June 28, 2021

To: UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees
From: The Race, Difference, and Power Concentration, Department of Anthropology
Date: June 28, 2021
Re: Open Letter to the Board of Trustees Concerning Academic Integrity at UNC-Chapel Hill

As faculty and students who study the ways that race, difference, and power manifest in our relationships, experiences, identity, politics, and agency, we are committed to building a vibrant and just Carolina community. We join our colleagues from units all across campus in voicing concern about recent events at UNC-Chapel Hill—especially those threatening academic integrity—that indicate our institution is in crisis and in need of immediate action.

From the UNC Board of Trustees’ refusal to review the faculty’s recommendation that journalist Nikole Hannah-Jones be appointed with tenure; to the statements of a growing number of women faculty of color who have chosen to publicly share their reasons for leaving UNC and the difficulties they face in staying; to UNC Student Body President Lamar Richards’ open letter informing the Carolina community to brace for genuine reckoning; to Faculty Chair Mimi Chapman’s need to call the campus to action, we are alarmed about the gravity of these escalating events that endanger our institution, our campus community and our collective ability to thrive. More specifically, we are facing threats to academic freedom; to institutional efforts to promote diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging; and to the health and wellbeing of our scholarly community. This is no way for faculty, students, or staff to live.

We urge the Board of Trustees to consider carefully the faculty’s recommendation and vote on Hannah-Jones’ tenure case and to ensure it is acting in the best interests of the university, not those of outside parties. We also call upon our leadership at all levels to uphold the values of academic freedom, diversity, scholarly integrity, and public service that will always be central to a flourishing public university.

Respectfully,

Members of the Race Difference and Power Concentration, UNC Department of Anthropology
Karla Slocum, Thomas Willis Lambeth Distinguished Chair, Professor of Anthropology
Angela Stuesse, Associate Professor, Anthropology & Global Studies
Ariana Avila, PhD Student, UNC Department of Anthropology
Patricia A. McAnany, Kenan Eminent Professor & Chair, Department of Anthropology
Anna Agbe-Davies, Associate Professor, Anthropology
Donald M. Nonini, Professor, Anthropology Department
Glenn Hinson, Assoc. Professor, Dept. of Anthropology
Townsend Middleton, Associate Professor, Anthropology
Caela O'Connell, Assistant Professor, Anthropology and E3P
Lucía Stavig, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Anthropology
Francesca Sorbara, PhD Candidate, Department of Anthropology
Valerie Lambert, Associate Professor of Anthropology

Additional Anthropologists, UNC Department of Anthropology and Beyond
Gabrielle C. Purcell, graduate student, anthropology department
Michele Rivkin-Fish, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology
Lillian Ondus, 2021 UNC Anthropology M.A. Alumna
Mara Buchbinder, Professor of Social Medicine, Adjunct Associate Professor of Anthropology
Cayla Colclasure, PhD Student, Anthropology
Aaron Delgaty, Teaching Assistant Professor, Anthropology
Christopher Nelson, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology
Margaret Wiener, Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies, Anthropology
Benjamin Arbuckle, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology, UNC-CH
Lauren Leve, Associate Professor, Department of Religious Studies
Jocelyn Chua, Associate Professor, UNC Anthropology
Colin Thor West, Associate Professor - Anthropology
Dawn Rivers, Doctoral Candidate, Department of Anthropology
Geoffrey R. Hughes
Colleen Betti
Molly Drilling, Academic Advisor in the Academic Advising Program and IDST 290 Instructor
Sierra Roark, Graduate Student, Anthropology
Peter Redfield, Professor Emeritus, UNC Chapel Hill
Silvia Tomášková, Druscilla French Distinguished Professor, UNC Chapel Hill
Amanda Thompson, Professor, Anthropology
Brian Billman, Associate Professor, Department of Anthropology
Rosemary Gay, Graduate Student, Department of Anthropology
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Martha King, Teaching Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology
Ann Norinne Suk, Doctoral Candidate, Anthropology
Paul W. Leslie, Pardue Distinguished Professor, UNC-CH

Cc: Kevin Guskiewicz, Chancellor
    Mimi Chapman, Chair of the Faculty