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Student voice nearly absent in tuition decision

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With the new tuition increase upon us, another concern has arisen: students have a disturbingly small voice in important decisions at this university.

On Dec. 12 the UNCW Board of Trustees met in a special meeting to discuss the tuition and fee increases for 2004-2005. The proposed increase would raise tuition \$360 per year for the next two years and would also increase student fees by \$57. The board voted in favor of the increase, with only two members opposing.

The UNC Board of Governors will vote on each campus's recommendation at the Feb. 12-13 meeting.

The board of trustees is comprised of people appointed by the Governor and by the UNC Board of Governors. They are allowed to serve two four-year terms and are typically people who either are connected to a university or are high-profile citizens. Wynne is the only student on the board and is a member because he is the Student Body President.

The greatest concern is that students were not sufficiently notified of the proposed tuition increase and the ways in which they could voice their opinion. According to administration, a campus-wide email was sent, letting students know about the proposal and about an open forum that was to be held to discuss it.

When several students were asked about the email, an overwhelming number either didn't receive it or didn't read it because

did attend, although most of them were from the Student Government Association, and only one voiced their opinion to

where we could have more student members. Unfortunately, we had no set policy that says who sits on that task force and when it meets. That was the largest cause of concern for myself and the SGA. I requested that the administration come up with a plan before the trustees January meeting that can be set as university policy. I am hoping this plan includes a large number of students and begins meeting far in advance of any deadline," Wynne said.

Wynne asked for four additional students to be on the tuition task force, and received them. However, Wynne had a hard time filling those spots because of the strenuous schedule that the task force chose (four meetings in one week, each for more than two and a half hours).

In addition, this year the tuition task force did not begin meeting until Nov. 7. "This bothers me because the task forces at other schools had already made their decisions by that time, and we were just starting, knowing the trustees had to meet on the issue in December," Wynne said.

By the time the tuition task force started meeting, there was less than one month before they had to have a recommendation for the Chancellor.

"The tuition task force is

"I respect the administration and the task force, but this kind of work cannot be rewarded," Wynne said. "I am certain our school will move to correct these problems in the future."

Both Chancellor DePaolo and Chairman Jeff D. Etheridge voiced their concern over the matter as well. "We run this institution for the students-for their present and for their future-they need more voice in this," said Chairman Etheridge.

"In terms of the past process, I believe Student Affairs worked with the SGA president to get student representation on the tuition committee. Now, I am very concerned about having much more student involvement, as well as making the committee's work an ongoing, annual process. I have asked Vice Chancellor Pat Leonard and Interim Vice Chancellor Kay Ward to initiate this change," DePaolo said.

However, the administration is not the only one at fault, said Wynne. Students may not be eager to serve on a tuition task force. Wynne commented that it is difficult to get students involved here at UNCW, especially in complex issues such as budgets and tuition.

"I am hoping that a more student friendly tuition task force will get more students involved," Wynne said.

Students can also get involved by going to trustee meetings, Board of Governors meetings and writing trustees.



Andy Bader/the Seahawk

Chance Lewis and Rene Jordan show how students at UNCW do not have a say in issues such as tuition increases. A tuition increase was instated Dec. 12.

it looked like just another press release from the school.

Even if the students were aware of the open forum, it was on a day that most students could not attend. The open forum to discuss the tuition increase was held on Dec. 5. This was originally reading day, but it turned into the hurricane make-up day. Either way, students would have been either studying for finals or in class.

Nevertheless, a few students

the board. This made minimal impact in the decision-making process.

Since additional student representatives on the board is not a possibility, the next best thing to get students involved in the decision is to have additional student representatives on the tuition task force-the group that actually makes the recommendation to the Chancellor.

"The tuition task force is

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