



THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

Peter Hans | President | 223 S. West Street, Suite 1800 | Raleigh, NC 27603 | president@northcarolina.edu

April 1, 2025

The Honorable David Rouzer
2333 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Letter of Support for the UNC Pembroke's Preservation of Old Main

Dear Representative Rouzer:

As the President of the University of North Carolina System, I write to ask for your support of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke's funding request to renovate a historic building on its campus. UNC Pembroke is a vital and unique institution within the UNC System, embodying a rich and inspiring history of American Indian education and pride. Its proposal to revitalize and preserve Old Main is a critical piece of that history.

Old Main was built in 1923 as the main building of the Croatan Normal School. The school was founded in 1887 by the Lumbee Tribe, the largest state-recognized tribe in North Carolina and the largest tribe east of the Mississippi River. The Lumbee believed in the right to education and the school served as a beacon of hope and opportunity for generations of American Indian students during segregation. Between 1939 and 1953, it was the only state-supported four-year college for Indians in the nation.

Old Main stands as a testament to the resilience and enduring spirit of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina and the broader American Indian community. The building is both an architectural symbol and a cornerstone of identity for UNC Pembroke. For nearly a century, it has represented the university's commitment to providing education to underserved populations, and its preservation is crucial for maintaining the cultural and historical fabric of the university and the region.

In addition to its historical value, the preservation project aims to ensure that Old Main continues to serve as a functional and inspiring space for academic pursuits. This includes exterior upgrades to meet modern standards while retaining historical charm. The project will enable the university to host events and programs that benefit the entire community, from academic conferences to cultural celebrations.

Robeson County is one of the culturally richest and economically poorest counties in North Carolina. The restoration of Old Main sends a powerful message about the value of the region's heritage and a willingness to invest in its rejuvenation. By preserving Old Main, UNC Pembroke will not only safeguard an important historical landmark but also open more opportunities for tourism and economic development in the wider region.

The restoration project includes elements designed to safeguard the building from future challenges. Robeson County, situated in the southeastern part of North Carolina, is particularly vulnerable to hurricanes and flooding. The region experienced significant damage from hurricanes Hurricane Florence in 2018 and Hurricane Matthew in 2016, which led to widespread flooding, property damage, and displacement of residents. Ensuring Old Main's resilience against such disasters, specifically by installing a new roof and weatherproofing windows and doors, is vital for protecting the useful life of this building.

UNC Pembroke's quest to preserve Old Main is an investment in the future of the university, the region, and the rich history that it represents. Thank you for your consideration of this request, which would enable UNC Pembroke to continue its mission of education and cultural preservation, while contributing to the economic and social well-being of Robeson County.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Hans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "P" and "H".

Peter Hans
President

April 3, 2025

The Honorable Representative Rouzer
2333 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Letter of Support to Preserve Old Main

Honorable Representative Rouzer,

I write today to ask your support for an earmark request for the renovation of the historic Old Main building, which is critically needed to preserve an important piece of Robeson County, North Carolina's history, and plays an invaluable economic development role in our region.

As the Chief Executive Officer of Lumbee Tribe Holdings, Inc., former Economic Development Director of Robeson County, an alumnus of UNC Pembroke (UNCP), and a Town Councilman, I can personally attest to the vital role that UNCP plays in creating the workforce of future generations. Cultivating talent in rural North Carolina has become increasingly important. The iconic Old Main building on the campus of UNCP presents an opportunity for cultural tourism and generates renewed interest in the many bachelor's and certification programs offered.

Old Main, serving as an iconic building on campus, acts as a crucial element in student recruitment. Its historical and cultural significance highlights the university's rich history, legacy, presence, and ongoing resilience. The preservation and renovation of Old Main will not only enhance the university's appeal but also demonstrate its commitment to maintaining a strong connection to its past while advancing into the future. This makes it a vital component of the university's strategy to attract and retain talented individuals who will contribute to the region's economic development.

The renovation of this historic building will foster additional interest from both students and the community. Workforce training and education are primary factors in determining locations for business recruitment and retention. UNC Pembroke plays a significant role in the economy of southeastern North Carolina, with its graduates representing the future workforce. The building's importance to the Lumbee Tribe uniquely contributes to tourism in Pembroke and attracts many visitors to the area.

That is why I respectfully ask for your careful consideration of UNCP's request for Old Main renovations, which will make the building more resilient to the weather and more attractive as a destination and gathering place to tourists, students, and staff, as well as preserve an important part of Pembroke's history.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this important priority for our region and all you do for our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kanning Jones", written in a cursive style.

Channing Jones
Chief Executive Officer
Lumbee Tribe Holdings, Inc.

LUMBEE TRIBE OF NORTH CAROLINA

John L. Lowery | Lumbee Tribal Chairman



April 3, 2025

The Honorable Representative Rouzer
2333 Rayburn House Office Building Washington, DC 20515
RE: Letter of Support to Preserve Old Main

Honorable Representative Rouzer,

I am writing to you as the chairman of the Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina, the largest tribe east of the Mississippi River and the ninth largest in the nation. I offer my strongest support for the earmark request submitted by the University of North Carolina at Pembroke (UNCP) for the renovation and restoration of Old Main, the most historic and iconic building on campus.

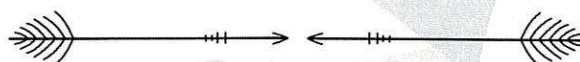
Old Main is a symbol of the Lumbee people's deep appreciation for education, resilience, perseverance, and pride. It is the heart of UNCP, which was founded in 1887 as a normal school for the education of American Indians. Old Main was built in 1923 and since that time has been a place of learning, culture, and community for thousands of Lumbee students and alumni, and other Native and non-Native students. It has also witnessed the evolution of UNCP from a normal school to a state college to a regional university, reflecting the changing needs and aspirations of the Lumbee people and the diverse population of southeastern North Carolina.

Old Main is also a testament to the Lumbee people's determination to preserve their heritage and identity. In the early 1970s, when the university planned to demolish Old Main and build a new auditorium, the Lumbee community mobilized to save the building, collecting signatures, writing letters, and marching in protest. They saw Old Main as a historical monument to their past and a permanent part of their heritage. Their efforts paid off when the university decided to spare Old Main. However, in 1973, Old Main was gutted by a fire. The Lumbee community did not give up on their beloved building. They rallied again to raise funds and secure support from the state and federal government to restore Old Main. In 1976, Old Main was added to the National Register of Historic Places. In 1979, Old Main was restored and rededicated, highlighting its importance and inspiring pride among the Lumbee people and beyond.

Today, Old Main is a significant attraction for cultural tourism, inviting visitors to explore the history and achievements of the Lumbee and other Native peoples of the region. It is a focal point for educational, research, and outreach activities that promote the understanding and appreciation of American Indian heritage and issues. The building serves as a sacred space that connects the past, present, and future of the Lumbee people and UNCP.

OFFICE OF THE LUMBEE TRIBAL CHAIRMAN

6984 Highway 711 W. | Pembroke, NC 28372 | 910.521.7861



LUMBEE TRIBE OF NORTH CAROLINA

John L. Lowery | Lumbee Tribal Chairman



Old Main's location within the Lumbee tribal territory enhances its role in fostering economic development through tourism. The renovation of Old Main is not only a matter of aesthetics but also a way to honor the legacy and contributions of the Lumbee people and UNCP to the history of access to education in North Carolina and the nation. Enhancing the visibility and attractiveness of the exterior of Old Main as a cultural and educational resource is essential for drawing more visitors, which in turn supports local businesses and economic growth in the region.

I strongly encourage you to approve the earmark request submitted by UNCP for the renovation and restoration of Old Main. Thank you for your consideration and support of this important project. I hope you will join me and the Lumbee Tribe in celebrating and honoring the history and heritage of Old Main, UNCP, and the Lumbee people.

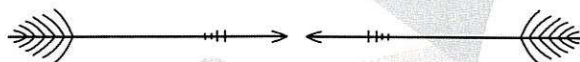
Sincerely,



John Lowery
Chairman, Lumbee Tribe of North Carolina

OFFICE OF THE LUMBEE TRIBAL CHAIRMAN

6984 Highway 711 W. | Pembroke, NC 28372 | 910.521.7861





ROBESON COUNTY Board of Commissioners

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April 3, 2025

The Honorable Representative Rouzer
2333 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Letter of Support to Preserve Old Main

Honorable Representative Rouzer,

I am writing to you as Robeson County Manager, Vice Chair of the University of North Carolina System's Board of Governors, and as a citizen of the Lumbee Tribe. I enthusiastically endorse the University of North Carolina at Pembroke's (UNCP) request for earmark support to renovate and restore Old Main, a historic building that represents the history of access to education for American Indians in North Carolina and the nation. Old Main is a symbol of the Lumbee people's self-determination and achievement and a cultural and economic asset for Robeson County. By supporting this project, you will honor the legacy of the Lumbee and contribute to the development of our County and our region.

The university was established in 1887 as the Croatan Normal School, a state-sponsored teacher training institution for American Indians who did not have access to public education at the time. Old Main was built in 1923 as the first brick building on campus and it still stands. The building has survived many challenges, including old age, a fire, and numerous hurricanes, and it stands today as a testament to the resilience and perseverance of the Lumbee people.

Today, buildings attract thousands of visitors each year who learn about the rich heritage of our community. It hosts educational programs, workshops, and events that promote community engagement and foster intercultural dialogue and understanding. Additionally, the building functions as an administrative and academic center for UNCP, housing various offices, classrooms, and facilities that support the university's mission.

It includes spaces for student services, faculty offices, and meeting rooms that facilitate the daily operations of the university and provide resources for both students and staff. Furthermore, the building serves as an integral part of UNCP, a comprehensive regional university that educates over 8,000 students from diverse backgrounds, offering quality education across multiple disciplines.

The entire exterior of the building needs renovation and restoration. The building's distinctive brickwork and columns are especially vulnerable and require urgent attention, which is why this work is being prioritized. Restoring Old Main will not only preserve an important cultural and historical site but also serve as an economic engine for Robeson County. The influx of visitors, students, and events generates significant revenue for local businesses and fosters economic development in the area.

I strongly support UNCP's efforts and respectfully encourage you to approve the necessary funding for this project. By doing so, you will recognize the importance of Old Main as a historic site that reflects the history of education for American Indians. You will also help preserve and promote a vital resource that benefits our County and beyond. Thank you for your thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kellie Hunt Blue".

Kellie Hunt Blue
County Manager

April 3, 2025

The Honorable Representative Rouzer
2333 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

RE: Letter of Support to Preserve Old Main

Honorable Representative Rouzer,

I am writing to seek your support for an earmark request for a building renovation that is critically needed to preserve the iconic Old Main building. Situated on the University of North Carolina Pembroke's campus, Old Main holds significant historical value for Robeson County and plays an invaluable role in the economic development of our region.

As a local business owner (Manager of the Holiday Inn Express) and Chairman of the Pembroke Tourism Board, it is easy to recognize the tremendous value that Old Main plays economically and culturally in this region. Old Main is the oldest building on UNCP's campus. It was built in 1923 and was also the first brick building on the university's campus.

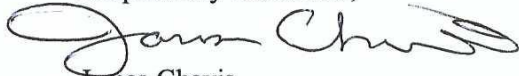
Old Main is on the National Register of Historic Places and houses The Southeast American Indian Studies Program and UNCP's American Indian Heritage Center, as Robeson County is home to more than 60,000 members of the Lumbee Tribe. Regarding economic development, Old Main has become a state tourist attraction, drawing more than 15,000 people a year to this poor region of our state. Therefore, it is important to restore and renovate Old Main to pristine condition.

Over the years, time and weather have taken a toll on the condition of Old Main, and it is in dire need of renovation and restoration. The external renovation will enhance the building's attractiveness to tourists, students, and employees. This work will also protect the building from extreme weather events, ensuring that it continues to stand as a landmark of cultural and historical significance in the region.

If the building experiences further decay, it risks losing its ability to draw visitors not only to Pembroke, but it may also stymie emerging economic development and cultural tourism such as Lumber River excursions, Lumbee tribal events, and a host of other events in Southeastern North Carolina.

I respectfully request your consideration of UNC Pembroke's plea for Old Main renovations to enhance accessibility and preserve a key piece of Pembroke's history. Thank you for prioritizing this matter and for your dedicated service to our state.

Respectfully Submitted,



James Chavis
Owner/Manager of the Holiday Inn Express
Pembroke, N.C.