

HIGHER PRICE TAG

Tuition increase bad for UNC

When I was campaigning last year for Student Body President, I ran under the motto, "Come Together."

It not only allowed me to use that catchy Beatles song, but also captured what is truly special about our University. When we work together, we have the resources to be a leading public institution.

But after a week of Board of Trustees meetings and tuition strife, I fear Carolina is in danger of falling apart. The decision made by the board and supported by our chancellor last week puts the diversity of future classes and the overall educational quality of our University at risk.

I was disappointed with the haste in which the board considered the tuition increase proposal.

Late last year, Nancy Suttentopf, vice chancellor for finance and administration, presented the trustees with an excellent five-year

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financial plan addressing, among other things, the concerns for faculty retention.

Faculty retention was the main reason for the large increase. However, it's a serious long-term problem that will not be solved by a one-year hike. We must plan in advance for the financial well-being of our University.

I'm not against tuition increases. I understand the market-based argument for raising out-of-state tuition. But because the board ignored the opportunity to complete a six-month study to provide guidance, I believe its actions are irresponsible. A study would weigh the risks and benefits for raising out-of-state tuition. The risks are considerable.

Our admissions office Web site celebrates Carolina's prominence in national rankings. But in approving this increase, the trustees are choosing to conduct a live experiment with our student body and jeopardizing our claims to national fame.

The decision to apply the increase to current students with little notice is disturbing, as it compromises the education of those already enrolled. The board urged campus administrators to help students and their families adjust to this unexpected tuition increase.

There are unsubsidized loans available in the form of low-interest federal Stafford Loans and other private loans. More than 5,500 students receive unsubsidized Stafford Loans, which are not based on financial need. This number is a good indication of the amount of students who barely miss out on need-based aid and are most vulnerable to unpredictable increases.

The campus-based increase isn't the only thing out-of-state students have to fear. Last year, the state legislature added a 5 percent (\$700) tuition increase.

The total potential increase in tuition next year will greatly exceed the 3 percent to 5 percent the Office of Scholarships and Student Aid advises students to expect. Families must be able to plan for the major financial investment inherent in higher education.

The University has a serious morale problem. In the days after the board's vote, I received many e-mails from upset students, alumni and parents.

A student said, "I feel as though the board and chancellor view us as commodities, not students."

A parent expressed, "I will make every effort to keep my son at UNC no matter what, but hate to burden him with more loans and more pressure."

Students feel marginalized, parents are worried about finances and alumni are concerned with the direction of our University. Faculty and staff also have expressed their unease with regard to the increase.

Our administrative leadership must turn its attention inward to make sure our vibrant community doesn't fall apart.

Contact Matt Tepper, student body president, at tepper@email.unc.edu.

In the days leading up to the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees' vote on whether or not to implement a \$1,500 tuition increase for nonresident students and a \$300 resident hike, various terms gained prominence in the University lexicon.

"Retention." Keeping valued members of the faculty on this campus has become both more important and more difficult, as more of them have been tempted to seek greener pastures.

"Philosophy." The BOT accepted that, for in-state students, tuition is based on the premium of affordability. For nonresidents, it is "value- and market-driven."

"Ends" and "means." Chancellor James Moeser said getting the desired result of UNC-CH leading the nation's public universities — and not the actions taken between now and then — should be at the forefront of administrators' considerations.

"Campus-based." Revenue from campus-based increases would be available solely for this University to use, as

opposed to systemwide hikes imposed by the UNC-system Board of Governors or state legislators.

"Merit- and talent-based scholarships." Administrators received flak for setting aside revenue from the proposed increase for the private Educational Foundation and the John Motley Morehead Foundation. Before the BOT's Jan. 21 meeting, officials eliminated such possibilities.

The trustees have voted. The increases are on their way to the BOG for approval. Should that body authorize the hikes, they will go before the N.C. General Assembly, which can turn them into a reality.

The majority of trustees have argued that revenue from the hikes will help to satisfy the needs of the University and its faculty. Opponents of the increases have maintained that they will put more weight on nonresident shoulders and might affect UNC-CH's out-of-state applicant pool.

While the board has made its decision, the tuition debate is far from over.

Board took its time in its vote

Last week, the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees voted to recommend to the UNC-system Board of Governors campus-based tuition increases of \$300 for resident students and \$1,500 for nonresident students at Carolina.

We did not take this action lightly. It came after two months of careful study and deliberation. Throughout, we were guided by a desire to make this University the very best that it can be — for those of you who are here now and for those who will come after you.

When Chancellor James Moeser and his administration brought the Tuition Task Force recommendations to the Board of Trustees in November, we agreed that the task force had targeted tuition dollars toward the areas of greatest need: faculty salaries, teaching assistant compensation, need-based financial aid and a small but symbolic amount for

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staff compensation.

All of those areas address the future quality of the education we provide at Carolina.

But we felt that we really needed more discussion about tuition. We felt uncomfortable making incremental increases without a strong sense of where we were headed.

Rather than continuing the practice of incremental increases in tuition, we felt that the board should have a long-overdue discussion on where this University should be positioned with both in-state and out-of-state tuition.

Before our vote Wednesday, we spent a lot of time talking about the philosophy that should guide how we determine tuition levels.

We affirmed that we believe in the vision of becoming the leading public university. But we agreed that we also are committed to staying true to this University's founding principles.

We are mindful of the N.C. Constitution, which states, "The General Assembly shall provide that the benefits of The University of North Carolina and other public institutions of higher education, as far as practicable, be extended to the people of the State free of expense."

We agreed that resident tuition should be affordable to ensure accessibility and thus should remain in the bottom quartile of our national public peers. We agreed that nonresident tuition should be value- and market-driven, with the goal of reaching but not exceeding the 75th percentile of our national public peers. And we reiterated our commitment toward providing for all students eligible for financial aid.

We firmly believe that our philosophical approach to our campus-based tuition should determine any specific dollar amounts for increases. That philosophy also should guide the future work of tuition task forces discussing campus-based tuition issues and the administration.

It's important for students to know that tuition is just one piece of the University's overall financial plan. The state has supported higher education generously over the years. But the state's economic realities make it unlikely that it can invest more right now.

We are relying increasingly on the faculty's ability to attract research funding and on private gifts raised through the \$1.8 billion Carolina First campaign. Campus-based tuition increases are just one revenue stream: They enable us to target academic plan priorities that directly affect the quality of the education we provide to students.

The decisions we made last week did not come easy. This was hard work, and we know our conclusions are not popular with everyone. But the Board of Trustees is charged with making hard decisions, always with an eye on maintaining and strengthening this great University.

Contact Richard Williams, chairman of the UNC Board of Trustees, at rwillia@duke-power.com.

EDITORIAL CARTOON

"Keep Your eyes ON THE ENDS AND NOT JUST THE MEANS"



With retention in mind, hikes are reasonable

There has been a considerable outcry about the tuition hike approved last week. After all, \$1,500 is a large chunk of change for out-of-state students to swallow.

But this is not an unreasonable increase.

First, we all know that tuition has to go up sometimes in order to maintain the quality of the University.

Second, this is a public university that is chartered to educate North Carolinian students at the most reasonable cost. If the potential cost to residents is lowered by charging nonresidents more, then so be it.

Finally, while being one of the most affordable universities is laudable, we should be strive to become the best educational institution possible and not merely the "best buy."

Last year our faculty retention rate was less than 50 percent when taking into account faculty members who had received outside offers. That is completely unacceptable for a university of our standing.

Whatever else members of the Board of Trustees might have said or done, they are correct in saying that we are in a crisis when it comes to faculty retention. If we cannot compete with other institutions, we will cease to be one of the leading public universities in the nation.

A high quality faculty is essential to UNC's future. Even if we do not want to grow, we must not lose ground by allowing our best professors to be lured away by rival universities.

UNC is indeed a public university — but its purpose is to educate North Carolinians first and foremost.

Of course, it would be idiotic to suggest that nonresidents do not enhance my education and that of other in-state students. That being said, if the University can delay or minimize in-state tuition increases by increasing

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out-of-state more so, then such an increase would be in line.

Jerry Lucido, director of undergraduate admissions, conceded that there probably would not be a decrease in the quality of the applicants admitted with a one-year, \$1,500 increase. This year alone, we turned away several hundred out-of-state applicants who scored higher than 1,400 on the SAT.

If current students really are held harmless from the bulk of the increase, as has been promised, then this tuition increase should not affect significantly the students here — nor will it lower the quality of the average UNC student in the future.

We should push to have the highest quality school possible. Sure, it's great to be the most efficient use of dollars for education, but that is not necessarily going to go away with higher quality to go with the tuition increase.

I have constantly heard that UNC is "not UVA or Michigan." Well, I say we are, and we can be even better than those institutions and still be less expensive than them.

In short, we should strive to be the best university that we can be — not just the cheapest.

We cannot stop moving forward as a school, or we will stagnate and fall behind. We must have quality instructors to teach us, and they do not come free of charge.

If we want to continue to have an education that will be considered to be on par with or even better than our peer institutions, then we will have to look toward tomorrow. We can't just dig in our heels, hoping to make today last forever.

Contact Chris Cameron, editorial board member, at ccameron@email.unc.edu.

BOT decision doesn't fit with UNC-CH ideals

I am an in-state student from Chapel Hill. Although I was born in Virginia, I long have considered this quintessential college town to be my home.

This means the mission statement of the UNC system refers to me, among many other others, when it states that "the University of North Carolina is a public, multi-campus university dedicated to the service of North Carolina and its people."

I am a Carolina Scholars Award recipient and a National Merit Scholar, meaning that my parents and I pay a relatively minuscule amount of money for my education here.

That being said, who am I to take issue with the UNC-Chapel Hill Board of Trustees, now that it has voted in favor of a \$1,500 tuition hike for out-of-state students and a \$300 increase for residents?

Why should I question the board's actions and motives? The trustees are intelligent, successful people who have been involved more closely in University affairs for a significantly greater amount of time than I have. They should know what's best for students like me and UNC-CH employees.

Right? Nevertheless, their recent decision gives me pause.

I consider the fact that while many of my friends here are native Tar Heels, many more were attracted to the University from outside this state's borders.

I consider the fact that the \$1,500 more that they and all other nonresidents — current, prospective, graduate and undergraduate — will have to pay each year isn't exactly chump change.

In fact, it's a considerable extra burden that many of them will be hard-pressed to assume.

I consider the fact that there was barely any mention of the Tuition Task Force's October recommendation for an across-the-board campus-based

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increase of \$900 over three years.

I consider the fact that, despite the glaring financial needs and concerns of the people who work here, the Faculty Council unanimously condemned the proposal to increase nonresident tuition drastically.

I consider the fact that, in the end, the board disregarded a number of Faculty Council Chairwoman Judith Wegner's cautions — against the high dollar amount of the increase, the rushed pace of discussion, the skewed focus of the debate and the BOT's contentious tuition philosophy for nonresidents.

I begin to think that by approving this tuition hike, the BOT essentially is marching into the darkness without a guiding light. Ultimately, we might reach a point at which UNC-CH truly will be the leader of public universities — "No. 1," so to speak. But the path we now are using to get there seems foreboding, to say the least.

I begin to think that paying too little attention to the means is a dangerous proposition, no matter how tantalizing the ends are.

I begin to think that Carolina should not be nipping at other universities' heels.

I begin to think that this decision to tamper severely with nonresidents' ability to pay for a Carolina education compromises the University's ideals.

And with all that in mind, I begin to think that I — in addition to all those members of the University community who have voiced their opposition to the one-year, \$1,500 hike — am right.

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