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Richard Y. Stevens
Chair, UNC Board of Trustees
Office of Public Affairs
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Chapel Hill NC 27599-9150

Dear Mr. Stevens:

We write this letter in response to the call for action of our elected Faculty Chair, Frank A. Daniels Distinguished Professor Mimi Chapman. We are unified in our faculty voice in response to the threat of an assault on the very integrity of our academic process. We love the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and we wholeheartedly believe in the missions and values of this beloved institution. It is in this spirit that we are speaking out in full support of Lux Libertas.

It is a matter of great honor and pride to all of us that, as the nation's first public university, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill is the birthplace of public higher education in this country. The stated mission of our university is to "serve as a center for research, scholarship, and creativity and to teach a diverse community of undergraduate, graduate, and professional students to become the next generation of leaders." Our commitment to our founding principles—lux, libertas—light and liberty—led us to "chart a bold course of leading change to improve society and help solve the world's greatest problems" (<https://www.unc.edu/about/mission/>). Our ability to attract and retain the exceptional faculty necessary to achieve these lofty mission goals is interwoven with our institutional commitment to academic freedom. This promise of academic freedom is stated clearly in the Trustee Policies and Regulations Governing Academic Tenure in the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (adopted by the Board of Trustees on April 9, 1976 and last amended September 24, 2020):

"Academic freedom is the right of a faculty member to be responsibly engaged in efforts to discover, speak, and teach the truth. It is the policy of the University to maintain and encourage full freedom, within the law, of inquiry, discourse, teaching, research, and publication and to protect any member of the faculty against influences, from within or without the University, which would restrict the faculty member in the exercise of these freedoms in his or her area of scholarly interest."

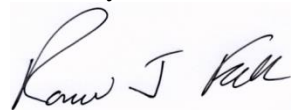
We fully concur with this policy, and we aspire to promote and guard the exploration of scholarly thought and discourse that the promise of academic freedom ensures.

As department chairs and center directors in the UNC School of Medicine, we have moral and ethical obligations to uphold the stipulated and written values and principles of the Appointment, Promotion, and Tenure (APT) process. Our values govern our principles and act as the foundation for the APT process that, at its most fundamental core, is to protect academic freedom. We face complex issues in running our diverse departments and centers. As clinical department chairs, we must provide excellence in health care delivery to the patients we serve. As center directors and clinical and basic science chairs, we must continually push the boundaries of scientific discovery and innovation. As an academic medical center, we must also foster and support our outstanding academic missions in training the next generation of learners and leaders. The APT process is a fully articulated system of checks and balances that requires participation and feedback from Department Chairs, Center Directors, Division Chiefs, Professors, APT committees at the department, school and university levels,

Dean of the School of Medicine, the University Provost and the UNC Board of Trustees. Consequently, our APT process is utilized to achieve our stated mission and values, and has allowed us to attract, retain, and promote exceptional faculty who are invited and encouraged to explore heterogeneous thinking. Many have become nationally and internationally recognized drivers and thought leaders of their field.

As institutional leaders, we must have the full confidence and trust of our faculty that we have assiduously guarded the integrity of the APT process. Without the integrity of our academic processes, our promise of academic freedom is broken and will be tarnished. Educational excellence will wane. We fully understand that our University's greatness is directly proportional to our clinical, research and educational excellence, and we deeply cherish and safeguard the distinction we have achieved through the merits of our faculty. Lux Libertas!

Sincerely,



Ronald J. Falk, MD
Nan and Hugh Cullman Eminent Professor and Chair
Department of Medicine
Founder and Co-Director, UNC Kidney Center



Stephanie Duggins Davis, MD
Charles and Katherine Brewer Professor and Chair
Department of Pediatrics
Physician-In-Chief, N. C. Children's Hospital



Kathleen Caron, PhD
Professor and Chair
Department of Cell Biology and Physiology



Samantha Meltzer-Brody, MD, MPH
Assad Meymandi Distinguished Professor and Chair
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