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Traditional tuition increase passed by trustees

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NEWS EDITOR

The end of December comes with many holiday traditions - for UNCW, tuition increases are one of them.

Shortly after classes ended, the Board of Trustees voted on a campus-based tuition increase over the next two years, which was brought about by a recommendation by Chancellor DePaolo.

The board approved the tuition and fees increase with only two members opposing, one being the only student on the board.

The campus-based tuition increase will raise tuition \$360 a year for the next two years. There will also be an increase in fees of \$57 for the 2004-2005 academic year.

This brings the total increase of tuition and fees for 2004-2005 to \$417, with an additional \$360 tuition increase that will go into effect for 2005-2006.

The increase in fees and the two-year tuition increase will cause in-state tuition to rise 25 percent over the next two years.

This tuition increase is campus-based only. This does not include the possible system-wide and statewide tuition increases that are likely to occur.

UNCW has seen tuition hikes for at least the past five years. These have been a mix of campus-based and state and system-based increases.

Each hike has been more drastic than the previous year's, rang-

ing from 5 to 23 percent.

At the meeting the board was shown a detailed powerpoint presentation illustrating the reasons for the increase.

The first reason being to restore the student to faculty ratio to 16:1. The increase will allow the addition of four faculty positions per year for the next four years. While there was a disagreement over what the current ratio was - some say 17:1 and some say 21:1 - it was agreed that the ratio should be between 15:1 and 16:1.

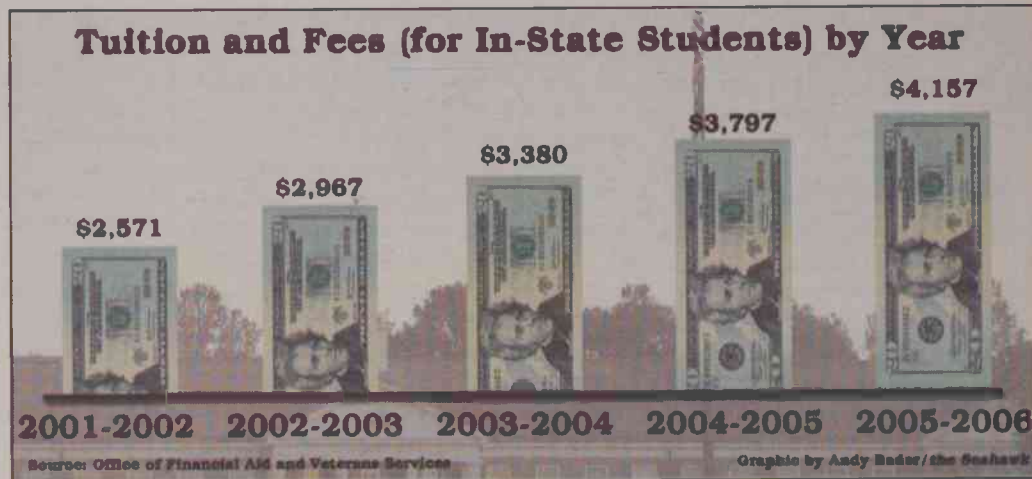
The second reason is to keep bringing in high quality faculty. The increase would allow UNCW to raise all faculty salaries to the 80th percentile of the national average.

Other reasons include preventing the erosion of the university's quality programs, preventing any further flexing of faculty funds (using faculty funds for other purposes), and replacing the money lost by state funding.

One matter of concern among the board was financial aid. Last year, 38 percent of incoming freshmen were need-based.

Administration is aiming to expand total enrollment to 12,500 by 2010, with current enrollment being 10,929. The office of the president has also been known to request additional numbers of students to be accepted.

Because the number of students keeps increasing, the number of students in need will go up accordingly. Last year, 326 stu-



dents that were entitled to aid did not receive it because there was not enough funds, said Kay Ward, acting vice chancellor for business affairs. These students were then referred to federal loan programs for additional aid.

"We're trying to grow and expand at the same time and it's just not possible," said Mike Conley, vice president of organizations for the SGA. "All of the burden is being put on the students."

Possible system-wide and state-wide tuition increases that have not yet been decided upon were of much concern to many people.

"What happens if the legislature comes back with an increase too," asked a concerned Hannah Gage, of the Board of Governors.

Unfortunately, no one had an answer.

The biggest protest against the tuition increase came from SGA

President, Zachary Wynne. A decision of this importance was made too quickly and without informing the students properly, Wynne said.

"Students were not informed enough of this proposal," Wynne said, "and six meetings is not enough to make a decision of this magnitude."

"Please keep in mind that members of the board could afford to write a \$360 check - many families and students cannot," Wynne said, politely reminding the board of the student perspective.

The tuition task force did not have their first meeting until Nov. 7.

"This allowed less than one month to make a recommendation to the Chancellor by the Dec. 1 deadline," said Wynne in a letter addressed to the trustees.

With only one student on the board, only one student on the

task force and little to no student input, the tuition increase was passed easily, with only Wynne and one other member opposing.

"Actions we take today, I can assure you, are taken in a heartfelt way, but to maintain the quality of this institution ... we have no choice," Evans said.

Before the board moved on, Zachary Wynne and Chancellor DePaolo both suggested a process change for future years when the same question of tuition increase will inevitably be brought in front of the board again.

In Georgia, 50 percent of the committee was made up of students, DePaolo said. "That's a direction I'd like to see this university go in."

"We run this institution for the students - for their present and for their future - they need more voice in this," said Chairman Jeff D. Etheridge, Jr.

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