

Acceptance Comments for the RFA Leadership Award/Luncheon  
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What an honor it is to be among you today, and to receive this award. It's also humbling, for I have been recognized far more than any one person deserves. This award is especially meaningful because the recognition comes from faculty. As I told the DTH yesterday, "Faculty are the intellectual force of this University, inspiring hearts and igniting minds — so to be recognized by those I respect so much means a lot."

It was a great privilege to spend the last nearly two decades of my career at Carolina, and I hate to think of what I would have missed had I remained in Washington state.

It is also hard to believe that it has been 15 years since then-Chancellor James Moeser announced the creation of the Carolina Covenant©. When I initially suggested the program to the Administration, I called it the "Carolina Compact", never dreaming that university attorneys would permit the creation of a "promise" program well into the future. It was actually Chancellor Moeser who named it the Covenant, pledging that it would indeed be there for *future generations* of students. And that is what distinguishes it from any other institutional financial aid program.

When Chancellor Carol Folt arrived, she then embraced the Covenant as zealously as James Moeser had, signaling that Carolina would indeed preserve its culture of opportunity and care. In presidential transitions, embracing and celebrating a signature program of the Chancellor who preceded you is rare, but we all thank you for doing so Chancellor Folt. (Applause)

And now I seek your forgiveness, for I am going to sound a bit like a presenter at the Emmys!

No one builds a strong program alone, and I am deeply indebted to one of your long-time faculty colleagues—the late Fred Clark, professor of Romance languages and an academic Dean in the College of Arts and Sciences— who brought the human touch to the program. Early on we recognized that the Covenant needed to be as much personal and academic support services as it was about money. Fred was hired as the Faculty Academic Coordinator for the Carolina Covenant, a role in which he thrived (as did the program) for over a decade. Four years ago this very day we celebrated Fred’s life in Memorial Hall, so it seems only fitting that we remember him here today.

There are three other “boots on the ground” colleagues from the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid that I want to recognize as well: Ann Trollinger, Michael Highland, and Frank Kessler. Michael and Ann are here with me today. These three individuals have spent countless hours with students over the years, listening and problem solving, and conveying their absolute belief in students. I owe my deepest gratitude to each of them.

Since the start of the program nearly 7,000 undergraduates have been named as Carolina Covenant Scholars. Their achievements are remarkable, and now they are creating lives for themselves with greater economic security than that which they knew growing up. They excel in all academic fields, but today I will highlight three students – one in Science, one in the Arts, and one in Medicine.

**MAX WOLPERT**, from Durham, graduated in 2014 with distinction in Bio Chemistry and Hispanic Languages. In fact, he is proficient

in four languages, including Mandarin Chinese. I first met Max through Professor Pat Pukkila's HHMI grant for future scientists. And a future scientist he is! Max has already earned an MA in the Cognitive Neuroscience of Languages and is currently enrolled as a second-year doctoral student in Neurosciences at McGill University.

Hailing from Huntington, West Virginia, **VICTORIA WILBURN**, who graduated in 2011, told me over lunch at the Carolina Coffee Shop one day that she never could have enrolled at Carolina were it not for the Covenant. After all, out of state tuition, even then, was quite a burden. After graduating with a BA in Communications/Media Studies and Production, Victoria went on to earn an MA at the University of Southern California's prestigious School of Cinematic Arts. Today, Victoria is an accomplished business operations manager who has worked her way up through the ranks of the LA entertainment industry (including time at Creative Artists Agency [CAA], Sony Pictures Entertainment, CBS Films, Fullscreen and New Form) both as a manager and an artist. Victoria says she is "now fulfilling her dream by using that experience to produce music that empowers people to be their best selves", while simultaneously operating with a business-minded approach. Her album, *PhilosoV*, came out January 1, 2018 and is available to stream and download on all digital platforms. I did so, and it's really quite good (though I'm not much of an authority on rap)!

And last, there is **ALISA EANES** from Monroe, NC. I first met Alisa in 2006 as she was transferring in from Wilmington. She was in a long line in our office on one very hot day in August, and I was trying to alleviate my stress by "working the line" and talking to students. Graduating in our first Covenant class in 2008, Alisa

earned a BA from UNC in Women's Studies, but had her sights set on a career in Medicine. Under the tutelage of Dr. Charlie Van der Horst, Alisa was soon admitted to UNC's School of Medicine, and graduated in 2015. When applying across the country for her residency Alisa told me how much she hoped for a "match" closer to home, stating: "Wouldn't it be cool if, after all of this taxpayer support, I could give back to the residents of the state of North Carolina?" Well, she is now in her third year as a Resident Physician at MAHEC OB/GYN in Asheville fully using both her Women's Studies degree and her medical school education from Carolina. Indeed, Alisa is giving back!

On my final day of work Friday, July 29, 2016, I wrote my last official email addressed to my supervisor Vice Provost Steve Farmer (who, by the way, always gave me incredible support), Professors Don Hornstein and Brian Hogan, Vice Chancellor David Routh, and Chancellor Carol Folt.

It read:

**"Dear friends –**

**Today (my last day) my work feels nearly finished here. It is a good feeling.**

**With regard to the Covenant –**

**I leave its *guardianship* to Steve Farmer;  
the *voice* of the program to professors Don Hornstein and Brian Hogan;  
its *solvency* with David Routh and our friends [in development];**

**and the *heart* of the program with Chancellor Folt (who has been steadfast in her support)."**

To which the Chancellor so kindly replied:

**"Your lovely words remind us all of the profound legacy of hope that will live on in the Covenant, through the thousands of those who have been a part of it and the thousands more who will be one day."**

The vision holds and the Covenant remains in all of their very capable hands, though there is a growing and critical need for private funds in order to sustain it.

In closing — as educators, we often hope to have some lasting impact on our students. And rarely do now know what we have accomplished until many years later. But I am one of the lucky ones for I saw the fruits of our labors every day, in tangible joyful ways. And through a multitude of student testimonials, we *know* the Carolina Covenant changes lives.

That makes me one lucky woman, and doubly so now to be recognized again for my *introductory part* in this grand enduring effort called the Carolina Covenant.

Thank you.