



Farewell Report to the UNCSCA Board of Trustees  
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## Board of Trustees Final Report

### John Mauceri

It has been a number of months since we have all been together in this room. I know that over the past seven years I have enjoyed telling you tales of my adventures here on campus and throughout the United States and, indeed, the world. I have truly loved telling you of the successes of our students, our alumni and our faculty. I know I have sometimes spoken in excruciating – but always passionate – detail about this great school. It has been thrilling for me to brag about this place and all it stands for and all it achieves. My heart beats faster just thinking about the Tony nominations our drama alumni received this week and the reviews our film alumnus, Jeff Nichols got for his feature film, called *Mud*.

I could tell you about the performances at Chapel Hill that were nothing short of world class, and how UNCSCA was the only school to participate in a year-long festival that included the Cleveland Orchestra, Yo Yo Ma and the Silk Road Ensemble, the Joffrey Ballet, the Mariinsky Orchestra and Valery Gergiev, not to mention the Martha Graham Dance Company – and us: U-N-C-S-A.

And, quite frankly, there are no happier memories for me than the most recent: conducting 90 music students in an orchestral concert last Saturday night in which the very concept of orchestra was once again reaffirmed: the coming together of so many people who are totally committed to performing and supporting each other and with the total support of an audience. Not one of us could have performed that repertory standing alone on the stage of the Stevens Center. Together we all participated in the miracle of collaboration, trust, and support. We were, to put it simply, in the state of grace – and I will never forget it and I know I will never experience anything greater in my life.

I know I could list the changes that have occurred during the past seven years — and there are many. We have given over two thousand one hundred performances during my time as chancellor. We have seen the school threatened by external and internal circumstances that were bombarding us simultaneously, relentlessly and sometimes recklessly -- and I do not think any students ever quite knew – and that is a major achievement of this administration, because that is what an administration does.

When I came here, 70% of the administration, including deans, a provost, a financial officer – were either interim or nonexistent. There was no transition team, only a mandate to change the school. To fix it. To tell its story. To “retool it for the 21st century” as the chairman of the Board of Governors told me.

If it is true that personnel is policy, then you know who I was as chancellor. I have been incredibly lucky and blessed with the greatest colleagues imaginable, starting with George Burnette. And then there’s Jim DeCristo who was the quiet one and became our de facto Chief of Staff and took over all the tasks left uncovered when we were cut 11% in the sixth year of my service to this institution. And Katharine Laidlaw, who has helped us support our scholarship funds when the endowment tanked and it was Oklahoma! and the annual *Nutcracker* that has brought in quite literally over a million dollars to support the costs of our students’ education. You cannot have a school without students, and Katharine was the one who, against all odds, raised the funds that kept our scholarship funding alive. And David Nelson, the provost applicant whose CV looked so unlikely that he either was going to be the worst fit we could find or the greatest – and he is the greatest. And, as I leave you, our Advancement Office finally has a person to lead it, who is not only someone who truly gets who we are, he is also an alumnus. And it is our alumni who must take charge. I envy every one of you, because I can never be an alumnus of UNCSCA – just the former chancellor.

And the deans. Ethan Stiefel and Jordan Kerner were game changers during an incredibly short amount of time, and now we have added the brilliance of Susan Jaffe, Carl Forsman and Susan Ruskin. But, here I must stop, because I am doing what I said I would not do, so forgive me if I have left you out, because we need all of you and we are grateful to all of you for making this school ever new and ever alive – especially our supporters who have stood by this school for 50 years, no matter what.

And there are heroes who walk amongst us, sometimes unlikely, usually unsung, like faculty members Brenda Daniels, Mary Irwin and Bob King; staff members like Sue Miller, Chris Boyd, Chris Grubbs, Jamie Moore and his staff who keep this campus looking so incredibly beautiful and the housekeeping staff: Hector and all those who clean up after us and love us so much, in spite of crippling cuts. And of course, there is Miss Maggie, who cannot let me into or out of the cafeteria without a hug. And more than anyone, the students, like President Nick Correa, who sometimes have to teach us adults how to behave, when things get out of hand around here. But these are just examples of the profound goodness that exists here and inspires us every day.

The other day, I learned that our excellent new Director of Human Resources, James Lucas, is part Lumbee Indian and his Lumbee name is "Service." He is the grandson of a man called "Tune." Can anything better sum up who we are meant to be at UNCUSA than that someone might call us, "Service, grandson of Tune"?

We have kissed babies, attended weddings, knelt at funerals and mourned our beloved Mary Semans, Robert Ward and Phil Hanes. We are grateful to have known them and to have been inspired by them.

And because of them, we have challenged the toxic power of the tribe. We have challenged the concept of nostalgia without memory. And we have rejected the policy of victimhood. I was hired to be a change agent, because the school had to change if it was to survive the scrutiny of our constituency and our leaders. We all know that change is hard, but we also know that if you do not like change, you will like irrelevance a lot less. There were many times during these seven years that I felt like the man thrown off a 20 story building who optimistically opined somewhere between the fifth and fourth floors, "So far, so good!"

And yet, here we are, successfully standing at the gateway to our 50th birthday, with four new buildings going up, a successful summer school, a television series, the cleanest audits in the system, a retention rate second only to UNC Chapel Hill, a 40% increase in our Endowment and judged to be number 41 of the top 100 best values in public colleges in the United States of America.

But, if I were to sum up seven years, it would simply be our insistence on excellence and integrity. Good enough is not good enough.

And here's why:

We have a high responsibility toward nothing less than civilization itself when we take on the stewardship of young men and women who are forming themselves right before our eyes to become the creative leaders of our future. Teach them to distrust authority and they will distrust authority. Teach them to be cynical and they will become cynics. Teach them to work together as

colleagues and they will. Teach them creative problem solving and there is no problem they cannot solve. That is because:

They trust us.

They are precious.

They are vulnerable.

And they are the very best our world has. They come to us with the firm belief that we -- we -- will teach and train, inspire and challenge, prepare and release them as viable citizen artists who will create a world we may not live to see. They are the ones who will carry on the great aspirations humanity has for itself, bravely confronting the faces of negativity, violence, cowardice, and sloth.

Simply put, they are our heroes. We may be the sorcerers, but every sorcerer knows in his heart that the future belongs to the apprentice.

And, as I said at my Installation, that future began yesterday.

I am deeply grateful to Erskine Bowles for choosing me to be a part of this mysterious, essential, and, yes, sacred process, something Gerald Freedman once called "the commitment of the innocents." I am grateful to have worked with Tom Ross, who I believe to be a great man, one who inspires me. There are a few thousand young people -- some of whom are in this room -- who will always be "my kids" and I cherish the knowledge that we are bound together and I will do whatever I can to help them be the greatest iteration of themselves possible.

I love the state of North Carolina and feel a deep concern that those who now have the responsibility to lead it might be unaware of what has made this state unique and great. I hope I am proven wrong and I will always consider myself a citizen of North Carolina and a fierce defender and advocate of its unique history and its visionary and generous people.

Betty and I have each spent more than 10% of our lives here with you, and while there might be a flashing moment, taking a certain satisfaction in what we have done together, it is the "queer dissatisfaction" that Martha Graham spoke of that leads us onward ... Ever onward.

I now respectfully take leave of you and wish you all well. Take care of this place and all who dwell within it.

Thank you.