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Proposed bill will penalize for excessive tuition raises

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The College Affordability in the Higher Education Act of 2003 proposed by Rep. Howard P. "Buck" McKeon (R-Calif.) appears to be the perfect plan to stop tuition increases, but it is stirring up controversy throughout the world of education.

Many future college students, current college students and their families dream of the day when tuition prices will stop increasing and possibly even begin to decrease. A new bill proposed to the House of Representatives claims it is the answer to those dreams.

The proposed bill would create a "College Affordability Index" by measuring the increase

in tuition and fees over a three-year period divided by the inflation rate for the same period. Any school with an index greater than two (a tuition rise of more than twice the rate of inflation) would be put on the government watch list.

Schools placed on the government watch list would be required to provide a statement explaining the increases to the U.S. Department of Education and a plan on how the school plans to manage and reduce the existing prices.

If the school does not comply with the management and reduction plan, government financial assistance will eventually be withdrawn.

Institutional aid outlined in Title IV, such as the Federal Work

Study Program would also be withheld.

According to the American Association of State Colleges and Universities, "a congressionally-mandated study released by the U.S. Department of Education in 2002 confirmed that state funding is the largest single factor affecting tuition and fees in public institutions."

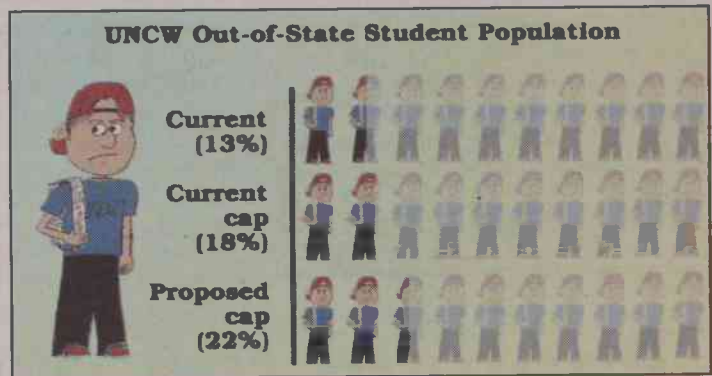
By taking away state and federal funding the tuition and fees would only increase or eventually spell the end for an institution.

The American Council on Education said, "more than 1,400 institutions would have lost Title IV funding in the last two years had this law been in effect."

While Rep. McKeon is trying to help keep higher education institutions affordable, it appears that the proposed bill is focused toward the wrong group. The AASCU said, "decisions about tuition and levels are made by legislatures and statewide higher education boards - not by institutions."

Therefore, the institutions themselves do not and cannot control increases or decreases in tuition and fees. Implementing this bill would leave many needy students with no options for help.

The proposed rules would not take effect until 2008, which means the first school could lose funding in 2011.



Out-of-State cap may be increased

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The UNC Board of Governors has postponed a vote on two proposals that would allow UNC campuses to accept more out-of-state students.

They were originally scheduled to vote on the issue Friday, but have delayed it due to mounting opposition.

Currently, 18 percent of freshmen can be from out of state. One proposal raises the cap to 22 percent at 15 state universities. The policy would not apply to the NC School of the Arts.

The other proposal says that schools wanting to enroll more out-of-state students must ask permission from the board.

UNC-Chapel Hill is at the forefront of the issue because competition is highest there among nonresident students. According to a report in the

Raleigh News and Observer, "the campus received 11,000 applications for 635 seats this year." Officials there are concerned by the number of students they have had to reject who scored better than 1,400 on the SAT-reportedly over 1,000.

The concern among some legislators and the state school boards association is that more nonresident students mean fewer students from this state. UNC-Chapel Hill officials say they want to increase both numbers.

Here at UNCW, the board of trustees has not taken an official position, though none of the state universities have spoken out against the plan.

Mark Lanier, special assistant to the chancellor, told Star News, "we can attract some very bright out-of-state students," which would bring in new ideas and

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Courtesy of mckeon.house.gov

Had the law been in effect this year, more than 1,400 institutions would have lost funding.

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