

Officials Look to Make Payments Predictable

By Brook Corwin
Staff Writer

Tuition increases at UNC-Chapel Hill might never be looked at the same way again.

During the past several years, tuition hikes have come primarily in the form of short-term increases implemented by individual campuses.

But this year, a bleak state financial outlook forced state legislators and UNC-CH administrators to examine the role of tuition as a funding source and how and why it is increased.

After UNC-CH students paid a 9 percent retroactive systemwide increase passed by the N.C. General Assembly last August, administrators proposed raising their tuition bills again – by as much as 12 percent based on systemwide tuition increases and \$300 based on campus-initiated increases.

The systemwide proposal would fund enrollment growth in the system by redistributing funds from some campuses – like UNC-CH – to others. The proposal will go before legislators this summer.

Officials and student leaders say the flurry of recent proposals has shifted UNC-CH's tuition philosophy from one-year increases to long-term plans.

"The thing we need more than anything else is predictability," said Provost Robert Shelton. "Tuition is going to go up, but we want to minimize that increase and let students plan for that."

Shelton said he hopes to establish long-term tuition guidelines by creating a standing committee made up of UNC-CH students, faculty and administrators.

Shelton said the committee, which will meet this summer, will work to create a three- to five-year plan for tuition increases that will be presented to the UNC-CH Board of Trustees in the fall.

A temporary University committee was formed last winter to craft a \$400, one-year increase proposal. The proposal was approved by the BOT in January, but later the UNC-system Board of Governors reduced it to \$300.

Shelton said he hopes the new committee will take into account the needs of UNC-CH and the needs of the UNC system as a whole to reduce the chances

the BOG will alter its proposal.

"I want this group to look at the whole picture with regard to tuition so that maybe we can influence a tuition increase after it leaves the BOT," he said. "If we can show the Board of Governors that we're thinking through this and reaching a rational proposal, I hope we can have an influence on their decision."

Senior Eric Johnson, a member of last winter's Task Force on Tuition, said forming a long-standing tuition committee will be helpful because the committee can examine the philosophical issues of maintaining access to the University – something he said the task force did not have time to sufficiently address. "The advantage of this committee is that they'll have the time to look at long-term issues," Johnson said. "They'll be able to propose more responsible tuition increases."

But the new committee members won't be the only individuals reviewing tuition increase proposals this summer.

Student Body President Jen Daum said the magnitude of budget cuts the legislature makes to the University this summer could impact future tuition increases.

Johnson said that unless the General Assembly increases its financial support for UNC-CH, the University might use tuition to fund areas such as student services and student affairs that are typically funded through the state.

"The other times we raised tuition were short-term emergencies that diverted from normal policy," Johnson said. "What you have now is that administrators will look to tuition as a long-term solution to achieve certain goals. I'm afraid the BOG has accepted this."

Shelton said that even with the most recent increases, tuition at UNC-CH is still a bargain compared to most schools.

But he added that by increasing tuition all at once, the University places too great a burden upon students, something he hopes a long-term approach will change.

"The problem is that when tuition goes up 9 percent in one year, you can't plan for it," Shelton said. "Good buy or not, we're not treating people well in regard to predictability."

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Tuition Increase Seen as Short-Term Fix

By ALEX KAPLUN
State & National Editor

"We're doing this as a one-time stop-gap measure. I hope that we will never have to do it again."

With those words, UNC-system Board of Governors member Addison Bell closed a late-night, March 5 meeting of the board's Budget and Finance Committee. Just an hour earlier, the committee agreed to the largest systemwide tuition increase ever approved by the BOG.

The committee passed an 8 percent across-the-board tuition increase for all in-state students and a 12 percent increase for all out-of-state students – a total of \$186 and \$1,478 for UNC-Chapel Hill students, respectively.

Less than 24 hours later – on March 6 – in front of about 50 student protesters, the full board approved that same tuition increase by a 21-6 vote.

Now the stopgap measure will head to the N.C. General Assembly for approval.

Along with the systemwide increase proposal, the legislature also will examine individual campus-initiated tuition increase requests, including a one-year, \$300 increase at UNC-CH.

Revenue generated from the systemwide tuition increase – a total of about \$40 million – will go to fund enrollment growth and need-based financial aid,

about half of the system's need for 2002-03.

UNC-system officials and some legislators are hopeful that the legislature will be able to fund the remaining \$40 million. "I think they will (fund enrollment growth)," BOG Chairman Ben Ruffin said. "I think (legislators) understand and we've gotten good response back from them regarding enrollment."

But few are expressing any hope that the legislature will be able to provide any more than \$40 million – which would allow for the tuition increase to be scaled back proportionately.

When lawmakers officially head back to Raleigh on May 28, they will have to find a way to trim about \$1.2 billion from the state's \$15 billion budget.

North Carolina is facing one of the worst fiscal situations in state history with both lagging tax revenues and the need for increased spending for Medicaid and education initiatives all combining into a budget deficit well more than \$1 billion



Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand says he will continue to examine the tuition increase.

for the next fiscal year.

Sen. Jeanne Lucas, D-Durham, co-chairwoman of the Senate Appropriations on Education Committee said that while there are many factors legislators will have to consider before approving a tuition increase, the state's bleak fiscal outlook might leave legislators with little choice.

"It's obvious someone needs to put some money out there for all the University's needs," Lucas said. "You can't do anything without money. Here we are with the economy being so bad, and the people are unwilling to pay more taxes. ... Where do find the money?"

Despite similar – although somewhat less severe – conditions last summer, legislators were able to provide the full \$40 million that the UNC-system needed for enrollment growth.

UNC-system Association of Student Governments President Andrew Payne said that while he is confident that legislators will find the \$40 million in funding, they might increase tuition even beyond what the BOG approved. "(Legislators) are not going to decrease the recommended tuition increase from the Board of Governors," Payne said. "Actually, I think you might see an additional increase for out-of-state students."

Payne said he would not be surprised if legislators increase tuition for out-of-state students by as much as 15 percent in an

effort to generate additional revenue.

But whether lawmakers will even accept the systemwide increase is also still up in the air.

Senate Majority Leader Tony Rand, D-Cumberland, also said lawmakers will examine whether the systemwide tuition increase is fair to all 16 UNC-system campuses. When the BOG approved the systemwide tuition increase, some UNC-CH officials complained that it was unfair to the campus because about \$5 million in tuition receipts raised at UNC-CH would flow to other UNC-system schools.

"We will certainly look at the fact that a significant amount of the money is going to be taken from Chapel Hill and spent at other schools," Rand said.

Payne also said he is concerned that the many problems facing the legislature this summer could force the session to drag into next fall, creating the possibility of a retroactive tuition increase.

Last year, the General Assembly did not approve a 9 percent across the board tuition increase until August 29 – more than a week after the start of classes.

Payne said, "If the General Assembly stays past the beginning of the school year, we could once again have a retroactive tuition increase."

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Year Tests Relations Between Students, Officials

By DANIEL THIGPEN
Assistant University Editor

The emergence of this year's prominent issues posed serious tests in communication between students and administrators – but ultimately, both groups say they were working for the same goals.

Chancellor James Moeser did not hesitate to reflect on the perceived turbulence between students and administrators in the past year.

"It's been a tough year and not an altogether satisfactory year," Moeser said. "There's been a lot of frustration on the part of students."

Provost Robert Shelton also noted that at times dialogues were contentious. But more often than not, he said, his interactions with students were constructive, citing his work on the Task Force on Tuition.

The committee of students, faculty and administrators met during Winter Break to recommend a one-year, \$400 campus-based tuition increase. "Students were very positively participatory ... even when they vehemently disagreed with

something," Shelton said.

Senior Eric Johnson, who served on the task force, said administrators were open to suggestions. But if the process had not been so short, he said, students might have been more effective. "The process was in motion to increase tuition, and students only responded then," he said. "On the student side, you should have seen this coming."

But one instance in which both students and administrators agree communication was lacking was during this year's discussions about balancing the Department of Public Safety's \$2 million budget deficit. While various parking proposals surfaced throughout the year-long process, administrators finally agreed on a compromise plan in April.

Ultimately, officials decided that internal cuts would be the best solution to efficiently address the shortfall.



Provost Robert Shelton says some dialogue between students and administrators was strained.

But most contention centered on the discussions about implementing a night parking program, which sparked debate about student safety and other concerns.

"I think the whole parking thing got off on the wrong foot and never got back on track," Shelton said, who was involved in parking discussions last fall.

Former Student Body Vice President Rudy Kleysteuber speculated that administrators did not fully grasp students' concerns about the issue. "The problem with parking was that the chancellor didn't realize, and his subordinates didn't feel, the great importance that parking decisions have on campus," he said. "That could do nothing but become a public debate, and I don't think administrators were ready for that level of debate."

Shelton said a better example of civil student-administrative interaction was last year's On the Wake of Emancipation Campaign protest against alleged institutional racism. After the group presented a list of demands to Shelton, he and the campaign have held periodic meetings to discuss the issues, he said.

Many student leaders have contended that more of this constructive dialogue could have taken place during UNC's negotiations with the Qatar Foundation for Science, Education and Community Development. The group solicited the University's resources for establishing a satellite business school in the region, but UNC officials ultimately backed out of the proposal after months of negotiations. Last November, when faculty mem-

bers visited Doha, Qatar, student leaders were upset about the fact that then-Student Body President Justin Young was not allowed on the trip despite his requests. Their concerns directly resulted in a public forum and a seminar for students to pose questions about the venture.

But Kleysteuber said he is convinced Moeser took student input about Qatar into serious consideration. "The chancellor made clear that student involvement steered the negotiations," he said.

While students' suggestions were considered during the negotiations, Shelton said he stands firm that they should not have held as much weight as faculty members' simply because the faculty were formulating potential programs and curriculums. "We handled the Qatar situation infinitely more openly than (other universities involved in the proposal)," he said.

Shelton said it is difficult to gauge the student body's opinion when any issues arise and that officials must rely on student leaders. "On one level, it's critical we work with those elected representatives."

Student Body President Jen Daum – who already has worked with administrators through the Student Advisory Committee to the Chancellor – said next year brings the opportunity to improve student relations with administration. "My officers and I are in constant contact with South Building," she said. "I look forward to our relationships developing."

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