

Finding the Answers...

Chancellor Hooker Speaks with the Black Student Movement

By Courtney McSwain

On November 11, Chancellor Michael Hooker attended the general body meeting of the Black Student Movement to engage in a question and answer forum. Hooker stated that his goal in coming to the BSM meeting was to “visibly symbolize the support of the chancellor and his administration for the mission of the BSM.” The members of BSM took advantage of this opportunity to speak to Hooker, seeking answers concerning issues ranging from the administration’s responsiveness to the BSM’s 22 Demands, to the chancellor’s views on the recent homecoming king and queen elections controversy.

In order to respond to questions concerning the 22 Demands, Hooker had on hand several faculty members including Susan Kitchen, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs, Susan Ehringhaus from the University Counsel, and Harold Wallace, Special Assistant to Minority Affairs and BSM faculty advisor. While several demands have been met, such as the proclamation of November as Black Student Movement month, Ehringhaus explained that many of the demands have to be further investigated due to legal mandates. For example, the tenth demand which states that “The Pogue Scholarship remain separate from all other merit-based scholarship applications.” The demand poses legal conflicts because of a precedent set by the Court of Appeals. The University of Maryland attempted to defend a scholarship similar to the Pogue that was restricted to minority students. The Court of Appeals declared this unconstitutional and according to Ehringhaus

provided the “defining moment of what UNC could and could not do in respect to admissions and scholarships.” Chancellor Hooker and Ehringhaus both stated similar legality conflicts with respect to other demands by the BSM. Hooker stated that the challenge to his administration was to find “where we can continue to increase the ratio of Blacks in the student body and faculty, consistent with the law.”

“I fret about that [racial tensions] more than anything else because I don’t know what to do. I don’t have magic answers.”

-Chancellor Michael Hooker

Moving from questions regarding the 22 Demands to concerns about racial tensions on campus, several BSM members addressed the recent homecoming king and queen elections controversy and its coverage by the Daily Tar Heel. Admitting that he did not read the DTH and was unaware of the specific problems that occurred, the chancellor offered little insight to the recent problem. Hooker stated that he felt the situation “was a student issue” and had little to do with the administration. Obviously disappointed with this response, BSM members challenged Chancellor Hooker to read the DTH in order to realize the focus of campus concerns. Offering more comments on the homecoming elections, Kitchen, whom Hooker relies on as his

“primary liaison with the students,” spoke on the need for a dialogue to address the specific details of the controversy. She felt that the elections’ conflict was “indicative of some of the tensions that are here” on campus. Along with Kitchen, Chancellor Hooker also stressed the need for open dialogue when asked what the administration was doing to alleviate racial tensions. Hooker expressed the importance of engaging in healthy communication in order to “confront openly issues that we find difficult to speak about.” Despite his advocacy for dialogue, the chancellor offered no specific examples of what the administration was doing to help ease racial tensions on campus. “I fret about that [racial tensions] more than anything else,” Hooker stated, “because I don’t know what to do. I don’t have magic answers.” The need for answers left some members at the BSM meeting unsatisfied. Stacy Edwards, a freshman general body member of the BSM, stated, “I felt that Chancellor Hooker went around the questions rather than directly answering them.” This reluctance to directly address issues has been a barrier for the leaders of the BSM in their dealings with Hooker. Tamara Bailey, BSM president, stated that she was “glad the members could see what we’re dealing with.” Members of the BSM should not get the impression that their leaders are not working hard to make progress on the issues that were addressed at the meeting. They know that working with the administration is something that the leaders of the BSM must continue to do in order to reach the goals of the organization. ☀