

TO THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA

The seventeen campus University of North Carolina system is the engine that powers the economic, intellectual and cultural well-being of our state and its citizens. Any act or failure to act which impairs the ability of this engine to provide the system of public higher education mandated by our state constitution wrongfully jeopardizes the future of our state and the young men and women who rightly look to it to provide a readily accessible system of higher education where they will acquire the knowledge and refine the skills that will enable them to make the most of their talents and the opportunities which life will present to them.

After serious and thoughtful consideration, it is the sincere opinion of the undersigned that the implementation of the presently pending campus requests to increase tuition at our institutions which constitute the University of North Carolina will make these institutions inaccessible to many qualified young men and women and breach the moral and constitutional duties of our state to all of our citizens. Many high school graduates would be denied the opportunity to take advantage of the challenging and stimulating programs which as students in our institutions they could enjoy and utilize to maximize their abilities and make meaningful and continuing contributions to their fellow citizens and the well-being of all who are fortunate enough to call North Carolina home.

Over two hundred years ago the people of North Carolina signaled the importance they gave to education when, in their 1776 State Constitution, the first and only public service they commanded was education. Here are their words:

Art. 41. That a School or Schools shall be established by the Legislature for the Convenient Instruction of Youth with such salaries to the Masters paid by the

public as may enable them to instruct at Low prices; and all useful learning shall be duly encouraged and promoted in one or more Universities. (Emphasis supplied)

Subsequent amendments to and revisions of our Constitution have reiterated and reaffirmed this commitment to maintain a system of public higher education and mandated that “the benefits of the University of North Carolina. . . be extended as far as practicable . . . to the people of the State free of expense.” (Emphasis supplied) N. C. Constitution, Art. IX, Sec. 9

For most of the last century, the General Assembly has heeded the constitutional command that it provide well for the University. It has recognized that whatever impairs the comprehensive system of public higher education mandated by our Constitution wrongfully jeopardizes the future of our State and its citizens, who rightly look to that system to provide higher educational opportunities by which they can best develop their own capacities.

Recent years have brought substantial tuition increases. These increases, responding to sharp reductions in state legislative appropriations, threaten the capacity of the University to serve the people of North Carolina as it should.

Now, further major tuition increases are pending approval by University authorities. I fear these escalating charges in tuition, fees, and other University attendance costs are denying an increasing number of our people the higher educational opportunities that are essential to their fulfillment as productive and responsible citizens. And experience shows that tuition charges only rise; they never reduce.

In light of North Carolina’s wise and historic commitment to public support for higher education, not just for the increase in the skills of our citizens but as an investment in promoting the strength of our commonwealth, I believe there must be a renewed emphasis on the public

obligation to sustain our University institutions. We cannot responsibly shift an increasing burden in the form of ever-rising tuition and fee charges on to the students and their parents.

I am convinced that implementation of the proposed tuition increases would do great and lasting harm to our State. Accordingly, I urge you to:

1. Reject the presently pending proposals for tuition increases.
2. Continue the studies and other efforts now under way to find program and organizational changes that may be made to reduce operating costs without serious impairment of the ability of the University to meet its constitutional and moral obligations to the people of the State.
3. Study and implement in all of our institutions where they do not exist programs to assist low income students to attend University institutions without taking on burdensome debt.
4. Defer the institution of new programs pending the completion of these studies.
5. Keep any tuition increase as low as possible if in the exercise of your best judgment you conclude that a tuition increase is inescapable.
6. Call on the citizens of this state to impress upon their legislative representatives the necessity of keeping tuition at a level which does not have the tragic effect of denying a North Carolina citizen the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of what many recognize as one of the finest institutions of higher education in the world.

I respectfully request your favorable action on this matter.

This statement is signed by the undersigned former member(s) of the Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina on January _____, 2012.
