

System might see fund consolidation

Schools may lose overhead funds

BY MATTHEW BOWLES
STAFF WRITER

UNC-system campuses could lose their individual oversight of important funds if the N.C. General Assembly brings back a retired budgetary measure.

As legislators examine various proposals meant to balance the budget and fill a massive shortfall, they might look at taking overhead receipts from the universities and putting the money into the General Fund.

Overhead receipts, formally referred to as facilities and administrative receipts, accompany federal research grants to cover costs indirectly related to the projects themselves.

These receipts, now controlled by recipient universities, could go to the General Fund of the university system — and legislators would have the choice of where to spend them.

In addition to the more than \$1 billion it received in research grants, the UNC system was awarded a total of \$149.4 million in overhead receipts for the 2003-04 fiscal year. Almost 69 percent of this money was reserved for UNC-Chapel Hill.

The university has not always held full control over these receipts, said Jeff Davies, UNC-system vice president for finance.

"Several years ago, there was a process in place by which the state captured some of the university's overhead receipts," he said. "During the last few years, we have retained 100 percent of the receipts."

Tony Waldrop, UNC-CH vice chancellor for research and economic development, said a reduction in receipts would hinder the University's research departments.

"Clearly that would have a huge impact, depending on the amount they decide to withhold," he said.

Money from facilities and administrative receipts are one source for supplementing higher

education bonds, funding of construction projects, maintaining libraries and paying research aides, Waldrop said.

"We're very appreciative that the state has allowed us to retain those funds in recent years."

But state lawmakers are not ruling out the option of seizing some of the money.

Rep. Maggie Jeffus, D-Guilford, chairwoman of the appropriations subcommittee on education, said the committee still is discussing the particulars of the budget and has not made a decision.

"At this point, everything is on the table to look at," Jeffus said. "I don't know that one is more important than the other."

The Senate has yet to present its own plan and will first address the issue in committee. Because of the budget shortfall, members of the Senate's higher education appropriations subcommittee are among those who have to make cuts.

The committee has asked state universities to plan for budget cuts of as much as 4 percent, though Sen. A. B. Swindell, D-Nash, co-chairman of the committee, said they probably won't be that high.

He added that putting overhead receipts in the General Fund is always an option to quell budget deficits.

Swindell also said the state must be cautious with regard to which funds it decides to cut, adding that the government should act in the interest of students.

"We must stay focused on the students," he said. "Numbers are well and good, but each time I take a look at the budget and I see cuts, I think of what this will do to the students."

And if the state legislature does attempt to take some of the overhead receipts, university administrators will lobby hard against any such measure, Davies said.

"We would argue at length, if this proposal emerged, to ensure that these funds are available at the campuses."

Contact the State & National Editor at stntdesk@unc.edu.

SCHOOLS

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value," he said.

Pedersen shared a similar outlook. "Any of these reductions will reduce the quality of the programs and services we offer," he said.

Board member Mike Kelley said he hopes commissioners realize the importance of public education when they review Pedersen's recommended budget May 5. "We are the best thing government can do with its dollars," he said.

After commissioners discuss the budget next month, the budget

will continue to be reviewed and revised through a series of public hearings and work sessions.

Pedersen will announce the district's final budget July 21.

And while he said he is trying to be positive about the budget process, Pedersen admitted that he thinks the outlook is not bright.

"I want to be optimistic," Pedersen said.

"But frankly, I don't know if I've received signs that we should necessarily be optimistic."

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

Professor reports to city schools

Grumet eyes future work on disparity

BY BRIANNA BISHOP
ASSISTANT CITY EDITOR

On the heels of a report citing major disparities between the two local school districts, some city school board members say further study is needed at the heart of the issue — in the classroom.

Professor Madeleine Grumet of the University's School of Education, who spearheaded the report, spoke with the Chapel Hill-Carrboro Board of Education on Thursday about her recent findings.

Grumet's report states that due to the district's special tax, city schools have about \$12 million more than county schools each year to spend on resources such as social workers and subject-area specialists.

Both Grumet and members of the school board agreed that the area needs further contemplation and more in-depth studies to look at the true disparities between the districts.

"This study has to be moved to the next level," Vice Chairwoman Liz Carter said, adding that the teachers and parents who see the inner workings of the schools on a daily basis should be included in the research.

Grumet had similar thoughts, saying the report provided data and inferences but not the significance of its findings.

"We're also not giving you very powerful information about what's going on in the classrooms," she added.

She said that in order to really understand the problems facing both systems, studies need to focus on how it feels to be a student in each district.

Grumet told the board she would enjoy the opportunity to research such projects.

The Orange County Board of Commissioners first requested the report to help it examine a controversial proposal to merge the districts — an idea first pro-

posed by Commissioner Moses Carey Jr. in 2003 as a solution to the inequity problems between the systems.

But Grumet said the report was not comprehensive enough to weigh into a debate of the pros and cons of merger.

"I don't feel our work has generated an opinion," she said of the report, adding that the idea of a merger has to do with social issues not touched upon in the report.

"I think the issues of merger have as much to do with culture as they do with resources," she said.

"Merger is more than money and achievement."

While there is still not a definitive answer about how to equalize the districts' resources, Grumet said that by increasing collaboration, the districts could easily find ways in which they can help each other.

"There are possibilities of just extending the areas where each district is stronger," she said. Specifically, Grumet said the dis-



UNC Professor Madeleine Grumet reported on the disparity between area schools.

tricts could work together on developing curricula and training for professionals such as administrators.

Employees of county schools do not have access to the same opportunities for professional development as city school workers, she said.

Board Chairwoman Lisa Stuckey thanked Grumet for her research, saying the report gave the district the opportunity to look at itself from a much broader perspective.

"I thought the report was fascinating," she said.

Grumet will meet with the Orange County Board of Education April 25 to discuss her findings.

Contact the City Editor at citydesk@unc.edu.

CHANGES

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Last fall, 16 students were put on probation because of academic violations, and 28 received probation as part of punishment for conduct violations such as drug offenses and property violations.

McDowell said he'd prefer to get more opinions on the issue before changing the standard.

"I feel like everyone in the University should have a say in that," he said.

Officials also are considering whether to maintain the current standard needed for conviction.

As it now stands, the honor system cannot convict a defendant unless it is sure "beyond a reasonable doubt" that the student is guilty. The changes would switch that to a "reasonable standard" of proof.

Because the honor system is a

"We need to do a better job of analyzing what was going on in the student's life."

DAVE GILBERT, DEAN

University entity and not a criminal court, Chavez said, it is not bound to "beyond a reasonable doubt."

Leaders are still discussing the revisions, and they won't take any action until next year when the Committee on Student Conduct gets outside opinions, Chavez said. "It's a conversation we've been needing for a while."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

WHITE RIBBON

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Ertischek, the group's treasurer.

He said it is important to funnel peer pressure into something that can produce change for the better.

The campaign sponsored a Salsa Night last week to raise money for the violence prevention center, which Ertischek said group members see as a very worthy cause.

Members of Que Rico, a University dance subgroup of the Carolina Hispanic Association, volunteered to teach participants the moves during the evening, for which the campaign sold more than 60 tickets.

"The focus of the campaign is to get men involved, but this was one way we could get women involved," Satterwhite noted.

After collecting a few small

donations on top of the cash from their ticket sales, the group presented a \$485.76 check Thursday to Melissa Radcliff, interim executive director of the violence prevention center.

Radcliff said that as a small organization, the center does not have many resources. She said continued support from campus groups aids the organization by providing access for more people.

"We would like to think this is a relationship that could grow not only through the campaign season but throughout the year," she said.

Ertischek said he has high hopes for the campaign's future. "Next year, we'll have people who are really interested and looking to kick it up a notch."

Contact the University Editor at udesk@unc.edu.

BUDGET

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the town get out of the commercial garbage business altogether.

Committee members also are poised to recommend the sale of at least one of three town-owned buildings: the post office building on Franklin Street, the Chapel Hill Museum and the Inter-Faith Council's men's shelter.

Member Alan Rimer said selling the museum and relocating it to the old post office would be a solution to everyone's problem.

But the committee might be hard-

pressed to find common ground on issues such as employee medical benefits and competitive pay raises.

Rimer said that compared to private standards, employee medical benefits, which are expected to increase 15 percent or \$440,000 next year, are extremely generous.

While former town Mayor Joe Capowski said he is reluctant to change medical benefits for workers in "tough, dirty jobs," many members favored keeping insurance costs down by placing a cap on increases.

Perhaps the town's most cov-

eted priority excluded from the base budget — and at \$750,000, the largest — are across-the-board competitive pay raises.

But, as areas for savings dwindle, funding proposed 3 percent raises could be difficult, Pease said.

Capowski said the town should prioritize a 1.5 percent raise for the town's lowest-paid workers.

"I think we need to do something to help these employees, to help their morale," he said.

On Saturday, the committee will finalize its recommendations, which will be presented to the council Monday night.

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Women's Tennis vs. Virginia
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