



## Tar Heel Bus Tour

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I was on the Tar Heel Bus Tour from early Wednesday morning through Friday evening. Three different buses carried 90 faculty members and senior administrators across North Carolina. the goals were largely the same as the first bus tour in 1997:

- Develop an awareness of the state's geography, economy, culture, government, politics, history, educational systems, and health issues.
- See where our students, patients, and clients come from.
- Promote understanding and bonding among faculty and administrators.
- Encourage service to the public and research to address state problems.
- Expose faculty members to Carolina's multiple publics.
- Show that Carolina is connected to the entire state.



I feel that we accomplished those goals, and we did it in three incredibly intense days. Our bus of road warriors covered a lot of territory and they did it with inquiring minds and a generous spirit. They also followed my advice for surviving a bus tour —never pass an opportunity to use a bathroom.



### Getting Ready to Leave the Friday Center on Wednesday Morning

Each bus had a different route—east, west, and southeast—and a leadership team with the following roles: host, commentator, logistics, and advance. I hosted the west bus and Jim Leloudis from the History Department was our commentator. Jim's knowledge of North Carolina and its history provided invaluable context for the participants. Our logistics guru was Adriana Parker with the Carolina Center for Public Service, and our advance work was handled beautifully by Dan Holt, an alum of the School's MPA Program. Anita Brown-Graham hosted the bus on the southwest route, and she also did a wonderful job facilitating a debrief for all three groups at Chancellor Guskiewicz's house on Friday night.

It is impossible to capture the tour in a single blog post, and my guess is that each participant would choose different things to highlight and emphasize. I was especially proud during our visit with Mayor Darrell Hinnant talking about the redevelopment of Kannapolis. Jordan Jones and Nicole Furnace did an excellent job describing the role of the Development Finance Initiative. On Friday we had lunch in Wilkesboro and learned about the School's Opioid Response Project. Sara DePasquale serves as liaison between the School's faculty and the community members from Wilkes County who are working heroically to address opioid abuse. It was inspiring to hear from the community members about their personal journeys, and I really appreciate the extra effort Sara



made to get there from the district court judges conference in Charlotte.



Jordan Jones and Nicole Furnace Talking about DFI in Kannapolis

Two unrelated impressions.

Breakfast on Thursday morning on the 60<sup>th</sup> floor of the Bank of America corporate headquarters. We had a panel discussion that was facilitated beautifully by Jeff Michael, Director of the Urban Institute at UNC-Charlotte. In the midst of such wealth and prosperity, it was stunning for most people to learn that Charlotte ranks dead last (50th out of 50) in upward mobility among America's largest cities. For a child born in poverty in Charlotte, in other words, it is harder to get out of poverty than any other large city in the United States. That statistic does not correspond with Charlotte's progressive self-image. A range of public-private partnerships have emerged to try and address economic mobility and related issues. That represents a shift away from a time not long ago when "four benevolent dictators" (all white men who did incredible things for the city) largely called the shots for the community. Our panel unintentionally reinforced that old image by being composed exclusively of white men. Vi Lyles, Mayor of Charlotte, was sick and couldn't attend, and a nonprofit leader who also is an under-represented minority had to cancel at the last



minute. Charles Bowman, Market President for NC with BOA, and Michael Marsicano, President of the Foundation for the Carolinas, did a nice job of describing their own work and they did their best to represent a range of perspectives on Charlotte. It was a thought-provoking visit.

Square dancing in Asheville at the Pack Square Tavern on Thursday evening. This may seem frivolous when compared to serious concerns about economic mobility, and yet it is an important part of the bus tour. We had a wonderful dinner in the event space of the restaurant, and then Joe Sam Queen (a state legislator from the mountains) called square dancing to the blue grass music of Buncombe Turnpike. Joe Sam taught the dances with humor and patience, exactly as he did over twenty years ago on the first bus tour. His grandfather called square dancing at the White House in 1939 when President Roosevelt entertained the King and Queen of England. I cannot recall the last time I saw a group of people having such a good time. Everyone was smiling, laughing, shouting, and connecting with one another on a completely different level. These kinds of opportunities are part of the bus tour's secret sauce that develops relationships that last far beyond the tour. I've heard that there is a video of the dancing, but I'm following the rule that what happens at the square dance stays at the square dance.



Principal Chief Sneed of the Eastern Band of the Cherokee Indians



Let me share something that Gary Marchionini, Dean of the School of Information and Library Science, sent yesterday to all SILS employees. I think Gary's sentiments nicely reflect how everyone felt who participated in this year's Tar Heel Bus Tour.

*I am inspired. I just returned from the Tar Heel Bus Tour and am energized, encouraged, and amazed at the resiliency and diversity of North Carolina people and institutions. Before Wednesday, I was somewhat regretful about giving up three days to participate in the tour but I am so very thankful that I did. Our university is engaged with people in ways I may have heard about but were made visceral by meeting people who serve and collaborate with compassion and pride to meet the enormous challenges of poverty, racism, environmental disaster, and greed. I was assigned to the west bus tour and our stops in Kannapolis, Charlotte, Connelly Springs, Cherokee, Asheville, Wilkesboro, and Eden demonstrated how our schools and departments partner with people coping with these challenges on a daily basis. UNC's work in rural health, opioid addiction, economic disruptions, K-12 education, and natural disasters is truly remarkable. At last night's gathering of the 3 exhausted bus tour participants (almost 100 people) at the Chancellor's House, the energy, stories, and commitment were amazing. SILS plays roles already but has opportunity to work with public libraries, museums, community archives, government offices, clinics and hospitals in many more ways. I look forward to following up with some of the people I met along the way and sharing some of the details with you. Deep bonds are formed among fellow travelers who share common intensive experiences interspersed with hours on a bus together. I hope that campus leadership will continue to do the bus tour and strongly encourage you to volunteer to participate in those tours. You will be inspired.*

Special thanks to Interim Chancellor Kevin Guskiewicz for having the vision to revisit the bus tour, and for bringing it back in a new and even better way. He participated by making his way to different stops along the three routes—he may have covered more miles than anyone. Thanks also to so many other people who worked hard to plan and implement the tour. Kevin's commitment to the bus tour reflects his larger commitment to ensuring that the University is focused on helping address the challenges facing North Carolina. It is an exciting time for public service at Carolina.



Interim Chancellor Guskievicz at Wrap Up Event