

The Daily Tar Heel

Established 1893,
115 years
of editorial freedom

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Budget articles tough to humanize

“UNC plans for cuts to funding.”

That was a Daily Tar Heel headline on March 22, 2002. But it could just as easily have been last week. After several years of a booming state economy and generous funding increases for higher education, lean times are back.

PUBLIC EDITOR

And so are budget cut articles in the pages of the DTH. Budget stories are to reporters what annotated bibliographies are to history majors. They are complicated, research-intensive and unexciting, and there's a big risk of getting the details wrong. They're also some of the most important articles in the paper.

“Budgets can be intimidating for any reporter,” wrote journalism professor Jan Johnson Yopp. “To write about financial cutbacks, journalists have to understand the budget components and then where the cuts are being made.”

That can be maddeningly difficult to figure out at a place like UNC, with a maze of different funding streams and a decentralized process for making cutbacks.

A single department might receive a chunk of funding from the state, a little from endowments and gifts, some from tuition and another portion from research grants. Simply saying that state funding was cut by 5 percent does nothing to show what actually happened in that department.

“My goal is to take budget cuts — and the national economy in general — and show how students are affected,” wrote Andrew Dunn, DTH University editor.

With the downturn still in its early stages, that's difficult. And there's a tendency to focus on raw numbers and broad official pronouncements.

But the interesting part is in the details. Did you know that UNC uses salaries from empty faculty positions to pay for everything from light bills to graduate stipends?

That means you can eliminate a half-dozen faculty positions without necessarily firing anyone, but some grad student in a research lab might have to take on thousands more in debt to make up for a lost stipend.

How that affects her life — did she miss a trip home, is she eating more mac 'n' cheese? — is the true story of the budget cut. You can't get that from the raw numbers.

Allison Nichols, DTH editor-in-chief, said she is committed to producing those kind of stories in the months ahead.

“Almost by necessity, I think a lot of it has to be anecdotal,” Nichols said. “We tend to focus on it in a more qualitative way.”

It's still early, but reporting on budget cuts so far has included some limited illustrations of tangible impact. In the Nov. 6 article “Cuts force creative saving,” staff writer Brecken Branstrator reported that the economics department is cutting funding for visitors and speakers, and that the anthropology department has trimmed some recitations. But the article didn't say how many events might be cancelled, or how many students might be bumped from recitations.

Unfortunately for the economy, there's likely to be plenty of opportunity for those kind of feature stories.

“These are extraordinary economic times,” wrote Chancellor Holden Thorp in an e-mail to the entire campus last week. “We're committed to getting through this rough period as smoothly as possible with your help, cooperation and patience. And we pledge to keep you informed.”

Ditto for the budding number-crunchers at the DTH.

EDITORIAL CARTOON By Alex Lee, lobin@email.unc.edu



Lower tuition hikes best

Higher proposed increases would burden families

In this time of financial crisis, smaller tuition hikes are the right way to go.

Chancellor Holden Thorp should recommend to the Board of Trustees the lower of the two proposals for tuition increases: hikes of nonresident undergraduate tuition by \$1,150 and graduate tuition by \$400.

These figures are the lower of two proposals presented to him by a tuition and fee advisory task force. But they are still high enough to cover the Higher Education Price Index.

This year, college affordability for all students should be of more concern than hiring more faculty to reduce class size or increasing salaries.

Going with the steeper of the two levels of tuition increases for nonresident undergradu-

ates would be a mistake given the current economic climate.

One of those proposals, for nonresident undergraduate increases, is \$1,339. Last year, out-of-state tuition was raised by \$1,250. Considering that more families may have a harder time affording college this year, increasing tuition more than last year is an unreasonable burden.

Resident tuition isn't being debated because tuition hikes are capped at 6.5 percent and administrators are likely to go with the maximum increase.

The argument for higher tuition increases is that without funds for important measures like raising faculty salaries, the University won't keep up with peer institutions — a perspective that has resonated with this board in the past.

But not this year.

It's true that UNC is committed to holding students harmless. Last year, 35 percent of the hikes were dedicated to need-based aid.

But keeping tuition hikes low in the first place would mean the financial aid office wouldn't need as much money to immunize needy students from tuition hikes.

Thorp does not have to choose any of the proposals, but he will consider them before making a recommendation to the Board of Trustees.

Continued increases in academic quality and faculty salaries are important. But not at the expense of making college unaffordable. This year more than ever, affordability must come first.

Green investment

Town smart to invest in hybrid-electric buses

Thanks to some federal funding, and some forward thinking by town officials, Chapel Hill will be a bit greener by April.

The Chapel Hill Town Council's decision to more than double its fleet of hybrid-electric buses is one example of a shift toward sustainable, environmentally conscious policies.

Following a long political campaign season with lots of talk about “investing in green energy,” the sound decision-making of the council reflects the direction of Americans toward environmentally con-

scious decisions.

The hybrid-electric buses are a solid investment because of their reduced maintenance costs, along with the obvious emission reductions.

Because of the difference in price — hybrid buses cost \$215,000 more than diesel-fueled buses — it required a federal grant of \$3 million to bring the buses to the streets of Chapel Hill.

Seven buses will be added to the fleet, and all of them will get five miles per gallon, compared with the diesel-powered buses fuel mileage of three miles per gallon.

Though federal funding made the additions possible, the town still will pay 10 percent of the total cost of the buses, with the N.C. Department of Transportation kicking in another 10 percent. Also, the addition of two longer hybrid buses will be financed by the town.

This financial commitment shows the town is serious about making green investments.

It is encouraging to see cooperation between the federal, state and local government in addressing environmental concerns with financially sound ideas.

QuickHits

Ellipticals

About half the ellipticals at Rams Head are broken. The board is split on this — half of us love the things, the others just want to see the rest of the machines break as well.

Arson

Authorities believe that the fire in Gerrard Hall was caused by arson. Shame on whoever did this. The University just spent \$2.4 million renovating this building. Hey, arsonist: What were you thinking?

Walgreens

It's about time. One empty space on Franklin filled, many more to go. Walgreens should be a convenient option for students. But let's face it, there's no substitute for the Gap.

RSVVP

On Nov. 11 local restaurants donated 10 percent of their sales to help fight hunger in the Triangle. We're glad to see local businesses continue to support this 20-year-old initiative.

Noon Football Games

These games seriously cramp our style. Getting up at 9 a.m. to enjoy pre-game festivities? Come on. But on the other hand, lighting for night games hasn't had the best track record this year.

Basketball

For the first time in Associated Press preseason poll history, there's been a unanimous preseason No. 1 (UNC). Let's just hope we're unanimously No. 1 when it really counts — at the end of the season.

Ashley Harrington
Junior
International Studies, Public
Policy

Dialogue should continue on town developments

TO THE EDITOR:

It's important to recognize that Greenbridge is in fact only one piece of the broader trend of gentrification in Chapel Hill.

Developments like Rosemary Village, Warehouse Apartments, the Franklin Hotel and the upcoming development at 140 W. Franklin St. all contribute to rising property taxes.

Not to mention the handful of realtors who, during the last 20 years, have increased property values in Northside by purchasing houses, renovating them and renting them out to students at high prices.

This factor in particular is one of the major contributors to the marginalization of the Northside community, which has seen the number of owner-occupied homes drop from 80 to 20 percent.

Greenbridge is simply the most visible and current cause of gentrification in Chapel Hill, not the sole harbinger of it. Give them credit for their environmental and social equity efforts, even if they have been a bit short-sighted.

Let's keep dialogue open. Northside is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in town, and it will remain that way only through a spirit of cooperation from both sides.

Jon McDonald
Senior
English

Arielle Reid
Sophomore
Political Science

'La Colina' section shows the DTH's business savvy

TO THE EDITOR:

Far too often, Americans sacrifice the prosperity of our nation to strive for an antiquated, xenophobic image of America where nothing ever changes.

To observe this phenomenon, one need look no further than the graduate schools of America's great universities, where we mold thousands of international students into great minds every year, only to see them leave after graduation as stifling immigration laws prevent them from obtaining work visas.

On the other hand, The Daily Tar Heel correctly recognizes the importance of globalization, catering to the significant (and increasing) Hispanic population of North Carolina.

Smart businesses like the DTH, rather than swimming against the tide, adapt to the ever-changing landscape of commerce. If “La Colina” was truly a bad idea, the DTH's revenues would suffer, and it would likely stop publishing the section; this is the beauty of the free-market system we celebrate in America.

Joseph M. Crowley
BSBA '07
Chicago, IL

QUOTE OF THE DAY:

“I would certainly expect that the (stem cell research) ban would be overturned. I believe that is very good news for research.”

TONY WALDROP, VICE CHANCELLOR FOR RESEARCH AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

FEATURED ONLINE READER COMMENT:

“(United with the Northside Community NOW)'s sole achievement has been complaining about something it does not fully understand.”

— ON “NORTHSIDE STORIES”

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Homecoming selection process unfair this year

TO THE EDITOR:

Why two extremely qualified female black candidates for homecoming queen, Mia Barnes and Eboni Blake, were denied the right to campaign has never been fully explained but one cannot help but find fault in the process when one reviews their resumes and service project plans.

Donovan Livingston, the black male candidate, was forced to give up his opportunity to open for “Gym Class Heroes.” He was asked to perform by CUAB but the Homecoming Committee said it would give him unfair exposure.

Jeremy Crouthamel, however, was not discouraged from wearing his cheerleading uniform and cheering or from allowing Rameses to hold his sign in the Pit. Donovan is a noted rap artist on the campus, just as Jeremy is a cheerleader. Why was one prohibited from filling his normal role and the other not?

The tactics and mechanisms employed in this year's homecoming selection process were discriminatory and unjust. And we students, who value and cherish our self-government above all else, cannot let this situation go unnoticed or unspoken about. We cannot allow a committee of five people with a process that is clearly not transparent and criteria that are not spelled out to decide who we call King and Queen. It is 2008, we have done better than this and we should demand the same of the Homecoming Committee.

First Amendment should not be used as a shield

TO THE EDITOR:

After reading the letter to the editor titled “Free speech tunnel allows just that, free expression,” (Nov. 12), I am disheartened to find that some Americans still don't understand the First Amendment.

It's upsetting to hear people say insulting things, and then use “free speech” as a way to dodge the consequences of their actions. If you verbally offend your boss and he fires you, are you going to take him to court for obstructing your First Amendment rights?

If a child utters a “bad word” and his mom punishes him by not letting him watch TV for a week, are his rights being violated? No.

Buck Burnette, an athlete from the University of Texas, learned this last week when he made racist remarks about Barack Obama and was consequently kicked off the football team.

That wasn't an obstruction of his First Amendment right, as the government did not arrest him for his offensive language. But he did suffer the informal consequences of his actions.

The First Amendment doesn't protect you from your boss, your mom, your coach, your friends or your school, and it doesn't mean you won't pay for your words.

I implore all Americans to stop using the banner of free speech to promote a culture of immaturity and irresponsibility. It's time for people to be held accountable for what they say.

If you're brave enough to say something, you'd better be brave enough to accept the consequence, whether it's a dirty look, a slap on the wrist or expulsion.

SPEAK OUT

WRITING GUIDELINES:

- ▶ Please type: Handwritten letters will not be accepted.
- ▶ Sign and date: No more than two people should sign letters.
- ▶ Students: Include your year, major and phone number.
- ▶ Faculty/staff: Include your

department and phone number.

▶ Edit: The DTH edits for space, clarity, accuracy and vulgarity. Limit letters to 250 words.

SUBMISSION:

- ▶ Drop-off: at our office at Suite 2409 in the Student Union.
- ▶ E-mail: to dthedit@gmail.com
- ▶ Send: to P.O. Box 3257, Chapel Hill, N.C., 27515.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Columns, cartoons and letters do not necessarily represent the opinions of The Daily Tar Heel or its staff. Editorials reflect the opinions of The Daily Tar Heel editorial board. The board consists of six board members, two co-editors and the editor-in-chief.