

Governance

HIGHER EDUCATION NEWS FOR UNIVERSITY GOVERNORS AND TRUSTEES

JULY 2015

Time to End Summer Bridge Programs

The North Carolina General Assembly is taking steps to end summer bridge programs, which currently serve just 300 students at five UNC schools.

The House budget directs schools in the UNC system to defer enrollment for 1,305 academically weak students until after they have earned an associate's degree at a community college. Those students will then be guaranteed admission to UNC schools as juniors.

And a bill that has already passed the Senate would task the State Board of Education with developing a program to address the high rate of remediation in the state. High school students whose skills fall below certain standards at the end of their junior year will be required to take "remedial" courses in their senior year, rather than taking such courses after graduation as they do now.

Together, the two programs would help unprepared students get the developmental education they need as early as possible and direct students to programs that suit their academic skills, making summer bridge programs unnecessary.

The Senate budget recognizes this opportunity, ending all funding for summer bridge programs.

■ Jenna A. Robinson



How to "Right-Size" UNC

Jenna A. Robinson

The UNC Board of Governors will soon begin its discussion on how to "right-size" the 17-campus university system; that is, reduce the number of campuses if appropriate. As Harry Smith, the board's budget and finance chair, admitted in March, "People have been ducking this conversation for a long time."

And for good reason. Many vocal and powerful constituencies, including faculty and alumni, will protest any suggestion of campus closures or consolidations. But stagnating enrollment, poor student performance, and low job placement rates show that the UNC system needs reform.

As the board begins the difficult process, objective standards and rigorous analysis must be used to ensure the best outcome for students and citizens of North Carolina. Political and campus pressure should play no part in the process.

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Here are a few criteria the board should keep in mind:

- **Student Success:** Graduation rates, job placement rates, and results on national assessments (such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment) should be used to measure the value universities are delivering for their students and for the state’s tax dollars. Universities with very low graduation rates and job placement rates should be considered for closure.
- **Geography and Demographics:** There are seven universities lining the 100-mile stretch of interstate between Raleigh and Winston-Salem. Despite the dense population in that area, the number could easily be reduced to six or even five. And in the southern part of the state, less than an hour’s drive separates UNC Pembroke and Fayetteville State. Universities that serve overlapping or shrinking populations should be considered for consolidation.
- **Enrollment:** Universities with small, declining, or stagnating enrollments should be considered for consolidation. That’s true particularly if enrollments cannot be maintained without lowering academic standards or lowering tuition for out-of-state

students—two tactics that were proposed within the last year.

- **Private Gifts, Grants, and Contracts:** To remain vibrant, universities should attract alumni donations as well as private grants. Universities that receive less than five percent of revenue from private sources and investment returns should be considered for consolidation.

Plenty of classroom and lab seats will still be available even if a few campuses are shuttered. With only 44 percent of system-wide space currently used during a typical school day, the remaining universities will be able to easily meet the demand of qualified North Carolina students.

But closures aren’t the only way to boost the system’s efficiency. Consolidating administrative and academic functions across campuses should also be considered. Human Resources, legal services, and student aid are three possible services that could be performed centrally.

The board should keep all options on the table as it reshapes the UNC system for the next generation of students. ■

NC Voters: UNC Costs Enough Already

North Carolina voters think the UNC system is too expensive. That’s one key finding of a poll released in May by the Civitas Institute.

When asked about the amount of state appropriations used to support the UNC system, 47 percent of survey respondents said the taxpayer share of undergraduate education is “too high.” Just 11 percent of voters said it was “too low,” while 31 percent said it was “about right.”

Voters also oppose legislation that gives in-state

college tuition rates to North Carolina’s illegal immigrants. Fifty-five percent of voters strongly oppose such legislation and another 11 percent are somewhat opposed. Just 28 percent would support such a law.

North Carolina voters’ priorities are clear. While they support the UNC system, there is no appetite for extra spending. UNC must educate students as efficiently and effectively as possible using current resources.

If you haven’t already, please sign up for the Pope Center’s weekly email updates about higher education policy issues by visiting our website – www.popecenter.org – or sending a request to info@popecenter.org.

How Much Should Faculty Teach?

Jane S. Shaw

When North Carolina senator Tom McGinnis proposed earlier this year that all university faculty be required to teach four classes a semester, it made national news. Local reaction was so negative that the bill never reached a vote.

Indeed, a single high teaching load is probably not appropriate for a system composed of 16 schools. Current requirements for UNC range from two to four classes a semester, depending on a school's Carnegie classification.

The legislative threat has passed, but leaders of public universities should understand the impetus behind such a bill: There is a broad feeling that university professors are not producing what the public wants most—well-taught undergraduate classes. Senator McGinnis wanted permanent faculty, not teaching assistants or adjuncts, to teach undergraduates.

In 2014, Ohio's legislature proposed similar legislation: "to increase the institution's aggregate faculty workload by ten per cent in the combined areas of instruction, advising, and research."

The Ohio proposal—which was dropped—was preceded in 2013 by a tougher one. It proposed that trustees require faculty to teach at least one more course in the upcoming year than he or she had taught the year before. That provision didn't pass, either.

But why was it even introduced? The answer is that faculty could teach more students than they do now.

David C. Levy, former chancellor of the New School, writing in the *Washington Post* in 2012, said that faculty work less than comparably paid professionals outside academia.

An executive who works a 40-hour week for 50 weeks puts in a minimum of 2,000 hours yearly. But faculty members teaching 12 to 15 hours per week for 30 weeks spend only 360 to 450 hours per year in the classroom.

Even if they spent equal time preparing for class and grading, he said, they would be working only a fraction of the time other professionals work. The faculty's comfortable lifestyle originally compensated for low pay, he explained, but now it is an "abuse."

Vic Brown, a former businessman, remarked a few weeks ago, "One of the most surprising things I learned when I began teaching is how little presence the faculty has on campus for large portions of the year."

And Larry Nielsen, former provost of North Carolina State, commented on the pleasures of faculty life in 2007: "In comparison to other work environments, we operate in a truly benign administrative setting."

When challenged about workloads, faculty point to the Delaware Study, a University of Delaware method of analyzing teaching loads. According to UNC administrators, UNC system faculty in 2012 taught on average 3.37 classes per semester, measured by the Delaware Study.

A detailed sampling by the Pope Center however, concluded that this is not accurate, for a number of reasons. The figure, wrote Jay Schalin, is about 2.4 classes—one class per semester less.

Many university systems have a requirement for teaching loads. But it is being met?

A 2013 study by the Education Advisory Board reviewed five public institutions. All required the "equivalent" of a 12-credit load, (three 4-hour courses or four 3-hour courses) a semester. ("Research-productive" faculty had one less class and could buy out additional time.) Nevertheless, the report concluded that the "vast majority" of faculty at those schools teach three 3-credit courses each semester, or nine hours a semester.

Nine hours. That doesn't even reach the level that David Levy called an "abuse."

That's why there is pressure to teach more. ■



The John William
POPE CENTER

FOR HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY

353 E. Six Forks Road
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Upcoming Event!

July 31, 2015

Isaac Morehouse, Founder
and CEO of Praxis (an
alternative to traditional
college): *“Competition
Makes Everything Better:
Innovation Beats Politics in
Higher Education Reform”*

The Clubhouse, Pinehurst,
North Carolina

11:30 am to 1:00 pm

To register, go to
<http://bit.do/fld2015>

Do You Agree?

“For many Americans the term ‘speech code’ sends shivers up the spine. Yet these noxious and un-American codes have become commonplace on college campuses across the United States. They are typically so broad that they could include literally anything and are subject to the interpretation of school administrators, who frequently fail to operate as honest brokers.”

Kirsten Powers

The Daily Beast

The goal of this newsletter from the Pope Center is to help university trustees and governors to be more effective leaders in higher education.

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