

Statement on no-confidence vote

1. The conditions inside Poe Hall have been the [subject of complaints](#) from faculty and staff for over a decade.
2. In September, the University received a letter from the NC Department of Labor alleging the presence of asbestos and PCBs in Poe Hall. The letter stated, “You are requested to post a copy of this letter and your response to it where it will be readily accessible for review by your employees.” Instead of emailing a copy to all employees in the building, the letter was posted on a bulletin board, lost amongst all the other notices. This cannot be considered “readily accessible for review.” We did not learn about this letter until a [news report](#) on November 20th.
3. In October, the CED Assistant Dean of Operations and the Head of Occupational Medicine from Campus Health began covertly collecting cancer data from selected Poe Hall faculty to investigate a potential cancer cluster in the building, without informing all faculty and staff about the possibility of a cancer cluster in Poe. We did not learn about this until a [news report](#) on November 28th.
4. Faculty were told during an online meeting on November 21st to remove materials from their offices to ensure mission continuity. Despite repeated questioning from faculty, Dean Sztajn and the Director of Emergency Preparedness refused to answer questions as to whether materials from Poe Hall were safe to bring into our homes. Faculty and staff were forced to make an agonizing decision: stay safe and leave materials in our offices that were needed for our teaching and research, or retrieve the materials and potentially expose ourselves and our family members to toxic contaminants. We did not receive guidance from the University on how to clean these items until a month later, on December 18th, after many faculty and staff had already brought items home from Poe Hall.
5. The initial testing results from Poe Hall were released on December 20th. The [testing documents](#) showed that samples were taken beginning in mid-October and that the University *typically received the results within a week or less*. Many of us repeatedly requested these test results, but the University refused to release them. The University waited several weeks to release the initial testing results and only did so after WRAL threatened legal action.
6. The University waited until the day before the winter holiday break began to release the initial testing results, in a deliberate move to minimize the impact of their release. Rather than post them on the University website or provide them to faculty and staff directly, they were only released to the reporters and individuals who had filed Open Records requests. As such, most of us had to rely on [news reports](#) to find out about the initial results. To date, the University has not provided any context for anxious faculty and staff trying to interpret the test results and wondering what they meant for our health. We had to discover, via [additional news reports](#), that the levels of PCBs found in the initial testing were up to *38 times higher than EPA standards*.
7. Despite her knowledge of items 1 through 6 and the dangers in the building, Dean Sztajn continued with her plans to require staff to work in the building until Poe Hall was shut down. (For example, from her *Notes From My Desk* dated December 12th: “With changes in the University’s HR system related to Flexible Work Arrangements (FWA), we updated all staff work schedules with the goal of building our on-campus community. *We began implementing this shift on Oct. 15* [emphasis added]; then, Poe Hall closed.”)

8. A recent [news report](#) shows that the University is preventing the Centers for Disease Control from conducting an investigation into the contamination of Poe Hall. This is in stark contrast with UNC Hospitals, which is [cooperating with the CDC](#) to investigate their cancer cluster.

9. That same recent [news report](#) cites 40 cancer cases have occurred in Poe Hall. WRAL reporter Keely Arthur told me today that *the number of cancer cases has now climbed to 50*. Given that Arthur was able to determine there were 50 cases only by contacting individuals who are currently faculty members, the true number will likely be *much* higher when former graduate students and former employees who worked in Poe Hall are systematically counted.

10. It has been 11 weeks since Poe Hall was closed and given the quick turnaround time for the initial testing results in October, it has become clear that the University is once again refusing to release testing results to the University community.

Therefore, given that:

- University and College leadership have shared almost no information with us;
- Faculty and staff have had to rely on news reports to understand what is happening at Poe Hall;
- Questions about what this means for our health have been completely ignored by University and College leadership during the past few months;
- University and College leadership have focused solely on mission continuity, and
- The University is preventing the federal government from investigating the contamination of Poe Hall and the cancer cluster, which numbers at least 50 people,

I call for votes of no-confidence in Chancellor Woodson, Provost Arden, and Dean Sztajn.

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