



Campus Visit Summary **University of North Carolina at Charlotte**

Campus Visit Date: April 19, 2007

Brief Overview

A doctoral/research-intensive university offering programs at the baccalaureate, master's, and doctoral levels, UNC Charlotte has been recognized by Barron's 300 and U.S. News & World Report as an excellent university. UNC Charlotte is organized academically in seven colleges (architecture; arts & sciences; business; engineering; education; computing and informatics; and health and human services). The University's graduate school oversees a broad array of programs leading to over 60 masters and 18 doctoral degrees. The first doctoral degree was awarded in 1997. The campus now awards over 40 doctoral degrees annually.

UNC Charlotte is eight miles from uptown Charlotte, the largest city in the Carolinas with a metropolitan population of more than 1.5 million.

- Total Enrollment Fall 2006: 21,519
- Undergraduate Enrollment Fall 2006: 17,032
 - 75% white, 14% black, 11% other
 - 53% female, 47% male

Campus' definition of its "region"

Located in Charlotte, the campus' primary service area includes the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, and nearby counties of Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lincoln, Rowan, Stanly, and Union. For some purposes, UNC Charlotte also considers South Carolina counties that are part of the 16-county Charlotte Regional Partnership.

The undergraduate student body is drawn from all parts of the state with top ten counties represented including Wake and Forsyth counties in addition to the counties immediately surrounding Mecklenburg. The graduate programs draw students nationally.

Current responses to regional and statewide needs

Three major institutes (the Urban Institute, the Charlotte Research Institute, and the Institute for Social Capital) have been established to address the needs of specific stakeholder groups and integrate research, education, and service. The Institutes serve as umbrellas for specialized centers, facilities, and expertise, provide a single point of contact for outside entities, engage in proactive community outreach, and connect educational programs, particularly at the graduate level, to community issues. The campus highlighted the following programs and initiatives as representative of its efforts to meet regional and state wide needs:

- Economic Transformation –
 - *Graduate degree programs* offered in areas of high-growth high-need industries and professions, including Finance, Mathematical Finance, Sports Marketing & Management, Organizational Science, Mechanical Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Optics and Optical Engineering, Information Technology, Bioinformatics, Applied Mathematics, and Nanoscience.
 - *Charlotte Research Institute* – Created in 2000 as a community-driven initiative to accelerate the growth of UNC Charlotte as a research institution, the Charlotte Research Institute is the University’s “portal” for technology-based business and industry partnerships. Faculty and students conduct research in four affiliated centers in areas such as precision metrology, optics and optoelectronics, e-Business technology, and bioinformatics; the Center is now the site of the “Open for Business” initiative providing easy access for industry to university resources. The Institute provides access to the Millennial Campus.
 - *NC Motorsports & Automotive Research Center* - supports the motorsports and automotive industries through education emphasizing experiential learning, research, and community involvement.
 - *Center for Real Estate* – educates students on areas specific to the real estate industry (MBA concentration in real estate and executive education programs), and supports faculty research of issues identified by the industry (such as economic development in Charlotte Inner-City Corridors).
 - *Center for Professional & Applied Ethics* – raises moral awareness and enhances ethical skills of professionals, students preparing for one of the major professions, and faculty members based in the professional schools; the Center also provides ethics education to the general public.
 - *SBTDC office* – offers educational programs and consulting services to areas small businesses in subjects such as business management, marketing, government procurement, export financing, technology commercialization, and special programs for the marine and boating industry.

- Health, Environment, and Planning -
 - *Graduate degree programs* educate students in high-need areas including Public Policy, Health Services Research, Health Psychology, Infrastructure and Environmental Systems, Geography and Urban Regional Analysis, and Urban Design.
 - *Urban Institute* – faculty and staff conduct applied research and public opinion research, and provide technical and planning assistance to business, government, and non-profits in 3 focus areas: sustainable planning, economic transitioning, and changing demographics (examples of projects include economic impact study of the motorsports industry and the Charlotte Regional Indicators Project).
 - *Center for Transportation Policy Studies* – responds to regional transportation and public transit needs through applied research.

- *Center for Applied Geographic Information Science* - focuses on research and the application of GIS concepts and technologies to social and environmental problems; projects include modeling the spread of infectious disease, environmental planning for management of invasive species, and analysis of air quality patterns related to urban growth.
- *Charlotte Community Design Studio* – students and faculty of the College of Architecture (COA) conduct applied research on critical community design issues in and around the city of Charlotte.
- Education and Social Issues –
 - *Graduate degree programs* educate students in high-need areas including Education Leadership, Public Policy, Organizational Science, Counseling, Curriculum & Instruction, and Special Education
 - *Institute for Social Capital* - fosters university social and human capital research with the goal of increasing the community’s capacity for data-based planning and evaluation through collaboration with Mecklenburg region nonprofit organizations, governmental agencies, and other relevant organizations.
 - *Center for Mathematics, Science & Technology Education* – provides professional development for k-12 STEM teachers, student pre-college programs, and student programs that emphasize science, math, and technology (such as sponsoring Science Fairs and Science Olympiads).
 - *Professional Development Schools* – offers professional development for k-12 teachers.

Methods of identifying and incorporating regional and statewide needs into academic mission

- *Strategic Planning Process* – Designed in 1991 to guide the development of research, educational, and service programs, the campus’ strategic planning process incorporates data and analysis of demographics, economic, and workforce trends to identify regional needs; based on data analysis and stakeholder input, the Academic Plan is organized into “themes” (as opposed to schools and departments) to foster greater collaboration and comprehensive approach in responding to regional needs (Chancellor Dubois observed that this approach was designed to counter the age-old aphorism in higher education that “the world has problems, the universities have departments.”). The Academic Plan drives college and departmental plans as well as the plans of support units. Themes for campus development are:
 - Liberal Education (development of critical skills and soft skills are emphasized)
 - Urban & Regional Development
 - Business & Finance
 - Children, Families, & Schools
 - Health Care & Health Policy
 - International Understanding & Involvement
 - Applied Sciences and Technologies

- The campus is currently considering adding an 8th theme of Arts & Culture, reflecting the increasing sophistication and diversity of Charlotte’s cultural community.

Through the “theme” approach, the campus can comprehensively assess its response to regional needs. For example, the Children, Families & Schools Theme includes:

- College of Education (teacher prep programs, lateral entry summer institutes, and teacher professional development programs)
 - Department of Health and Human Services (social work program and program in health behavior and administration)
 - Center for Math and Science Education
 - Institute for Social Capital
 - Doctoral Programs (Special Education, Counseling, Educational Leadership, Health Psychology, and Clinical Community Psychology)
- *Advisory Boards* – The campus receives external input from 35 different advisory boards (totaling 550 members collectively), and regularly seeks input from community and business-related boards in the Charlotte region.
 - *Alumni surveys* – Through surveying its graduates, the campus can assess the impact of its programs on its graduates:
 - 70% are still in North Carolina
 - 92% are employed or in graduate school
 - Most frequent employers of graduates are: School systems in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Cabarrus, Lincoln, and Rowan-Salisbury, Wachovia, Bank of America, UNC-Charlotte, Carolinas Healthcare System, General Electric, and Northeast Medical Center.

Teaching Innovations (soft skills development, experiential learning, etc.)

- UNC Charlotte is in the implementation phase of a newly revised general education program.
- The new general education program focuses on *essential learning outcomes* including the fundamental skills of inquiry, inquiry in the sciences, liberal education for public and private life, and communication skills. The essential learning outcomes are reinforced and elaborated through the degree programs in all thematic areas. .
- General education requirements will focus on personal and social responsibility through integrative learning (experiential): civic knowledge and engagement, intercultural knowledge and competence, ethical reasoning and action, foundations and skills for lifelong learning.
- The campus has embraced *best practices* designed to promote the skills and qualities defined by national studies of business and academic leaders as critical for the 21st century workforce. UNC Charlotte Effective Educational Practices include:
 - First year seminars
 - Writing intensive courses
 - Collaborative assignments and projects

- Undergraduate research
- Diversity/global learning
- Service learning
- Internships
- Capstone courses/projects
- The campus uses the National Survey of Student Engagement and the Collegiate Learning Assessment to evaluate the success of its programs and to guide programs designed to increase student success.

Enrollment growth – General

- Demand for higher education at UNC Charlotte predicted to grow to 35,000 students by 2020.
 - The anticipated breakdown, based on analysis of demographics and regional job growth is: 25% master/doctoral students and 75% undergraduate students
 - A study is underway to assess the campus capacity to accommodate the anticipated demand.

Enrollment growth – Special Populations

- The campus has hired bilingual admissions officers to assist with the recruitment of Hispanic students in the region.
- Collaboration with the Latin American Coalition fosters early connections with the campus for high school students.
- Summer bridge programs, multicultural receptions, and learning communities are targeted at special populations, e.g., underrepresented groups and first generation college students.
- Close working relationships have been established with community colleges to facilitate transfer of students.
- A special office serves the needs of adult students and those whose full time employment limits access.
- Distance education programs, both online and face-to-face, have increased access of teachers to certification programs.
- The College of Computing and Informatics has established Diversity in Information Technology Institute to encourage the participation of women and underrepresented minorities in careers in information technology. The Institute is supported by several National Science Foundation grants.

Faculty Issues

- *Promotion and Tenure policies* – In advancing its doctoral level mission and associated faculty research, faculty are rewarded for patents in P&T policies; public service to the community is also recognized and encouraged, but is not the sole determinant of promotion and tenure.

- *Faculty (and Staff) Salaries* – The campus’ faculty salaries are not competitive with peer institutions and are acutely low given the high cost-of-living in the Charlotte area and the poor benefits package for UNC/state employees. The lack of health premium coverage for dependents is particularly problematic for the recruitment of faculty given the national marketplace, and difficult for staff given the competitiveness of benefits packages offered by Charlotte’s major corporate employers.

External Communications

- The campus does not have a comprehensive communications plan for communicating its programs and resources broadly; institutes and centers that work with specific groups communicate with those groups, but such communications are not incorporated into a broader, campus-wide strategy. A newly created Division of University Relations and Community Affairs is charged with developing a strategy for improved public communication. A major marketing and branding study is underway.

Barriers and Challenges facing the campus

- *Funding for new degree programs* – Lack of start-up funding for new degree programs (which are funded based on student enrollment) hinders the campus’ ability to respond quickly to needs identified by regional leaders. In addition, several high-demand programs identified by the campus are resource intensive – business and finance and healthcare.
- *Recruiting and retaining graduate students* – Lack of tuition remission funding makes attracting and retaining high quality graduate students (especially doctoral students) difficult.
 - Need based aid is also sought to further diversify qualified undergraduates
- *Enrollment growth* – The campus faces significant enrollment growth in the next decade:
 - Fall 2005 enrollment: 20,772
 - Projected 2020 enrollment: 35,000
 - On-campus housing study is currently underway
 - Campus capacity study also underway
 - Need for academic space: research labs and faculty office space

Given the high cost of construction in the Charlotte area, significant physical expansion of the main campus, student housing, and student facilities will be challenging. Notwithstanding completion of the bond buildings and the addition of significant square footage, rapid enrollment growth has essentially resulted in no net gain in academic space/FTE student for UNC Charlotte. Along with UNC Wilmington, Charlotte remains at the very bottom of the UNC system in academic

space per student and trails 53 of the state's 58 community colleges. *Retention and graduation rates* – The campus acknowledges the need to improve retention and graduation rates:

- Retention rate: 77.4%
- 4-yr Graduation rate: 24.2%
- 6-yr Graduation rate: 49.8%

However, the campus is proud of having maintained its retention and graduation rates in the face of rapid enrollment growth and little tangible gain in the availability of student aid to help students manage the rising cost of attendance.

Opportunities

- *Comprehensive communications plan* – development of a comprehensive communications plan would enable the campus to more broadly communicate its programs and resources.
- *Satellite Campus* – As part of its current effort to consider how to manage a student population of 35,000, the campus will explore development of one or more satellite campuses in the greater Charlotte area. Currently, its small Center City facility operates at capacity during evening hours, and demographic projections for population growth in the greater Charlotte area suggest a substantial increase in demand for programs. Four out of five of UNC-C's national peers have satellite campuses (University of South Florida, University of Texas San Antonio, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, and Portland State University). UNC Charlotte's major facility in Center City will open in early 2010, but its focus will be principally upon graduate, professional, and continuing education programs. There may be a need to consider alternative venues for the delivery of undergraduate programs or expanded use of the main campus, including additional evening and weekend courses.
- *Increased use of distance education* – With the advent of University of North Carolina online, the campus has an opportunity to greatly expand development of and marketing online degree programs.