



UNCC tuition hike considers needs and students' budgets

From UNC Charlotte Chancellor Philip L. Dubois:

Last week, the UNC Charlotte board of trustees approved my recommendation of a 6.5 percent increase in tuition and fees for fall 2012. We also put forth a \$100 "infrastructure improvement fee" to address our critical facilities needs. The total proposed increase for undergraduate resident North Carolinians is \$417, which would bring our total annual bill to \$5,857.

This recommendation was developed after extensive consultation with my senior leadership team, our trustees and with student leadership. It is a recommendation that fairly balances our needs to sustain academic quality and the maintenance of our facilities and infrastructure with the very real economic concerns I know our students and their families face. Even with these recommended increases, our tuition and fees will remain comfortably in the bottom 25 percent of our 17 public peer institutions in the nation.

By every measure, UNC Charlotte has always been a lean operation. Still, over the past four years, our campus has sustained a \$49 million permanent reduction in state funding, including \$33.5 million in the current year. To fill this year's gap with tuition alone would require a hike of 45 percent. That option, of course, makes no sense.

Unfortunately, with the many austerity measures we have already taken, including fewer and larger classes caused by 270 unfilled faculty and staff vacancies, and a mounting list of delayed infrastructure repairs, we must find additional revenue. Our proposed increases in tuition will raise about \$5 million and an additional \$1.7 million for need-based financial aid.

Even with the state's generous funding of both our newly opened Center City campus and the soon-to-open Energy Production Infrastructure Center (EPIC), funding for building renovations and repairs has virtually dried up. No new state-funded academic buildings are in planning, design, or construction even though the number of qualified students seeking an education with us continues to rise.

Miss Bonnie Cone, our founder, devoted a lifetime to encouraging young men and women of promise to pursue college degrees. These students were often from families of modest means and frequently the first in their families to attend college. Miss Bonnie understood that for those students, and the Charlotte region, UNC Charlotte was a gateway to a brighter future. That institutional heritage is central to our mission as the state's urban research university.

Today, among our 95,000 alumni, you will find Forty-Niners who have forged successful and productive careers; who have built and led businesses, both large and small; and who teach our children in our public schools, serve in the area's law enforcement agencies, and hold leadership positions in local and state governmental agencies.

These countless success stories were made possible by the UNC Charlotte experience. They affirm the importance for us - our faculty and staff, our students and their families, and the community - to work to protect access to this incredible asset and economic engine so that coming generations will have the same opportunities to create their futures and the future of our region.