

# Universities stress 4-year graduation

By Rasaan Johnson  
Staff Writer

Since UNC opened its doors nearly 200 years ago as the nation's first state university, the four-year time frame from entrance to graduation has been a staple of the college experience.

Now, faced with rising costs and budget cuts, a number of state universities across the country are looking for innovative ways to ensure that students graduate on time. And some universities would like to graduate students even sooner.

Responding to new laws passed by the N.C. General Assembly in 1992, the UNC Board of Governors has adopted a "Plan to Improve Graduation Rates in The University of North Carolina."

Although the plan does not specifically address decreasing graduation time to three years, an idea suggested by some state university presidents across the country, it does offer a number of resolutions that would increase four-year graduation rates throughout the 16-campus UNC system.

Though slightly more than half of entering freshman in the UNC system graduate in five years, less than one-third graduate in four. At UNC-Chapel Hill, the system's flagship university, 64.8 percent of students complete degree requirements in four years.

Travis Porter, BOG vice chairman,

stressed the importance of students graduating on time.

"In an ideal world, if you started out with 100 students, you'd graduate 100, and you'd graduate them in four years," he said. "The legislature is concerned that students are finishing in five years who could finish in four years."

Porter said students who took an extra year to complete degree requirements filled space that could be used by entering freshmen and transfers. Those who were not admitted due to space limitations often chose to attend other institutions, he said.

Provost Richard McCormick said UNC-CH's graduation rate already was impressive when compared to those of other universities.

"There is probably a limit to how much we can improve the four-year graduation rate," McCormick said, adding that new programs should not be implemented if they could be detrimental to some students.

"Many students rely on summer school," he said. "Many students have academic deficiencies. Other students have financial difficulties. That's reasonable too. We're already doing pretty well. We're going to do better. We're going to do that sensitively."

Porter said that there were "competing goals" between four-year graduates and those that did not graduate in less than five years.

Bruce Johnstone, chancellor of the 64-campus system of the State University of New York, recently called on the presidents of the individual campuses to come up with ways to enhance "learning productivity," including reducing the time students needed to graduate.

SUNY-Brockport was the first campus to establish a "Time Shortened Degree," which gives eligible students the opportunity to receive a baccalaureate degree after three years of study.

Karla Merrifield, SUNY-Brockport's director of marketing and communications, said only a small percentage of students had taken advantage of the Time Shortened Degree program.

Some innovative programs, no matter how good in theory, often collapse under the weight of disinterest, she said.

Though the program was established 21 years ago, "it's one of those things that's on student demand," she said. "We look at everything year by year. Nothing's definite but death and taxes."

The SUNY program goes beyond trying to expedite the time undergraduates spend at college.

(Johnstone's) ideas are not focused solely on people getting MDs in three years, but also getting people to get their five- and six-year-degrees in four," said Ken Goldfarb, the central administration's director of public relations for the SUNY system.

Goldfarb said increased technology,

more video capabilities and the increased availability of computers aided many students in getting their degrees in less time. The time saved also saves students and the school money, he said.

"There is more of an impetus to get that degree in less time to reduce the cost," he said.

Goldfarb said that like many public universities, including UNC, "SUNY has experienced a continuous succession of budget cuts." He said cuts would not be restored for "a long time."

Budgetary problems often have profound effects on state universities. But when there are problems with cash flow, the effects are ultimately most detrimental to the students.

Porter said monetary problems at home often translated to monetary problems at school. Students, in turn, were often forced to work, keeping them from taking a full course load and graduating in four years.

"One reason we're constantly campaigning to keep tuition to a minimum is to keep the higher number of students matriculating," he said.

Porter also said students who took longer than necessary to complete their degree requirements blocked entrance to the university to potential students.

"Recently, people are taking longer to matriculate," he said. "For five years, (some students) use dorm space, library space and cafeteria space."

# Local schools to poll parents about option for year-round school

By Rama Kayyali  
Staff Writer

Chapel Hill-Carrboro school officials are waiting for the results of an informal poll to determine whether year-round schools are a viable option for the overcrowded district.

Carrboro Elementary School teachers will spend time next fall asking parents whether they would consider sending their kids to year-round schools, Carrboro Elementary School teacher Settle Womble said.

By the end of the fall semester, teachers will present their findings to the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of Education.

Kim Hoke, spokeswoman for Chapel Hill-Carrboro schools, said the school board would consider the option of year-round schools depending on the results of the poll.

Many parents have voiced their opposition to the idea, but some administrators say year-round schools might be the only feasible solution to the district's overcrowding problem.

"The reason why we are considering year-round schools is purely for educational reasons," Hoke said.

Hoke said year-round schools would benefit students, especially those with learning difficulties, who often regress during summer breaks.

Mary Bushnell, chairwoman of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School Board, said students would be able to retain information in a year-round system.

"If a student is having problems, then we'll have the first week of the vacation dedicated to those with diffi-

culties," she said. "They'll be right on track when school starts the following session."

Hoke said students in year-round schools did not actually attend school all year or attend extra days of school.

"It means students will have school continuously throughout the year interrupted by periodical breaks," she said.

If the system's schools put students on the single-track option, students would go to school for nine weeks and then take a three-week vacation.

In the multi-track system, one group of students is in session for nine weeks while another group is on vacation.

Hoke said most school districts that operated on a year-round basis had adopted the multi-track option because it increased the capacity of the school by 25 to 30 percent.

Hoke acknowledged that year-round schools were not an appealing option for everyone.

"Year-round schools can be inconvenient because most people are accustomed to long summer breaks and to building a lot of things around the summer," she said. "This problem is bigger in this community because people are used to the university system and its summer breaks."

Bushnell said year-round schools would require summer camps and other summer agencies to change the way they operated.

Womble said she thought the additional expenses for year-round schools were low but added that she was not certain because research had not yet started.

# University Lake facilities closed for upgrades

By Daniel Feldman  
Staff Writer

Unlike past summers, University students and Chapel Hill residents will not be able to enjoy boating recreation facilities at University Lake this year.

The lake will be closed to the public this summer because of new government restrictions requiring that the main dam be upgraded to handle more rainfall, according to officials for the Orange County Water and Sewer Authority, who operate the facility.

Katie Kalb, general manager of

OWASA operations, said construction would begin early next month to make structural improvements at the lake's main dam.

Kalb said the improvements were insurance measures against an improbable incident of increased rainfall.

"The new regulations require us to be able to handle 13 inches of rainfall," she said. "We have never had a rain event like that, but the worst that I've ever seen occurred last month with three inches in six hours. The water level rose way up."

Kalb added that she hoped contracts could be signed soon so that work could begin in early May, with construction scheduled to end in December.

The costs of the operations total \$1,106,294, including contract costs and repairs, Kalb said.

"Because of trickle-down economics, OWASA customers are paying for it," Kalb added. "We are not going to raise the rates, for we've been budget-

ing for this for a while."

OWASA engineers recommended two years ago that the lake comply with stricter government rules set in 1985.

"In response to government new regulation requirements, we must reinforce the main dam and raise a nearby grassy knoll by six feet to make the area a more effective flood controller," Kalb said. "The main dam has to be supported with tie-down anchors to withstand a greater flow of water."

She added that there also would be grounds improvements, including the building of a new warden facility, floating docks and a gravel parking lot.

"People are going to notice these changes," she said. "We have to move the wardens' office because the raised ground (by the dam) will obstruct the wardens' view of the docks."

Robert Glosson, a University Lake warden, said the construction would not endanger the lake's wildlife community.

"A minimum amount of water has to be drained for the construction," Glosson said. "The dam itself is just as safe today as the day it was built."

Glosson said the compliance with government standards was dubbed the "1,000-year flood plan" after Noah and the Ark because of the unlikelyhood of unnaturally heavy rainfall.

Kalb said a rainfall of 13 inches in 24 hours would constitute a flood level of "biblical" magnitude.

"It's not really a 1,000-year plan, but more like a 500-year one," Kalb said. "According to governmental statistics, a major flood is estimated to hit any given area once every 500 years."

"Nobody has been pushing us to work quickly since the event is so unlikely to happen," she said.

University Lake, which is located near Jones Ferry Road west of Carrboro, was constructed during the 1930s after a series of droughts hit the area. Five wardens care for the property.

## Head Start

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Sandra Watson, a parent of a child in the Head Start program, said that despite charges of abuse and neglect, she fully supported the local Head Start.

"I stand behind Head Start 200 percent," she said. "I hope Head Start becomes required for all kids."

Head Start officials plan to require that the day-care staff receive training in appropriate discipline tactics and in child abuse and neglect policies.

Mary Bushnell, chairwoman of the Chapel Hill-Carrboro School Board, said she hoped the reputation of the local Head Start program would not be affected by the results of the investigation.

"I just feel that it's most unfortunate," she said. "So many people have worked so hard, and it's such a good program."

Bushnell said that although the cases of neglect should be taken seriously, she thought they were isolated incidents.

Bushnell said the school board intended to do what it could to ensure that the violations did not occur again.

"We have every intention of correcting any situations that need to be corrected," she said.

"I think it's very important for people to have high standards for early childhood education."

## Budget

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waste-disposal services included increased recycling services, collection of food wastes from some schools and restaurants for use as hog feed, and grinding clean wood and yard waste to mulch.

Chapel Hill citizens who attended Monday's council meeting petitioned the council for inclusion of additional programs in the budget plan.

Joe Hakan, chairman of the Chapel

Hill Chamber of Commerce, asked the council to help pay Orange Water and Sewer Authority fees for affordable housing in the private sector.

Hakan said the council had to give contractors incentive to build low-income \$94,000 houses.

Rachel Willis, chairwoman of the transportation board, urged the council to include in its budget proposal funding for bicycle and pedestrian paths.

## Awards

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pressed with the enthusiasm and class participation of his students on what would usually be a dry subject."

Religion Professor Kaufman has taught at UNC since 1978. "I won probably because I enjoy what I do,"

Kaufman said. Ehrman, who will be considered for tenure next year, said he thought there were professors at the University who were both good researchers and good teachers.

"The fact that somebody does quality research doesn't mean they can't teach," Ehrman said. "The three teachers who won are top-notch researchers."

Five teaching assistants also were honored. They were: Brooke Baker, Department of Speech Communication; Amy Dawson, Department of Romance Languages; Kathy Guiffre, Department of Sociology; David Johnson, Department of Classics; and Lee Tatum, Department of Germanic Languages.

The winning professors received grants of \$5,000 each, while the teaching assistants each received \$1,000.

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