

Governance

HIGHER EDUCATION NEWS FOR UNIVERSITY GOVERNORS AND TRUSTEES

An Executive Secretary for the UNC Board?

For the past year, the Pope Center has been urging that the UNC Board of Governors hire its own executive secretary. Why?

The Board of Governors is an eclectic group of individuals, including business executives who may be unfamiliar with higher education, all of whom are on the job only part-time. They can't possibly be up to speed on the many details of the university's operation.

And even the most savvy entrepreneur can easily be cowed by administrators and faculty who have Ph.D.s, long years in the academy, and who speak with elevated vocabularies.

Yet board members receive hundreds of pages of information for every meeting, often with only a few days to prepare. Rather than rely solely on the general administration, they should be determining the topics of discussion and expert witnesses.

Working with the chairman, an executive secretary would brief the members on board meeting materials, obtain additional information, and help them select topics and speakers.

However helpful the general administration can be, its staff should be advisers only. That's why an independent staff member is needed. ■

Jenna A. Robinson and Jane S. Shaw



Ending Unpopular Programs at the University System of Georgia

Jenna A. Robinson

(Editor's note: The experiences of states around the country can provide useful examples for the University of North Carolina.)

The University System of Georgia is taking a serious look at waste and duplication across its 31-school system. The effort is part of a strategic plan that includes as an "imperative" a commitment to measures of performance and accountability.

The reforms began when Hank Huckaby became chancellor of the system in 2011. Huckaby, who earlier served as director of the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, may have surprised some people with his determination to bring efficiency to the system.

Since then, 576 programs were terminated, while only 99 were added. In contrast, during 2010 and 2011, the system's regents approved 71 new programs and terminated only 12. The latest numbers may overstate the impact, since most of the programs were already inactive and thus the reduction didn't result in any faculty layoffs or cost savings. It also means that there has been no pushback from the universities during the program review process so far.

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But that may be just the beginning. Even after that reduction, many public Georgia universities don't meet the system's productivity standards. A May report analyzed degree production across the system, using "a data-driven process for reducing degree programs," with an eye to increasing overall productivity and making the most of campus and state resources.

By productivity, the regents mean the number of students a program graduates per year.

Their report, entitled "Academic Degree Productivity: Prioritization and Alignment of Mission, Programs, and Resources," found that only seven of the 31 schools meet the system's academic degree productivity criteria. The report described 18 percent of undergraduate programs and 28 percent of graduate programs at the other 24 schools as "low-producing." Across the University System of Georgia, those 383 programs are now being considered for elimination.

The measurement of productivity is quite explicit, although it varies with the nature and level of the program. Specifically, low-productivity programs are measured as:

- Associate programs: fewer than 5 graduates
- Bachelor's programs: fewer than 10 graduates
- Master's programs: fewer than 5 graduates
- Specialist in Education programs: fewer than 5 graduates
- Doctoral programs: fewer than 3 graduates
- First professional programs: fewer than 3 graduates

Among the undergraduate programs currently on the chopping block are: B.A. in speech/theatre at Albany State University, B.A. in gender and women's studies at Armstrong State University, B.S. in health fitness management at Clayton State University, B.S. in technology management at Dalton State College, A.S. in paralegal studies at Darton State College, B.S. in urban policy studies at Georgia State University, B.A. in African and African Diaspora studies at Kennesaw State University, B.S. in marine sciences.

A few of the graduate programs being considered for elimination are: Ph.D. in robotics at Georgia Institute of Technology, Ph.D. in crop and soil sciences at the University of Georgia, M.A. in art history at Georgia

State University, and several master's degrees in education across the system.

Low productivity is not the sole criterion. As the university makes its decisions about which programs to eliminate, it will consider the overall health of each program, its worth to the university, and its future prospects. Some programs may also be combined, reformed, or redesigned rather than eliminated.

Additionally, the university is considering a one-in, one-out policy. That is, for every academic program that is added, one will be removed. In any case, the progress so far suggests that more change is coming to the University System of Georgia. ■

WHAT DO EMPLOYERS THINK?

- For many employers it is difficult (42%) or very difficult (11%) to find recent college graduates who are qualified for jobs at their organization.
- When evaluating a candidate for employment, 43% of employers place more weight on experience and only 23% on academic credentials. 36% of employers rate the two equally.
- According to employers, the most important skills that colleges fail to teach their graduates are 1) written and oral communications skills, 2) adaptability/managing multiple priorities, and 3) making decisions/solving problems.
- Seven out of ten employers would hire a candidate even without a college degree.

Source: *The Chronicle of Higher Education and American Public Media's Marketplace*

The Budget Squeeze

Jenna A. Robinson and Jane S. Shaw



It is widely asserted that state legislatures are refusing to fund universities adequately—reflecting a long-term decline. But is it true?

Writing for the American Council of Education in 2012, John L. Pulley reported, “A quarter century ago, state funds covered 78 percent of the cost of college, says Julie Bell, education group director for the National Conference of State Legislatures. Today the figure is 60 percent.” He attributed to Jane Wellman, a well-known higher education analyst, the point that “the long-term trend of reducing state appropriations is largely a story of demographics and entitlement-based funding that have constrained state budgets.”

But could universities be finding other sources of revenue that make state appropriations pale in comparison? When we look at actual appropriations over time and compare them to actual revenues, that seems to be the case, both nationally and within North Carolina.

The most recent federal data on revenues and state appropriations are for the academic (or fiscal) year 2011-12. At the nation’s 711 public 4-year institutions, total university budgets were 83 percent higher than a decade earlier, in 2001-02. During the same time

period, revenues from state sources (operating and non-operating) grew by 22 percent. (All figures are in nominal dollars.)

That is, as Table 1 indicates, state appropriations grew, but they did not keep up with the rapid increases in other sources of funds. States did not, on average, cut appropriations to universities; their percentage merely went down.

In North Carolina, state funding has been even more generous, but revenues have grown still faster. From 2001-02 to 2011-12, state appropriations for public universities increased by 69.8 per cent. Total university revenues increased by 83.1 per cent. Table 2 shows this trend.

In 2011-12, the last year for which government statistics are available, there was a decline in state appropriations in North Carolina and the nation as a whole. (In North Carolina, as Table 2 indicates, state appropriations actually dipped only in 2008-09 and 2011-12.) Since then, as state economies have improved, the average appropriations have turned up, according to a survey by the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. ■

Table 1: State Support and Total Revenues
All U.S. 4-Year Public Institutions

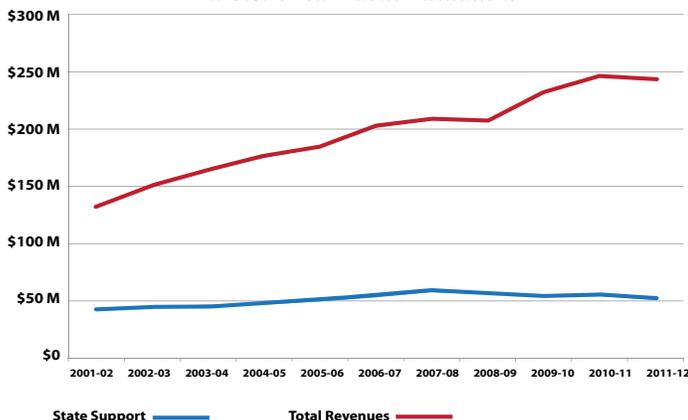
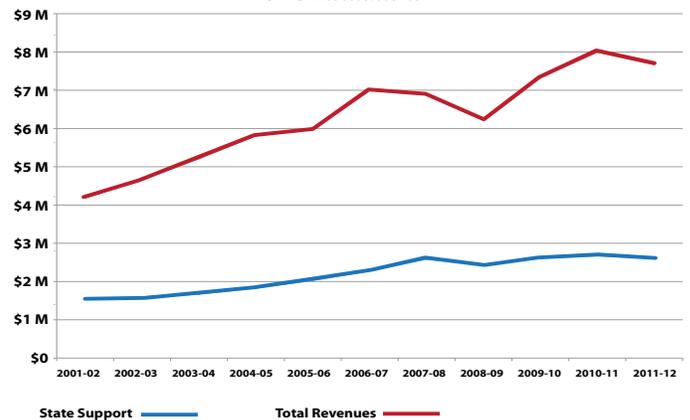


Table 2: State Support and Total Revenues
UNC Institutions



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Upcoming Events

7/31/2014

*Friedman Legacy 2014
Luncheon*

Loc: Wilmington, N.C.

9/10/2014

*Forum on General
Education at NC State*

*Loc: Talley Student
Center, NC State Univ.*

*Register online at
popecenter.org/events*

Do You Agree?

“[W]hether they are studying accounting or philosophy, hotel management or history, the vast majority of college students are capable of engaging the kinds of big questions—questions of truth, responsibility, justice, beauty, among others—that were once assumed to be at the center of college education.”



Andrew Delbanco, [College: What It Was, Is, and Should Be](#)

The goal of this letter is to help university trustees and governors to do a better job by being frank and thought-provoking.

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