



The Chancellor's Retreat

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At the start of each school year the chancellor holds an all-day retreat with the deans and vice chancellors. It is different every year and they have struggled to find the right format. From my perspective today's retreat was one of the best and I hope that we continue the same general approach in future years. It essentially was a high-level seminar with assigned readings and discussion leaders. Rather than have a presentation from an outside expert, we used the amazing expertise around the table to focus the discussion and generate ideas.

The day was divided into the following four themes: (1) Operational Effectiveness: Building a More Collaborative Culture; (2) Health Care: Value, Comparative Effectiveness, and Accelerated Translation; (3) K-12 Education: Can We Provide a Rigorous Basis for All of the Ideas Out There? and (4) Innovation and Creativity: It's Not Just about Tech Transfer. There was a discussion leader for each theme along with a panel that started the conversation with their observations about the readings. These broad topics are Holden's priorities and he was using us as a focus group to generate ideas for his State of the University speech in October. He wants Carolina to become the best managed university in the country, and he believes that collaboration is a key to making it happen.

It is impossible to summarize a day's worth of wide ranging discussion, but let me highlight a couple of points that seemed relevant for the School. One of the readings that resonated with people was a short article in *The Washington Post* called "[10 Take Aways From the Bush Years](#)" by Bob Woodward. It generated discussion about the need for collaboration and teamwork, along with greater truth-telling and transparency within organizations. The School needs to continue making progress in those areas. The Deans' Advisory Council (DAC) tentatively has agreed to recommend that we adopt the proposal to improve our internal communication and develop more team-based and cross-functional approaches to our work. I am glad that the University is focusing



on these same issues. The School will not reach its potential for helping state and local governments without adopting strategies that are more collaborative. I made the point that collaboration needs to include staff and EPA professionals, not just faculty and administrators—I mentioned that one step in that direction for us was to have those folks represented on the DAC. Several of the deans indicated that they had not included staff representatives on their senior advisory committee and now they would consider it.

Two final points. As we discussed health care and education, it was interesting (and disturbing) the number of times that different deans identified academic research that definitively resolved policy questions and yet either was unknown or ignored by policymakers. This is not surprising, but it reinforces the need for an effective mechanism to link public policy research and practice. I continue to believe that the School can help to make those connections. The afternoon session on innovation and creativity included a discussion about how to encourage high-risk research that holds the promise of significant breakthroughs. It was spurred by an interesting article in *The New York Times* called [“Grant System Leads Cancer Researchers to Play It Safe.”](#) There was a consensus that Carolina’s tenure and promotion system somehow needs to give people credit for “smart failures,” and it must embrace new forms of scholarly communication. The Provost’s Office is working on the latter piece this year, which is critically important for the School as we look increasingly to different instructional technologies and online strategies.