

## Adverse Weather Alert - Winter Weather News

### University Gazette

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

# Faculty members Cairns, Perrin vie for faculty chair post

March 18, 2014 – 9:57 am | Posted in Campus, Leadership, Working at Carolina

Faculty members will vote next month to choose a new chair of the faculty to succeed Jan Boxill, who will complete her term June 30. Two veteran faculty members, Bruce Cairns and Andrew Perrin, are running for the faculty leadership post.

### Cairns

Bruce A. Cairns is the John Stackhouse Distinguished Professor of Surgery and director of the N.C. Jaycee Burn Center, with a joint appointment in the Department of Microbiology and Immunology.

Cairns completed his surgical training at UNC (where he was the first National Institutes of Health trauma research fellow) and has been on the faculty since 2000. His NIH R01-funded research laboratory includes three graduate students, and his federally funded T32 research training grant earned the highest commendation from the NIH for efforts in recruiting under-represented minorities and diversifying the scientific workforce.



Cairns has collaborated with many departments across campus, including Computer Science and African, African American and Diaspora Studies, and he works with undergraduates through the Carolina Covenant, Honors Carolina and Department of Dramatic Arts.

An award-winning faculty member, Cairns has received the Edward Kidder Graham Faculty Service Award for service to the state, nation and University; the Leonard Tow Humanism in Medicine Award; and the Resident Physician Advocate Award, among other honors.

He has served two terms on the Faculty Council, including one term on the Agenda Committee and two terms on the Chancellor's Advisory Committee (re-elected in 2013). In 2012, then-Chancellor Holden Thorp appointed him to the Committee on University Government.

Cairns received his B.A. at The Johns Hopkins University and his M.D. from the University of Pennsylvania.

### Perrin

The faculty elections will be held April 14–21 by electronic ballot emailed to all eligible faculty members. Faculty are invited to hear the chair candidates' remarks and speak with them at the March 28 Faculty Council meeting (from 2:30 to 5 p.m., Pleasants Room, Wilson Library) or during an April 2 open forum at the Campus Y's Anne Queen Faculty Commons (from 9:30 to 11 a.m.) For information about eligibility to vote in the faculty elections, see [faccoun.unc.edu/elections](http://faccoun.unc.edu/elections).

Andrew J. Perrin is associate chair of the Department of Sociology and director of the Carolina Seminars Program.

His research and teaching focus on cultural and political sociology, particularly the sociology of democracy and relationships between culture and health. In recognition of his work, Perrin has received a Rachel Rosenfeld award for mentoring as well as a Philip and Ruth Hettleman Award for Artistic and Scholarly Achievement, among other honors.

His research has been funded by many sources, from the National Endowment for the Humanities to the National Institutes of Health. The most recent of the five books he has written, co-written or edited is "American Democracy: From Tocqueville to Town Halls to Twitter."

Perrin has been a member of the Faculty Council and has served on numerous faculty committees, including the Educational Policy Committee (which he chaired for two years), the Committee on Student Conduct, the Faculty Athletics Committee and the Agenda Committee.

He led the effort to address grading issues through Carolina's contextual grade reporting initiative, and he has been a Faculty Fellow and a Leadership Fellow at the Institute for the Arts and Humanities as well as a member of its faculty board.

Perrin has played a key role in the recent reforms of Carolina's Honor System and currently serves on the Faculty Athletics Committee. He also is Chancellor's Appointee to the Committee on Student Conduct and a member of the Provost's Student-Athlete Academic Initiative Working Group.

Perrin received his B.A. from Swarthmore College and his M.A. and Ph.D. from the University of California, Berkeley.



The Gazette asked both candidates about their views of faculty governance and some of the most pressing issues facing the University today.

### *What is your view of the role of faculty chair?*

**Cairns:** I believe the faculty chair must represent the goals and interests of the faculty as educators, researchers and service providers to the administration, the Board of Trustees and the community at large. This means presiding over the Faculty Council and ensuring that all 12 elected and 15 appointed faculty committees are supported in their important work.

The faculty chair must be willing to listen to a variety of perspectives and provide a mechanism for productive discussion and action. Equally important, the faculty chair must support the University's goals of diversity and ensure that all voices have an opportunity to be heard.

Finally, the faculty chair must help create a positive, supportive culture for our more than 40,000 faculty, staff and students across the University.

**Perrin:** First and foremost, the faculty chair should be an independent voice for the faculty. That means

representing the research, educational, service and work-life balance interests of the faculty to the administration, alongside promoting these missions and principles outside the University to the public.

Because the faculty is the heart and soul of the University, the faculty chair has the honorable duty of putting forth a thorough and enthusiastic defense of all the University's academic missions by representing faculty members' specific concerns and needs.

---

### *If elected, what are your priorities or goals?*

**Perrin:** I intend to be an effective, vigorous advocate for faculty and represent faculty's concerns to the administration and the public.

Within the University, I plan to lead continuing efforts to improve and safeguard academic quality and standards, including the new contextual grade reporting system, Honor System reforms and increased transparency following the athletic scandals – and to communicate these successes to the public.

We need to redouble our efforts for racial and gender equity for faculty, students and staff, reinforcing our commitment to carry out all academic tasks at the highest level and with honesty and integrity, while demanding similar high standards of our students.

I also plan to work with other leaders to promote the continued importance of a world-class public flagship university and Carolina's academic activities by talking with the public, government officials, alumni, donors and University critics.

**Cairns:** My top priority would be to ensure that faculty governance is as effective as possible in addressing the issues most important to our faculty members, regardless of their unit or level of appointment. While many of these issues occur at the individual and departmental level, there are always significant issues that affect us all.

By working with the Office of Faculty Governance, I would strive to keep faculty better informed about developments in areas such as appointments, tenure, copyright, faculty welfare and curriculum, to name a few – and how the specific committees outlined in the Faculty Code are responding to faculty concerns.

Carolina has a strong history of faculty governance, and my ultimate goal would be to build and expand on past success to ensure that Carolina's governance structure is maximally responsive to faculty as a whole.

---

### *What are some of the most pressing issues facing Carolina's faculty now?*

**Cairns:** Budget, priority and oversight. These issues not only affect Carolina but all the schools in the UNC system as well.

Carolina has faced several years of budget cuts and is clearly facing the prospect of more cuts. In addition, there is a new strategic plan for the UNC system that contains a number of challenging provisions, while the general education curriculum specifically, and the liberal arts more broadly, are under siege and must be defended.

Finally, there have been substantial leadership changes in state government, the Board of Governors, the Board of Trustees and the University's administration. All of these issues are related and have an effect on our faculty regardless of their appointment or role.

**Perrin:** We face several major challenges. The ongoing budget cuts, exacerbated by an increasingly skeptical state government, make it harder for us to do our jobs. Our extraordinary faculty is a prime target for hiring by other institutions, particularly given the lack of meaningful salary increases for many years and the poor benefits package. We need to increase efforts to reward and retain faculty – before they are tempted by an outside offer.

The athletic scandals and elected leaders' concern about intellectual work have taken a toll on our reputation and on faculty enthusiasm and morale.

We face a political and economic environment that hurts not just UNC, but also the values of intellectual exploration and discovery we represent. We must face that challenge head on.

---

### *How have these issues changed during your tenure at Carolina?*

**Perrin:** I have seen a lot of change in my time here. I arrived at Carolina in 2000, amid relative optimism. Faculty hiring was in good shape, the budget seemed comfortable, and the voters had just approved a landmark bond issue that resulted in the campus construction boom.

Both Carolina and the UNC system enjoyed strong support in the state legislature and the Governor's office.

In the years since, the state budget has been increasingly tight, and the recent changes in state government have eroded that support.

Carolina's response has been largely positive, from the Carolina Counts initiative that found ways to use our resources more effectively, to a host of efforts to improve the quality and impact of our academic activities.

**Cairns:** We are facing some of the greatest challenges in our modern history.

For over 100 years, the State of North Carolina has continued to increase its financial support as Carolina's programs and prestige have grown; unfortunately this is no longer the case. As a result, we have to work collaboratively in instituting efficiency measures and become more innovative to maintain our stature and remain competitive as an elite institution.

The value of a liberal arts education is as important today as ever, yet we are being asked to justify this inherent value with metrics and outcomes.

Finally, the consolidation of oversight in the UNC system is already affecting Carolina's programs (e.g., the drop-add policy), and this will only continue. We have to develop effective strategies to deal with these changes.

---

### *How will your professional experiences shape how you plan to lead the faculty?*

**Cairns:** As a critical care burn surgeon, I work with patients and their families in the most difficult circumstances, and I believe this challenging work exemplifies our University's connection with the people of North Carolina.

Over the years, I have worked with a number of wonderful faculty across the University. As a result, I am acutely aware of the need to share the stories about their research and service with the citizens of the state and beyond. Having worked with professional students, graduate students and undergraduate students in a variety of capacities, I recognize that supporting students and their education is our first priority.

I have spent more than a decade participating in Carolina's faculty governance. This experience has helped me appreciate the value of collaboration, compromise and listening as essential qualities of leadership.

**Perrin:** My work focuses on the ways people try to make their voices heard and learn to be good citizens. I have collaborated with colleagues across the University, and I have gained important skills through my roles at the Institute for the Arts and Humanities.

For years, I have been actively involved in faculty governance. We are very fortunate to have a robust system of shared governance that offers faculty a voice.

During two terms on the Educational Policy Committee, and as chair, I focused on improving academic quality in teaching and led a faculty survey on experiences with the Honor System. Those findings led to

reform initiatives and the current landmark changes.

Outside UNC, I have held several positions in the American Sociological Association; currently, I am chair-elect of ASA's Theory Section.

Consistently, I have held frank conversations, listened carefully to the ideas and concerns of everyone involved, and synthesized those ideas into substantive, meaningful reforms. I will lead in a way that honors that diversity of thought.

---

### *How will you approach representing the concerns and interests of faculty whose work lives differ significantly from those of faculty in your school or department?*

**Perrin:** I have a great appreciation for the diversity of academic work on our campus. I also have the unique position of being married to a faculty member in the School of Medicine. Learning the issues she faces has helped me understand a different side of campus from my own.

The needs and concerns of faculty in different fields and different schools vary, including the valued and incentivized forms of scholarship and teaching; the importance and availability of research funding; and the interactions among faculty, undergraduate and graduate and professional students, and postdoctoral fellows.

It is this very diversity that makes the University so vibrant, so I hope to honor, promote and synthesize the highest quality within each field, discipline and school.

**Cairns:** For me to be an effective faculty chair, it is essential that faculty believe that I understand their interests and respect their concerns.

We have a tremendous system of faculty governance at Carolina, and I would do everything I could to make sure that system is effective in addressing issues related to appointments, promotions and tenure, ethnic diversity, gender equity and faculty welfare – to name a few areas.

In addition, I would strive to create an environment where people's concerns would be heard, particularly the views of those who are under-represented or vulnerable. And based upon my position in the University – professor in the medical school, director of a center and in-depth involvement in education, research, service and outreach – I would work hard to generate buy-in and inclusion for all faculty.

---

### *Do you believe the University is headed in the right direction with its dual commitment to excellence in academics and competition at the highest intercollegiate athletic level?*

**Cairns:** I believe we have made important progress. For over 100 years, tension between academics and Division I intercollegiate athletics has existed, especially regarding revenue sports. The challenges we have faced at UNC demonstrate that we are not immune to the problems that can arise as a result of this tension.

Though our experience at Carolina has been challenging, faculty have helped put in place the proper policies, procedures and reforms to ensure that we do not have these specific academic student-athlete problems again.

It is important to remember that as faculty members, first and foremost we are here to educate and support all our students, whether they are student-athletes or not. As long as we remember this, we should be in good shape, but that doesn't diminish the need for vigilance.

**Perrin:** After a very difficult several years, I think the University is headed in the right direction. I was elected to the Faculty Athletics Committee in 2012, and I am a member of the Provost's Student-Athlete Academic Initiative Working Group, which is comprehensively reviewing all the processes related to student-athletes here.

I have sought to be an independent voice that examines the issue as a faculty patriot. I have learned that college athletics is far more complicated than I had imagined, and that there are no simple answers or easy decisions. We are being more systematic and transparent than ever before. With the reforms that have been put in place, and that will be phased in, Carolina should again become a national leader in conducting college athletics appropriately, as long as we communicate the good work we have done.

We will have to monitor our progress, but we also need to recognize the extraordinary work we do.

---

### *How can the faculty best respond to ongoing declines in state financial support and to state leaders' changing levels of investment in the University's mission?*

**Perrin:** These are the key challenges we face as a university. We also have some great resources to address them, including a phenomenal faculty and an enthusiastic, engaged alumni community. We will have to be very active in searching for new sources of funding for all our missions while never abandoning our commitment to being a truly public university.

We will also have to work diligently to demonstrate the value of our world-class university to the public we serve. That means renewing our commitment to the highest quality of academic work, while making the case about why that work is important and worth people's ongoing support. And it means listening to our critics' concerns and demonstrating the University's value and the importance of intellectual life.

**Cairns:** Great question! It is important to remember that we are a state university and that the people of North Carolina continue to provide generous financial support to Carolina, even with the recent budget cuts.

We should carefully embrace efficiency initiatives such as Carolina Counts while making sure faculty interests are not adversely affected. The leaders of the state are accountable to the people of North Carolina, and I strongly believe the citizenry still supports the University's work throughout the arts and sciences and in the various professional schools.

As long as we remain focused on our primary missions of education, research and service, and we work hard to help our various constituencies understand Carolina's many contributions to North Carolina, state leaders will recognize this value and continue to invest in the University.

---

*By University Gazette*

---

The University Gazette's mission is to build a sense of campus community by communicating information relevant and vital to Carolina's faculty and staff and to advance the University's overall goals and messages.

**Contact the Gazette**  
CB# 6205  
Phone: [\(919\) 962-7124](tel:9199627124)  
Fax: [\(919\) 962-2279](tel:9199622279)  
Email: [gazette@unc.edu](mailto:gazette@unc.edu)

**Links**  
[News Services](#)  
[Carolina Budget Information](#)  
[Faculty/Staff Resources](#)  
[Campus Map](#)

**Next Gazette**  
April 2, 2014  
**Feeds**  
 [RSS \(How to use RSS\)](#)  
 [Twitter](#)