

BUDGET
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At stake could be the state's Triple-A superior bond rating, which allows North Carolina to receive low-interest loans. If the state does not have a solid balanced budget, their rating could drop. If the state falls to a Double-A rating, it could lose \$300 million in higher interest loans.

"We're going to have to show that we have some permanent streams of money coming in that we don't have to juggle around," said Rep. Beverly Earle, D-Mecklenburg. "We don't want to have to rob Peter to pay Paul."

But even after the revenue issue is settled, budget writers still must determine how the money will be allocated, and there are several stark differences in the two budgets. Cuts to Education and Health and Human Services will likely see the most debate.

Increases in tuition have been a major area for concern among budget writers and education leaders. Under

the Senate plan, all UNC-system students would face a 9 percent tuition increase. But under the House plan, the increase would be 15 percent and only apply to out-of-state students.

Senators are concerned about what this might say about North Carolina's priorities. "I think that's a mistake," Rand said. "We don't want other states to pick on our students, so we shouldn't pick on our out-of-state students."

But time continues to be a factor in the budget-making process. Legislators passed another continuing resolution that will keep the state operating until August 29.

Legislators are getting weary, however, and have other several issues to deal with such as redistricting and perhaps a lottery referendum.

"I've already canceled all of my summer plans," said Sen. Howard Lee, D-Orange. "We cannot leave Raleigh with this budget as shaky as it is."

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the possibility of tuition costs rising. Student Body President Justin Young said he has been lobbying state legislators to minimize the increase. He also sent an e-mail to the entire student body to inform them of the proposals and suggest they call their representatives.

"Everybody's doing comparison, especially in terms of rate of increase," Young said. "A lot of schools across the nation are increasing their tuition into the double-digit percent rate. But ultimately, the state of North Carolina has prided itself on affordable access to education."

"We are the leaders of that, and I don't think that's something we should sacrifice. It's important to be a little bit more creative in dealing with the budget situation."

Young said he feels it is important to prevent a further tuition increase. "We're trying to take as much of an active role in the tuition fight as we can," he said.

Shelton said he hopes the legislature

will recognize the importance of low tuition to UNC's continued position as a superior institution. "Traditionally, North Carolinians have been very supportive of their universities - look at the bond issue last November," Shelton said. "You would hope the legislators would reflect that level of support and that priority."

"We wouldn't want to see that end because of a temporary budget crisis." Amy Fulk, a spokeswoman for N.C. Senate President Pro Tempore Marc Basnight, said legislators understand the importance of affordable higher education.

"We're doing everything we can to keep education affordable," Fulk said. "Of course it is a very tight budget, and there are some tough decisions ahead."

Young urged legislators to look for alternative measures for dealing with the tight budget. "What is being proposed is very damaging to higher education in the state," Young said. "It closes doors to what the state could become."

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REZONING
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to examine issues they haven't been able to look at in the past.

"We have a greater opportunity than we've ever had before to look into a broader plan and look into these various elements," said council member Jim Ward.

The development plan must include anticipated effects on traffic and a noise, lighting and stormwater runoff analysis. This will offer the town an opportunity to further monitor the University's growth and its impact on the community.

"The development plan is a significant opportunity for the council to - on a finer scale - address the concerns brought up by town citizens," Ward said.

Although the rezoning passed overwhelmingly with an 8-1 vote, several council members expressed sorrow as they cast their affirmative votes.

"My vote comes without any joy and without any enthusiasm," said Flicka Bateman as she cast her vote in favor of the rezoning.

Ward said he had similar sentiments. "I sympathize with the people who live along Mason Farm Road," he said Tuesday. "I don't expect them to applaud our decision. I just hope they understand the efforts that went into it."

Town residents expressed concern over the quick rate at which UNC is trying to implement its plan and say they are uneasy about the rapid growth of the University.

"I had hoped it would be a more thoughtful process," said Diana Steele,

a Mason Farm Road resident. "Growth does not necessarily mean quality."

Others expressed the summer months is a poor time to decide on such an influential decision.

"Rezoning means the town will have to review the development plan over the summer," Ruby Sinreich said. "This is the wrong time to make such a huge decision."

The town will have 90 days to review the inch-thick development plan and is expected to vote on the plan in early October. There will be several public hearings to allow town residents to continue to express their concerns with the University's growth.

Chancellor James Moeser said the University has worked hard to take resident's concerns into consideration and they will continue to do so.

"I hope we are signaling to the community that we really are trying to accommodate their concerns," he said. "That is our intent, and we've been trying to do that."

Waldorf said the University's expansion was almost inevitable.

"It's clear ... that the town cannot stand in the way of the University's growth," Waldorf said. "We have to permit their growth, but we also supervise their growth."

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