, UNC-Chapel Hill AAUP Chapter
Erskine Bowles, President, the University of North Carolina
Gary Rhoades, General Secretary, AAUP