The Chancellor’s Report
February 2021

Spring 2021 COVID-19 Testing
NC State has implemented a robust testing program for the spring 2021 semester, including re-entry testing. All students, faculty and staff who will be on campus for classes or research and students who live within a mile of campus were required to have proof of a negative test result before starting the spring semester. NC State set up four re-entry testing sites during the month of January and provided more than 20,000 tests before the start of the semester. Rates of positive test results for students, faculty and staff were less than 2% of test results coming back for students, faculty and staff.

NC State has also expanded the surveillance testing program from the fall semester. Designated faculty and staff, students living on campus, and select student employees working in face-to-face roles are regularly tested as part of this program. Participants are tested weekly with the exception of groups such as student-athletes, that must be tested at rates in compliance with guidelines from governing bodies like the ACC and NCAA. The goals of the surveillance testing program are to identify cases, allow us to quickly activate our contact tracing program, and help isolate and quarantine individuals as needed to help prevent spread.

Black History Month at NC State
In honor of Black History Month, NC State has planned virtual events throughout February intended to help our community reflect on and acknowledge the achievements and struggles of Black Americans. One example is Blacks in Wax Weekend, a program hosted by the African American Cultural Center, GLBT Center and Women’s Center that acknowledges and celebrates Black history at NC State and beyond. Another noteworthy event is the Red, White and Black Virtual Tour with former African American Cultural Center program director Toni Harris “Mama” Thorpe. This virtual tour will revisit campus locations that helped give voice to the Black experience at NC State. While February brings a special focus, recognizing and celebrating Black history and culture every day is another way we can work to combat racism on campus and elsewhere.

Online and Distance Education Rankings
In the 2021 U.S. News and World Report online education rankings, NC State’s programs are proving their value and making impressive jumps. The online Leadership in the Public Sector bachelor’s degree completion program ranked 14th in the nation for best online bachelor’s programs. This is an increase of 25 spots from the 2020 rankings. The Jenkins MBA online Business Analytics Certificate ranked 4th in Best Online Business Analytics MBA Programs. The Jenkins Online MBA ranked 16th, marking its seventh consecutive year in the nation’s top 20 Best Online MBA programs. A number of NC State’s online engineering programs continued to excel in the rankings. The online master’s program in engineering ranked 6th overall with specialized graduate programs in civil, electrical, industrial and mechanical engineering all placing among the top 15 in the nation. The recent rankings also reflect NC State’s ongoing dedication to serving veterans. Online master’s programs in the College of Education were ranked 1st in the state of North Carolina for veterans and 12th overall.
IARPA-Funded Research
NC State is one of seven academic institutions with three private companies collaborating on a new contract awarded to Accenture Federal Services by Intelligence Advanced Research Projects Activity (IARPA). IARPA is an organization within the Office of the Director of National Intelligence that invests in high-risk, high-payoff research that could help overcome difficult challenges relevant to the Intelligence Community. The project will use artificial intelligence and advanced machine learning to significantly reduce the time and cost of analyzing large volumes of geospatial imagery, as part of IARPA’s Space-based Machine Automated Recognition Techniques program. The ten collaborating organizations will assemble into three research teams, each focusing on distinct but interacting facets of the project: fusing and harmonizing data from multiple satellites, broadly searching Earth’s surface for change, and characterizing the attributes of changing landscapes. Josh Gray, assistant professor in the Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources and Center for Geospatial Analytics faculty fellow, is leading the NC State effort. He will work closely with colleagues at Boston College to lead the component dedicated to searching the Earth’s surface for change.

EPA With XVIII Airborne Corps
The University of North Carolina System signed an Educational Partnership Agreement (EPA) with the XVIII Airborne Corps, with NC State as the lead institution. The UNC System worked with members of the North Carolina congressional delegation to secure $8 million in the FY2021 defense appropriations bill for the “Pathfinder Airborne” program to support this innovative partnership between the 82nd Airborne Division, a subunit of the XVIII Airborne Corps, and the UNC System. The efforts are to focus on soldier-led research and innovation to support the 82nd Airborne Division’s unique mission of conducting joint forcible entry operations and deployment worldwide within 18 hours of notification. This partnership will strengthen NC State’s existing relationship with the military and allow for new opportunities to encourage and enhance education, research and innovation in STEM and other disciplines.

Accelerate to Industry Program wins Blackburn Award
The Graduate School’s Accelerate to Industry (A2i) program received the Blackburn Award from the American Association of University Administrators (AAUA), a non-profit organization dedicated to developing and advancing superior standards for the profession of higher education administration. The Blackburn Award is the highest institutional/programmatic recognition the AAUA offers. This award recognizes outstanding examples of college or university leadership activities that demonstrate creative solutions to common problems in higher education. A2i helps graduate students, postdoctoral scholars and graduate alumni gain valuable experience and explore careers in industry, making them even more competitive candidates for industry jobs.
2021 Board of Visitors New Appointments

Dr. Kevin Clark
Dr. Kevin Clark is currently a Director of Original Animation, Preschool at Netflix. Prior to joining Netflix, Dr. Clark was a professor and founding director of the Center for Digital Media Innovation and Diversity at George Mason University. In addition to his academic experience, he has extensive experience as a children’s media advisor and consultant. Some of Dr. Clark’s credits include: Creative Producer on Netflix’s preschool series, Bookmarks: Celebrating Black Voices; Co-writer on Arthur on Racism short; and Consultant on Amazon’s movie adaptation of Ezra Jack Keats’, The Snowy Day. Dr. Clark holds both a B.S. and M.S. in computer science from NC State University, where he is a 2020 inductee into the Computer Science Alumni Hall of Fame, and a Ph.D. in Instructional Systems from Pennsylvania State University.

Mike Elder
Mike Elder is the Head of Business Relations and Regional Business Development for Novozymes, covering North America. Approaching $1 billion in sales in the United States and Canada, Novozymes which has its North American base in Franklinton, North Carolina, is a global biotechnology company headquartered in Denmark. With more than 39 years of experience in industrial biotechnology, Elder began his career as a microbiologist with the company in 1981 where his career progression has spanned a variety of functional disciplines. In 2000, he entered Sales as Global Strategic Account Manager leading regional industry sales teams in North America and South America. As a strategic account manager for 17 years, Elder built his career on developing partnerships, including long-standing relationships with Cargill, Tate & Lyle, Anheuser-Busch, Ingredion, and PepsiCo. He has driven Novozymes business partnerships in 15 countries over the past decade. In his current role, he relies on his deep understanding of Novozymes’ technology and capabilities to find new business partners and opportunities for the company. Elder currently serves on several boards: the North Carolina State University College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Research Foundation, the North Carolina Biosciences Organization, the Research Triangle Regional Partnership, NC Biotechnology Center Ag Tech Advisory Council and the Industry Advisory Committee for Feed the Dialogue. He also serves on the Plant Science Advocacy Task Force. Elder earned a B.S. degree in chemistry from Gardner-Webb University.

Dr. Kady Gjessing
Dr. Kady Gjessing is a partner at Quail Corners Animal Hospital in Raleigh where she practices as a small animal veterinarian. The focus of her practice is ensuring older cats and dogs are healthy, comfortable and unafraid. Dr. Gjessing earned her veterinary degree from the College of Veterinary Medicine (CVM) at NC State University in 1994. She has been a committed and enthusiastic volunteer board member and an innovative adjunct faculty member at the CVM. She has also advised NC State’s veterinary hospital about hospital policy and veterinary services. Dr. Gjessing made the largest donation to CVM by a graduate to establish the Dr.
Kady M. Gjessing and Rahna M. Davidson Distinguished Chair in Gerontology, named for herself and her mother, an animal lover who once served on the CVM’s North Carolina Veterinary Medical Foundation Board. It is the largest endowed chair in NC State University history and laid the foundation for a veterinary gerontology program at the CVM, a first of its kind at a veterinary college in the United States and a focus area that is close to Gjessing’s heart. In 2020, Dr. Gjessing was awarded the prestigious Watauga Medal, which honors individuals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the university.

Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young
Dr. Chavonda Jacobs-Young is Administrator of the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Agricultural Research Service, USDA’s chief scientific in-house research agency. She is currently serving as the Acting Under Secretary for Research, Education, and Economics and Acting USDA Chief Scientist. Prior to joining ARS, Dr. Jacobs-Young served in several scientific leadership roles including Director of the USDA Office of the Chief Scientist, Acting Director for the National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), and Senior Policy Analyst in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy. In these roles she transformed USDA’s scientific coordination and made a lasting impact on the conduct, quality, integrity, and access to science for stakeholders. In these roles she also elevated the visibility of agricultural research globally. Dr. Jacobs-Young is a native of Augusta, Georgia. She holds M.S. and Ph.D. degrees in Wood and Paper Science and a B.S. degree in Pulp and Paper Science and Technology from North Carolina State University. She is also a graduate of American University's Key Executive Program. Dr. Jacobs-Young is a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS), a Fellow of the National Academy of Public Administration, an If/Then Ambassador for the AAAS, and a 2016 recipient of the Presidential Rank Award.

Wayne “Gil” West
Gil West is the Chief Operating Officer of Cruise, General Motors’ majority-owned autonomous vehicle subsidiary. He joined Cruise not long after retiring as the Senior Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer of Delta Air Lines, Inc. At Delta he led the team responsible for safe, reliable operations across the globe, including more than 70,000 employees in Airport Customer Service; Cargo; Corporate Safety, Security and Compliance; Delta Connection; Delta Global Services; Delta Private Jets; Flight Operations; In-Flight Service; Information Technology; Operations Analysis and Performance; Operations and Customer Center; Supply Chain Management; and Technical Operations. After joining Delta in March 2008, West led the Delta and Northwest airport and customer service merger integration and helped champion customer service and operational improvements, which have resulted in consistent annual ranking improvements from the Department of Transportation. Prior to Delta, he worked for Laidlaw Transit Services as President and Chief Executive Officer, and also held leadership roles at Northwest Airlines, United Airlines and The Boeing Company. He also currently serves on the boards of the American Cancer Society and Business Leaders for Michigan. West is a key alumni volunteer in the Atlanta area and is a contributor to both the Dean’s Circle and Fitts-Woolard Hall. He also established an endowed scholarship for students in Engineering from his hometown of Hayesville, NC. West is a 2018 Distinguished Engineering Alumni recipient as well as a 2016 inductee into the Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
Department Hall of Fame. He earned his bachelor’s degree in Mechanical Engineering from NC State and his MBA from National University in San Diego.