The External Affairs committee met on Thursday, October 14 at 1:00 p.m. The following board members were present: Agnes Beane, Robert Fensom, Holly Grange, Gidget Kidd, Yousry Sayed, and Jimmy Tate. Chairman Tate called the meeting to order, welcomed trustees and read the required statement of ethics. No conflicts were identified. Chairman Tate called for a motion to approve the minutes from the last committee meeting. Holly Grange motioned to approve. Agnes Beane seconded. The minutes from the July 15, 2021 meeting were approved.

Mark Lanier, assistant to the chancellor, provided a legislative report. Since our July meeting, at the federal level, the focus has been passing the increased debt ceiling and discussions regarding the “hard” infrastructure bill and the larger budget reconciliation bill. If it does go forward, we are most interested in whether it contains advanced refunding of debt obligations, which potentially could save UNCW millions in interest costs. Also, UNCW is working with the NC Biotechnology Center and other partners on a grant proposal for the US Economic Development Administration’s Build Back Better Regional Challenge, focused on enhancing the biopharmaceutical workforce in southeastern North Carolina.

At the state level, the Senate and the House passed different versions of the budget, resulting in a proposed conference report for SB105 reflecting priorities of both chambers. Predictably, the Governor’s first counteroffer to the proposed conference report included his full priorities, which was not acceptable to legislative leadership. The options are being discussed with the majority caucuses in both chambers. None of the priorities for higher education are in controversy. There is agreement on the top university priorities of full enrollment increase funding, building reserves for Connect NC bond projects (for UNCW, Veterans Hall), and for salary increases that are the same as other state employees (currently slated to be 2% in each year of the biennium, or 4% total, plus a possible one-time bonus). If an agreement on the overall budget is impossible, the legislature might pass the conference report as is, let the Governor veto it, then try to override the veto. Another option might be mini-budgets, including one that focuses on higher education priorities and possibly another one on capital projects. In the meantime, the legislature has moved on to redrawing districts based on the 2020 census results. However, the leadership continues to work with the Governor’s office to try to find an acceptable budget compromise.

Eddie Stuart, vice chancellor for university advancement, provided an Advancement and Campaign update reporting that the university received over $3.1M in gifts and commitments this fiscal year, and the Campaign total is currently $92M. Eddie shared that the campaign gala was rescheduled for March 2022 and will be a celebration of philanthropy. UNCW has established two new diversity scholarships, and advancement hosted four parent council socials this semester. Eddie announced the hire of a new Director of Advancement Communications and Development Officer for Diversity Initiatives, a new position within advancement. Eddie said that plans are underway for homecoming celebrations in February 2022.

Mr. Stuart then called on Andrea Weaver to share the PBS North Carolina feature video on the UNCW Coastal Engineering program. Next, Eddie called on the Director of Alumni Relations, Lindsay LeRoy, to share some information about the profile of the UNCW alumni base. UNCW will soon surpass over 100,000 alumni. Lindsay shared that the alumni association serves to connect alumni to the university, and informs alumni of opportunities to engage with UNCW. There were no questions for Lindsay LeRoy and Eddie Stuart.
Chair Tate welcomed the new members to the advancement team, and thanked Eddie for his commitments and the advancement team for their hard work. Chair Tate said he stands ready to help with the diversity scholarship, and was impressed with the team's creativity.

There was no old business or new business to report.

Lastly, Robby Fensom made a motion to go into closed session to prevent the disclosure of honorary degree, scholarship, prize, or similar award. Holly Grange seconded the motion. The committee voted unanimously for closed session. The group discussed the item and voted to go back into open session. In open session, Robby Fensom made a motion to approve. Agnes Beane seconded and the committee approved the item as presented to take to the full board. Chairman Tate announced that the afternoon board reception will showcase the grand opening of the University Film Center and adjourned the meeting at 1:55 p.m.