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Public Forums Feedback & Themes

GOVERNOR'S COMMISSION ON GOVERNANCE OF PUBLIC
UNIVERSITIES IN NORTH CAROLINA



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Overview

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- ▶ 6 Forums across NC to hear the public's recommendations on improving the governance of public universities
 - ▶ Wilmington
 - ▶ Asheville
 - ▶ Charlotte
 - ▶ Greenville
 - ▶ Greensboro
 - ▶ Durham
- ▶ Heard from faculty representatives, staff representatives, student representatives, business leaders, and other members of the public

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Areas of Feedback

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- ▶ Desire for greater transparency and accountability of BOG and BOT members
- ▶ Desire for more shared governance between governors, trustees, administrators, faculty/staff, and students
- ▶ Concern that Governors and Trustees are not representative of the geographic, gender, racial and ethnic, and political diversity of the state
- ▶ Acknowledgement that the BOG has become more political and desire to see it become less so
- ▶ Suggestions on strengthening roles and responsibilities of BOG and BOT members along with changing term lengths and board size to minimize politics and increase diversity

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Transparency

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- ▶ Wide agreement from forum participants that BOT meetings should be better publicized to the university community and general public
- ▶ Participants said that BOT meetings should be livestreamed in the same manner as BOG meetings
- ▶ BOG/BOT members are public servants and should have contact information that is publicly available and easy to find
- ▶ BOG meetings should have more time for public comment

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Faculty, Staff, and Student Representation

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- ▶ Interest in increasing communication between faculty, staff, students, and trustees/governors.
- ▶ Strong interest in ex-officio representation of faculty and staff on boards. This may require a statutory change.
- ▶ Additional ideas for engagement included representation at the committee level of faculty, staff, and students as subject matter experts and more frequent opportunities to provide comments to the boards.
- ▶ There was also discussion about ways to include retired faculty and graduate students.
 - ▶ Retired faculty come with a wealth of system/institutional knowledge and are connected to the needs of students.
 - ▶ The experiences and needs of graduate students are different from those of undergraduates. On the whole graduate students make up 21% of the student body.

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Regional Diversity

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- ▶ Forum participants expressed a need for geographic diversity at the BOG
 - ▶ This was strongest at the Asheville forum, where participants said the western part of the state is left out of important decisions
- ▶ Participants noted that geographic diversity could be attained by requiring at least one governor to come from each congressional district
- ▶ As congressional districts have fluctuated often, participants also suggested using the Councils of Government regions

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Racial and Ethnic Diversity

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- ▶ Forum participants mentioned that the racial and ethnic diversity of BOG and BOTs does not match the diversity of the state
- ▶ This diversity is important so that the needs of all students are met
- ▶ There was discussion at multiple forums about the previous racial and gender quotas for BOG members
- ▶ Discussion mentioned that the quotas ran into legal issues, but there was hope that there might be other ways to promote diversity among BOG and BOT members

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Political Diversity

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- ▶ Forum participants expressed that BOG policies reflect politics rather than long-term effective governance
- ▶ Commission members that have been on BOG noted that the BOG used to be much less political
- ▶ Forum participants suggested possibility of giving some appointments to members of the minority party in the General Assembly
- ▶ Inclusion of ex-officio members could make BOG and BOTs more focused on effective governance
 - ▶ Ex-Officio positions could include: the Superintendent of Public Instruction, President of the Community College System, and Faculty, Staff, and Student Government/Assembly Representatives

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Roles and Responsibilities

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- ▶ Lobbyists present an inherent conflict of interest on the boards
- ▶ Lobbyists should not be on BOG/BOTs, or there should be a cooling off period
- ▶ Better training, potentially through a designated center, is necessary to ensure BOG and BOT members understand the principles of good governance
- ▶ BOG members should visit constituent campuses more often
- ▶ BOT members should be present and available at their campus

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Term Length and Board Size

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- ▶ Longer terms and term limits may allow for more independence from the appointing body
- ▶ Consistent discussion at forums about the size of the BOG. Going back to a larger board may allow for more diversity

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