

# The Daily Tar Heel

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## [Opinion](#)

# Letter: UNC faculty oppose legislative, Board of Governors and Board of Trustees overreach

We, the [undersigned UNC-Chapel Hill faculty](#), are alarmed by the interference and overreach of the North Carolina legislature, the UNC System Board of Governors, and the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees whose actions violate the principles of academic freedom and shared governance that undergird higher education in N.C. and the U.S. If enacted, we believe that these measures will further damage the reputation of UNC and the state of North Carolina and will likely bring critical scrutiny from accrediting agencies that know undue interference in university affairs when they see it. Among the disturbing recent developments:

- [House Bill 715](#). This bill, called the Higher Ed. Modernization & Affordability Act, will “prospectively eliminate academic tenure and establish (a) uniform contracting procedure for faculty at constituent institutions and community colleges.” Contract terms will range from one to four years; the new law would go into effect on July 1, 2024. The bill grants the BOT the power to “[e]nsure efficient use of institutional resources, including regularly evaluating and eliminating unnecessary or redundant expenses, personnel, and areas of study.”
- [House Bill 96](#). If passed, it will create a new American history/government graduation requirement for all students of public colleges and universities in the state. In its current form, the bill would prescribe what is taught in this course and even determine much of the content and weight of its final exam. H.B. 96 violates core principles of academic freedom. It substitutes ideological force-feeding for the intellectual expertise of faculty.
- The Board of Governors’ ongoing assault on diversity, equity and inclusion efforts at UNC schools. The Board presumes to dictate what words are acceptable in any discussions with prospective students, employees, or incoming faculty. Led by people apparently opposed to equity and made uncomfortable by the concept of inclusion, these anti-DEI efforts violate the First Amendment and interfere with the unfettered pursuit of truth and enlightenment.
- The UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees’ proposed [School of Civic Life and Leadership](#). This initiative, reflecting BOT members’ proclaimed desire for greater partisan balance among the professoriate, came from BOT members rather than faculty, and it comes with [\\$4 million in state funding](#) amid financial austerity elsewhere at UNC. It constitutes a clear violation of the established principle that faculty, not politicians, are responsible for a college’s curriculum.

Unfortunately, these threats are familiar. In 2022, the national American Association of University Professors did a thorough investigation of [the problems of shared governance, academic freedom, and institutional racism at UNC since 2010](#), concluding that UNC needs leadership that “respects faculty expertise, that observes widely accepted principles of academic governance, that protects academic inquiry from political pressures and constraints, and that is willing to do more than simply pay lip service to the idea of equity.”

Instead of heeding this warning, our leaders continue to disregard campus autonomy, attack the expertise and independence of world-class faculty, and seek to force students’ educations into pre-approved ideological containers. We must protect the principles of academic freedom and shared governance which have long made UNC a leader in public education.

– Jay M. Smith, Professor of History  
Maxine Eichner, Professor of Law