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New UNC chancellor reconfirms NCRC commitment

By [Ben McNeely](#) | Independent Tribune

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KANNAPOLIS - Drumming up support - financial and otherwise - the new chancellor of UNC-Chapel Hill reconfirmed his institution's commitment to the North Carolina Research Campus.

Chancellor Holden Thorp told a group of 50 people at the UNC Nutrition Research Institute that UNC-Chapel Hill would build the NRI into a world-class nutrition institute, on par with the Howard Hughes Institute and Pasteur Institute in Paris, France.

"We know that higher education is the linchpin in our society," Thorp said. "We are going to have to innovate our way out of our current situation. And we need the funding and in-kind support to ensure the success of the NRI. State funding is not enough."

Thorp's visit highlights the next phase of the research campus' evolution: Attracting the faculty and investment to grow the project to its full potential.

For UNC-Chapel Hill, they have recruited former Gov. Jim Martin to chair the NRI's board of advisors, which is made up of business and academic leaders in the Charlotte metro region.

"We want the major corporations in Charlotte to be aware of what is going on here in Kannapolis," Martin said. "The challenge is growing in a down market. You don't have to launch the rocket, but you do have to attract the talented faculty here."

The opening of the Core Research Laboratory in October was the beginning of the next phase in the project. Equipped with the best scientific instruments in the world, campus leaders are hoping it will attract the best scientific minds.

But the economy is a factor, said Steve Leath, president of the Murdock Research Institute and vice president for research of the UNC system.

"We are very concerned about the state budget in the spring," he said. "We're going to make the request for faculty salary support. But it's difficult for anybody to get any increases."

Leath said the UNC system will request about \$10 million more in recurring funding for its seven research institutes at the research campus. He also said they have hired about one-quarter of the 50 faculty members the public university system wants at the campus.

This is all part of the system's five-year start-up plan for the campus, he said.

"We hope we get that money," Leath said. "We are very concerned about the state budget."

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