

Annual Report:

University Standing Committee:	<u>Speakers and Lectures</u>
Academic Year Covered by Report:	<u>2024-25</u>
Date Report Submitted:	<u>May 1, 2025</u>
Report Submitted by:	<u>Melvin (Jai) Jackson</u>
Number of times the committee met:	<u>Nine (9) meetings</u>

2024-2025 Committee Activities:

The committee met nine (9) times via Zoom with additional email communications among committee members to address opportunities for improvement and continued programmatic success.

During the 2024-25 academic year, the NC State Speakers and Lectures Committee initiated a comprehensive effort to broaden its outreach and increase perspectives within the university community. Our work's key focus was building strong relationships with representative agencies in the international speaker circuit. Through these efforts, we sought to connect with various speakers and connections; we aimed to broaden our pool of potential speakers and ensure a rich tapestry of perspectives for our audiences.

Fostering Partnerships for Greater Impact at NC State

This year, our efforts centered on cultivating partnerships that drive meaningful impact for the NC State community. By prioritizing interdisciplinary engagement, we expanded our reach across campus, bringing together students, faculty, and staff to participate in high-impact experiences that inspire learning, research, and service. Through strategic collaborations, we

strengthened opportunities for academic enrichment, innovative research discussions, and community-centered initiatives that align with NC State's mission of excellence.

A significant focus of our work has been supporting events and programs that foster cross-disciplinary dialogue and engagement. This year, we hosted events encouraging students, faculty, and staff to explore new perspectives, deepen their knowledge, and contribute to university-wide initiatives. These experiences have reinforced NC State's commitment to intellectual curiosity, academic growth, and meaningful societal impact.

In tandem with our outreach initiatives, we dedicated significant time and resources to strategic planning for the 2024-25 academic year. By engaging in discussions, research, and collaborative planning, we identified key themes and emerging topics that will shape an exciting lineup of speakers, lectures, and interdisciplinary programs. This forward-thinking approach ensures that our events continue to engage and inspire the NC State community while addressing critical issues that resonate across academic and professional fields.

Strengthening partnerships has been integral to these efforts. By collaborating with academic departments, student organizations, and external partners, we expanded the scope of our programming, creating dynamic opportunities that bridge disciplines and foster innovative thinking. These partnerships enhance our speaker and lecture series and enrich NC State's academic environment and create lasting connections. Through collective expertise and shared commitment, we continue to elevate the university's mission to provide transformative learning experiences and contribute to broader research and service initiatives that make a tangible difference.

Looking Forward:

As we look ahead to the 2025-26 academic year, we propose a strategic shift in the NC State Speakers and Lectures Committee's role—from a planning body to a granting organization. This

transition will enable the committee to better serve the university community by fostering high-impact collaborations with campus groups already engaged in hosting prominent speakers, rather than organizing competing programs. By providing funding and support to these initiatives, we can maximize the reach, visibility, and interdisciplinary impact of speaker events at NC State.

Enhancing Collaboration for Greater Campus Impact

Currently, multiple campus entities—academic departments, research centers, student organizations, and university offices—bring distinguished speakers to NC State, often working independently. This can result in competing events, diluted attendance, and missed opportunities for cross-campus engagement. By transitioning into a granting body, the committee will shift its focus to supporting, funding, and coordinating speaker events rather than directly planning them. This approach will:

- Funding strategic speaker events across campus will amplify impact and allow for broader participation, deeper interdisciplinary engagement, and greater alignment with university priorities.
- To foster Cross-Campus Coordination instead of duplicating efforts, the committee will collaborate with campus groups to enhance their existing programming and ensure high-quality speaker engagements.
- Reduce Event Competition. By consolidating support, we can minimize scheduling conflicts and increase audience engagement for high-profile speakers.
- Encourage innovation by providing financial support to a broader range of campus partners. This will empower new voices and perspectives while ensuring that events reach a wide and varied audience.

Strategic Partnerships and Funding Model

Under this new model, the committee will establish a grant application process through which campus organizations, academic units, and student groups can apply for funding to support their speaker events. Priority will be given to proposals that:

- Encourage interdisciplinary engagement and collaboration between multiple campus units
- Align with NC State's academic, research, and service missions
- Engage students, faculty, and staff in meaningful dialogue and learning experiences

Additionally, the committee will serve as a resource for best practices in event planning, marketing, and community engagement, ensuring that funded events achieve maximum impact.