



A Brief Report Prepared for the
Governor's Commission on the Governance of Public Universities in North Carolina

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Summary and Key Findings

The College Crisis Initiative (C2i) at Davidson College collected demographic data on nearly all trustees of public universities in North Carolina. Early results from the data collected suggest a majority of the board members at UNC System institutions are white. A majority are men and a plurality are Republicans. Political affiliation and racial composition of board members varies greatly by appointing organization (Board of Governors, Senate, House, Student Government, etc). The demographics of system trustees do not perfectly mirror the demographics of the state's population or public university student enrollment. Key findings from the report include:

- The majority of system trustees are men. Two out of three institutional trustees (67%) and three out of four Board of Governors members (76%) are men.
- White individuals make up a significant majority of system trustees. Three out of four (76%) of the Board of Governors, compared to three out of five (61%) of institutional trustees are White.
- Republicans are the plurality of all system trustees. There is only one registered Democrat on the Board of Governors. The House and Senate appointed an even number of Republicans to the BOG (8 each). The majority (64%) of Board of Governors members are registered Republicans.
- System trustees do not reflect the gender makeup of the state population or UNC System enrollment. While women make up a majority of the population (51%) and UNC System enrollment (59%), women hold fewer than one-third of institutional trustee seats (32%) and one-fourth (24%) of BOG seats.
- While the proportion of white UNC System students (55%) is lower than that of the general population (62%), white trustees make up 61% of institutional trustees and 76% of Board of Governors members. There are zero Hispanic or Asian members of the Board of Governors.
- North Carolina's partisan registration is fairly evenly distributed among the population with Democrats (34%), Republicans (30%), and unaffiliated voters (36%) all accounting for around one third of voting registrations. Nearly 3 out of every 5 legislative appointees, however (Board of Governors - 64%, NCGA-appointed trustees - 63%) are Republicans. Democrats are far under represented in the BOG (4% vs. 34%) and NCGA appointed trustees (11% vs. 34%).

Background

Governance of the public universities in the state of North Carolina is shared between the UNC System Board of Governors (BOG), representing the 17-institution UNC System, and the boards of trust (institutional trustees) at each constituent university and the North Carolina School of Science and Math (NCSSM). The UNC System Board of Governors consists of 25 members, with 24 appointed by the North Carolina General Assembly and 1 ex-officio student member. NC public universities have 8 members elected by the NC Board of Governors, 4 by the legislature (2 Senate, suggested by the President Pro Tempore; 2 House, suggested by Speaker), and 1 student (SGA President), totalling 13 institutional trustees. Prior to 2016, the Governor appointed four seats to every institutional board. The North Carolina General Assembly (NCGA) shifted those appointing powers to the House Speaker and Senate President Pro Tempore (PPT) as part of House Bill 17. On November 1, 2022, Governor Roy Cooper announced a commission to study higher education governance in North Carolina. The commission is jointly led by former UNC System Presidents Tom Ross and Margaret Spellings. Part of the commission's charge is "to ensure that the composition of the Board of Governors and each Board of Trustees reflects the regional, ethnic, racial, gender...political, and economic diversity of the state." This initial report, written using data from the College Crisis Initiative (C2i) at Davidson College, describes the demographic characteristics of institutional trustees and the BOG before comparing those demographic characteristics to those of the general state population and student enrollment at UNC System institutions.

Data Collection Procedure and Methods

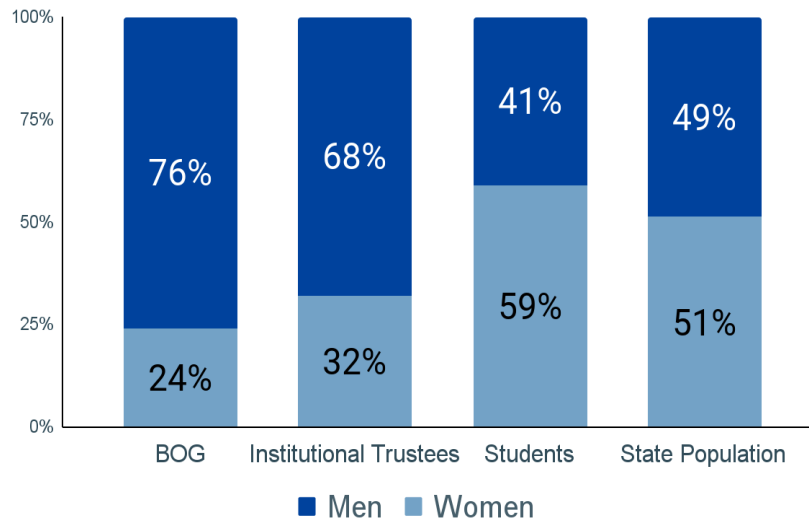
The [College Crisis Initiative](#) (C2i) is a student-oriented research lab at Davidson College dedicated to understanding how colleges and universities respond and innovate during times of crisis. C2i collects data on COVID-19/public health, natural disaster responses, campus infrastructure, and equity and governance. As a part of C2i's equity and governance research agenda, C2i student researchers at Davidson College and Vanderbilt University collected demographic data for 2,029 trustees for all public R1 and R2 universities in the United States between November 2021 and February 2022. Given that not all North Carolina public institutions fit those Carnegie Classifications, C2i researchers collected race, gender, selection method to board, political affiliation, appointment details, and relation to institution for the remaining 143 board members at UNC System institutions from December 5-December 12, 2022. When merged with the data that C2i collected over the last year, the final dataset included 212 board of trustees and 25 board of governors members (n=237). We confine gender to a male/female binary and race and ethnicity to five categories as used in the U.S. Census - Black, Asian, Hispanic, white, and other. Political affiliation data come from the North Carolina Voter Lookup. These data should be considered provisional and subject to change pending quality assurance measures.

The dataset contains information from the UNC System universities and the UNC System Board of Governors. The dataset does not include the NCSSM. To gather information on the race and gender of the board member, C2i used the bios and photos on institutional websites and news announcements. We also validated the race and gender of the board member using the demographic information provided in the NC Voter Lookup database, if they were provided. As an additional quality assurance process, C2i randomly selected a subset of board members to recollect and compare against original responses for all

data points. For all board members, C2i compared our findings for selection method and appointment year with the NC BOG 2022-2023 Board of Trustee Roster document ([Page 25 of the minutes from the July 20, 2022 BOG meeting](#)). When the method of appointment (BOG, Speaker, PPT) conflicted between the C2i dataset and the Board of Trustee Roster, C2i consulted legislative actions appointing members to institutional boards for confirmation. C2i categorized student members as “Student” instead of ex-officio, but they are ex-officio members. C2i refers to members of institution-level boards of trust as “institutional trustees” and members of the Board of Governors and institutional trustees collectively as “system trustees.”

Once completing the data collection process, we undertook a descriptive study not only to understand the demographic makeup of UNC System trustees, but also the extent to which those trustees reflect the diversity of North Carolina’s state population and UNC system student enrollment. We focus on descriptive representation - the idea that the demographic characteristics of representative bodies like the BOG and boards of institutional trustees mirror those they serve, in this case the students of the UNC System and the state of North Carolina. We gathered enrollment data from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) of the National Center for Education Statistics in the U.S. Department of Education. State demographic data come from the U.S. Census Bureau.

Figure 1: Gender representation among the UNC Board of Governors, institutional trustees at public universities, public university student enrollment, and the population of North Carolina.



Findings

Gender

Two-thirds (162/237, 68.35%) of all system trustees at UNC System institutions are men. Two out of three institutional trustees (143/212, 67.45%) and three out of every four members of the Board of Governors (19/25, 76%) are men. All but one of the trustees at N.C. State are men. Only one institution, UNC-Greensboro, has a majority women board. The Board of Governors appoints the majority of women institutional trustees (44/69, 63.77%), but still appoints nearly twice as many men (84/128, 65.63%) as

women (44/128, 34.38%). Among institutional trustees, nearly seven out of every eight House (28/32, 87.5%) and three out of every four Senate (24/32, 75%) appointees are men.

Figure 1 shows the difference in gender representation among the 25 BOG members and 212 institutional trustees compared with the student population of the UNC System and the state population. Women are a slight majority (51%) of a very evenly split general population. Nearly 3 in 5 (160,858/272,868, 58.95%) students are women. Fewer than 1 in 3 (69/212, 32.55%) institutional trustees and 1 in 4 (6/25, 24%) BOG members are women.

Race and Ethnicity

Nearly two-thirds (63.71%, 151/237) of all system trustees are white. Black board members make up one third (70/212, 33.02%) of institutional trustees. Six of the ten UNC System boards have non-white majorities. All of the six (ECSU, FSU, NC A&T, NCCU, UNCP, WSSU) are minority serving institutions. Of the 17 board members at UNCSCA on which C2i has demographic data (including ex officio members, excluding board liaisons), only two are not white.

The Board of Governors is more likely to appoint Black trustees than the House or the Senate. Of the 70 Black board members at system institutions, 44 (62.85%) were appointed by the Board of Governors. Around one-third (44/70, 34.375%) of all Board of Governors appointed trustees are Black. The vast majority of Speaker and PPT appointees are White. A total of three-quarters (24/32, 75%) of all House institutional trustee appointees and three-fifths (20/32, 62.5%) of all Senate institutional trustee appointees are White. The House and Senate also jointly appoint the BOG, 19 of whom are white (19/25, 76%). When combining the BOG appointees with institutional appointees, seven in ten (63/89, 70.79%) of all system trustees appointed by the NCGA are white.

Figure 2: Racial composition of the UNC Board of Governors, institutional trustees at public universities, public university student enrollment, and the population of North Carolina.

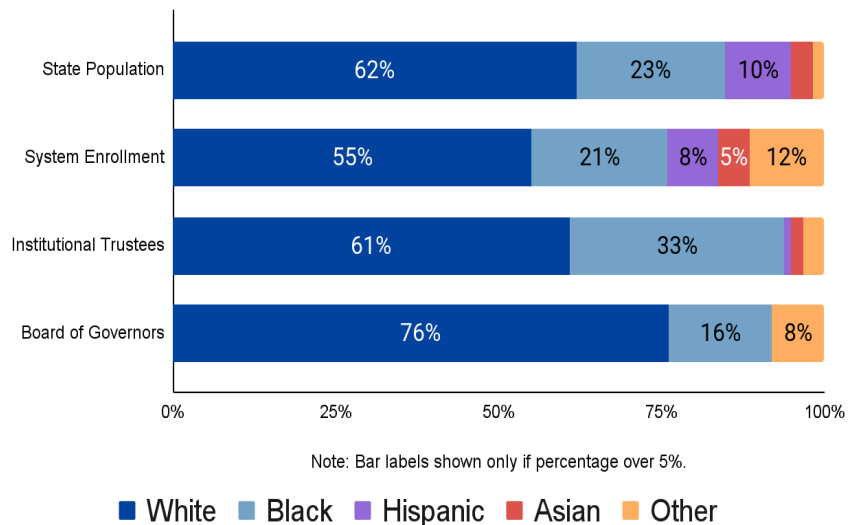


Figure 2 shows the proportion of racial and ethnic groups of the state population, system enrollment, BOG and institutional trustees. Bar labels in the figure only shown if percentages over 5%. While white students are a majority (150,336/272,868, 55.09%), Black students (56,715/272,868, 20.78%) and Hispanic students (21,436/272,868, 7.86%) make up nearly three in ten students in the UNC System. The proportion of white, Black, and Hispanic UNC System students is lower than that of the general population. The other category, which includes the Lumbee tribe, is largest among students. Asian and Hispanic individuals jointly make up around 13% of the state population and enrollment. Fewer than 3% (6/212, 2.83%) of institutional trustees identify as Asian or Hispanic. There are zero Asian or Hispanic members of the BOG, and just two Hispanic institutional trustees.

Political Affiliation

Two in five system trustees (95/237, 40.08%) are Republicans. Around a quarter (63/237, 26.58%) of all trustees are registered Democrats. Just under a quarter (54/237, 22.78%) are registered as unaffiliated. C2i does not have political affiliation information for 25 board members, many of whom live out of state. Over three-quarters of Democrat system trustees (48/62, 77.42%) are appointed by the Board of Governors, while nearly half of Republican system trustees (40/79, 50.63%) are appointed by the Speaker and President Pro Tempore.

Figure 3: Political composition of the UNC Board of Governors, institutional trustees at public universities, public university student enrollment, and the population of North Carolina.

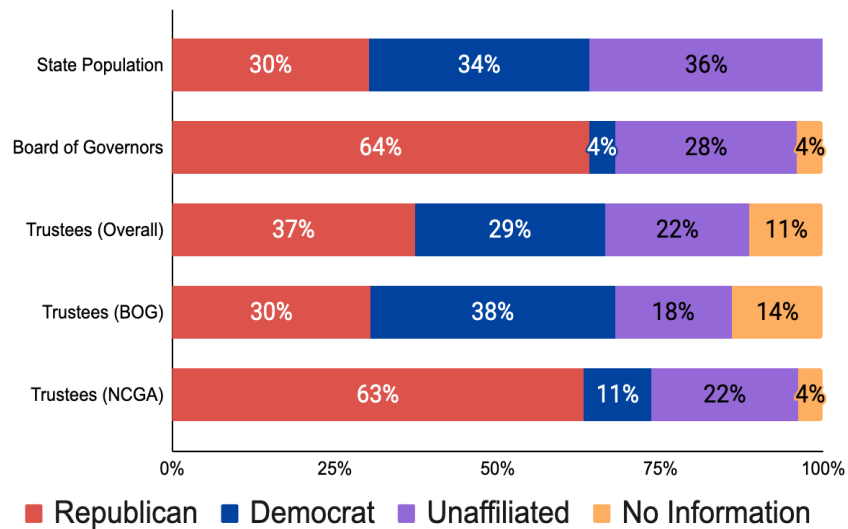


Figure 3 shows the political composition of the state population, UNC System Board of Governors, and institutional trustees. The figure further splits out institutional trustees by appointing body - the BOG or the NCGA. The state population is fairly evenly split among Republicans (30%), Democrats (34%), and Unaffiliated (36%) voters. Nearly 3 out of every 5 legislative appointees (BOG - 16/25, 64%, NCGA-appointed trustees - 40/64, 62.5%) are Republicans. Democrats are far under represented in the

BOG (4% vs. 34%) and NCGA appointed trustees (11% vs. 34%). Just over 3 in 10 (39/128, 30.47%) of BOG trustee appointees are Republicans, nearly identical to 30% of total voter registration. Under 4 in 10 (48/128, 37.5%) of BOG trustee appointees are Democrats, also mirroring total voter registration (34%).

Conclusions

Women are underrepresented on UNC System boards of trust relative to the general population and student enrollment. Women make up over half of student enrollment and the general population, but only one quarter of the BOG and only one third of system trustees.

People of color are underrepresented. For the most part, fewer people of color serve as BOG members or institutional trustees than we would expect given UNC System enrollment demographics and the demographics of the state of North Carolina. This is especially true for the state's nearly 1,000,000 Hispanic people, who are represented by only 2 trustees.

Republicans are overrepresented on the BOG and among institutional trustees. Members of the GOP make up 2 out of every 3 BOG members, despite the fact that only 1 in 3 registered North Carolina voters are Republicans. The institutional trustees appointed by the Speaker and President Pro Tempore are twice as likely to be Republican than a voter drawn at random from the general population. Despite the fact that two-thirds of the BOG are Republicans, the partisan distribution of trustees appointed by the BOG is very similar to the partisan distribution of North Carolina voters.

Dataset Citation

Martin, R., Mirabello, S., Solum, A., C., Marsicano, Christensen, C. R., Buitendorp, M., Thomas, R., Bock, Z., Diaz, D., Francis, A., Gujral, S., Hameed, O., Holland, A., Lagunas, J., Lane, T., Lawton, M., Lewis, A., Li, J., Lilly, E., Mau, D-B, N., McLaren, C., McLaren, T., Moore, A., Munshi, T., Navani, I., Norten, O., Olson, G., Paton, E., Rutherford, C., Tang, M., Tran, H., Vu Nguyen, B., Wachino, C., Webb-Newton, A. (2022). C2i College and University Board Demographics - North Carolina. [Dataset]. The College Crisis Initiative (C2i) at Davidson College.