

University of North Carolina System ^[1]

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by Wiley J. Williams, 2006; Revised December 2021

See also: [University of North Carolina System](#) ^[2]



Molly Corbett Broad, UNC system president from 1995-2005. Image from Flickr user

ACEducation/American Council on Education.

^[3]The University of North Carolina System is comprised of 16 constituent institutions throughout the state that form a multicampus public university. Consolidation of the state's public educational institutions began in 1931, when Governor [O. Max Gardner](#) ^[4] proposed consolidating the University of North Carolina (now the [University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill](#) ^[5]), North Carolina State College of Agriculture and Engineering (now [North Carolina State University](#) ^[6]), and the North Carolina College for Women (now the [University of North Carolina at Greensboro](#) ^[7]). His primary objectives were to eliminate unnecessary duplication of functions of the three institutions and to create a nationally distinctive university. But it was a [report](#) ^[8] on governmental efficiency and economy commissioned by the state from the [Brookings Institution](#) ^[9] in 1930 that gave the final impetus to consolidation. [Frank Porter Graham](#) ^[10], then president of the [University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill](#) ^[5], served as the system's first president, and a single board of trustees, consisting of 100 members, was appointed with full authority to manage the three campuses.



Erskine Bowles, UNC system president from 2005-2010. Image from Flickr user New America

Foundation.

^[11]Additions to the consolidated UNC System followed. In 1965 the [General Assembly](#) ^[12] added a fourth campus, the [University of North Carolina at Charlotte](#) ^[13], and in 1969 it added the [University of North Carolina at Asheville](#) ^[14] and the [University of North Carolina at Wilmington](#) ^[15]. In 1971 the General Assembly passed legislation bringing into the University of North Carolina System the state's ten remaining senior institutions: [Appalachian State University](#) ^[16], [East Carolina University](#) ^[17], [Elizabeth City State University](#) ^[18], [Fayetteville State University](#) ^[19], [North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University](#) ^[20], [North Carolina Central University](#) ^[21], [North Carolina School of the Arts](#) ^[22], [Pembroke State University](#) (renamed the [University of North Carolina at Pembroke](#) ^[23] in 1996), [Western Carolina University](#) ^[24], and [Winston-Salem State University](#) ^[25].



Thomas W. Ross, UNC system president, 2011 - 2016. Image from Flickr user North Carolina

Each of the 16 constituent institutions is headed by a chancellor, who is National Guard.

^[26]chosen by the UNC Board of Governors ^[27] on the president's recommendation and is responsible to the president. Each institution has a board of trustees, consisting of eight members elected by the UNC Board of Governors, four appointed by the governor, and the president of the student body, who serves ex officio. Each board has extensive powers over the operations of its institution on delegation from the Board of Governors.

In the early 2000s the 16 campuses had a combined enrollment of nearly 170,000 students and offered more than 200 degree programs. In addition to an array of liberal arts programs, the system has 2 medical schools and a teaching hospital, 2 law schools, a veterinary school, a school of pharmacy, 10 nursing programs, 15 schools of education, 3 schools of engineering, and a specialized school for performing artists. The UNC System presidents under consolidation have been Frank Porter Graham (1932-49); Gordon Gray ^[28] (1949-55); William C. Friday ^[29] (1956-86); C. D. Spangler Jr. (1986-97); Molly Corbett Broad (1997-2005); and Erskine Bowles (2005-2011); Thomas W. Ross (2011-2016); and Margaret Spelling (2016-2020). Spelling was succeeded by Peter Hans on August 1, 2020. Hans is the current president.

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