



MEETING OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS
Task Force on Pricing, Flexibility, and Affordability

February 16, 2021 at 3:00 p.m.
Via Videoconference and PBS NC Live Stream
University of North Carolina System Office
Center for School Leadership Development, Board Room
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

AGENDA

- A-1. Introduction Wendy Murphy
- A-2. Approval of the Minutes from December 17, 2020.....Wendy Murphy
- A-3. Defining Distance Education for Fee-Charging Purposes Andrew Kelly
- A-4. Flexibility and Transparency in Student Fees Andrew Kelly and Jonathan Pruitt
- A-5. Group Discussion
- A-6. Adjourn



DRAFT MINUTES

December 17, 2020
University of North Carolina System Office
Center for School Leadership Development, Room 128
Chapel Hill, North Carolina

This meeting of the Task Force on Pricing Flexibility and Affordability was presided over by Chair Wendy Murphy. The following committee members, constituting a quorum, were also present in person or by video conference: Art Pope, Carolyn Coward, Dwight Stone, David Powers, and Isaiah Green. The following committee members were absent: Michael Williford.

Staff members present included Andrew Kelly and others from the UNC System Office.

1. Introduction (Item A-1)

Chair Murphy called the meeting to order at 2:48 p.m., on December 17, 2020. The chair informed the task force that the recommendation to move to a standard, per-credit tuition pricing policy across distance education and on-campus instruction was approved by the Committee on Budget and Finance.

Chair Murphy reminded all members of the task force that the meeting would be conducted pursuant to the provisions of the Open Meetings Act. The law requires that all votes be taken by a roll-call vote. The chair also reminded task force members of their duty under the State Government Ethics Act to avoid conflicts of interest and appearances of conflict of interest. The chair asked if there were any conflicts or appearances of a conflict with respect to any matter coming before the task force. No members identified any conflicts at the time.

2. Approval of the Minutes of November 19, 2020 (Item A-2)

The chair called for a motion to approve the open session minutes of November 19, 2020.

MOTION: Resolved, that the Task Force on Pricing Flexibility and Affordability approve the open session minutes of November 19, 2020, as distributed.

Motion: Carolyn Coward
Motion carried

Roll Call Vote	
Murphy	Yes
Pope	Yes
Coward	Yes
Stone	Yes
Powers	Yes

Green	Yes
Williford	Absent

3. Defining Distance Education for Fee-Charging Purposes (Item A-3)

The task force heard from Dr. Andrew Kelly regarding the current state of fee-charging for distance education students. The presentation highlighted current processes and proposed changes based on price consistency and availability of campus services. Dr. Kelly also discussed options for defining distance education, including reviewing definitions used by peer universities and other university systems.

4. Group Discussion (Item A-4)

Following the presentation, the task force engaged in a discussion about the definition of distance education. Chair Murphy tasked System Office staff with developing a clear, uniform definition of distance education for fee-charging purposes, and the group agreed to reconvene after the holiday season.

There being no further business and without objection, the task force adjourned at 3:53 p.m.

Wendy Floyd Murphy, Chair

AGENDA ITEM

A-3. Defining Distance Education for Fee-Charging Purposes.....Andrew Kelly

Situation: The University of North Carolina System provides education through traditional in-person instruction and through distance education. Students enrolled in in-person programs and courses are typically charged the full slate of Board of Governors-approved mandatory fees, while those enrolled in distance education are charged a subset of those fees (Education and Technology, Campus Security, and Association of Student Government). The UNC Policy Manual does not have a standard definition of who qualifies as a distance education student for fee-charging purposes.

Background: G.S. 116-11 states that the Board of Governors “shall set tuition and required fees at the institutions, not inconsistent with actions of the General Assembly.” The Board of Governors may adopt policy to provide further detail about the establishment of tuition and fees, as long as the policy is consistent with state law. Policies adopted by the Board related to tuition and fees are located in Chapter 1000 of the UNC Policy Manual. Section 1000.1.1 of the UNC Policy Manual governs the setting of undergraduate and graduate tuition rates, lays out the process for the approval of tuition and fees, and requires that the Board act by February of each year (or as soon as possible thereafter) to establish the System’s tuition rates.

The UNC Policy Manual does not formally define distance education for fee-charging purposes. As a result, fee-charging practices vary across institutions, with some determining fees based on a student’s program of study and others basing that determination on a student’s course-load in a given semester. In practice, students with similar course-loads at different institutions may be charged dramatically different fees. This variation has implications for transparency and predictability, the sustainability of fee-supported activities and projects, and competition within and outside the UNC System.

At its December 17, 2020 meeting, the Task Force continued a discussion of various approaches to defining distance education for fee-charging purposes. The Task Force also considered opportunities to charge optional fees to students who were learning online but wished to access fee-supported services and activities. In this meeting, the Task Force will review a draft recommendation for defining distance education and review feedback from the universities.

Assessment: The Task Force will consider a draft recommendation for defining distance education for fee-charging purposes and review institutional feedback on that draft definition.

Action: The Task Force will consider potential recommendations to the Committee on Budget and Finance.

Potential Recommendation to the Committee on Budget and Finance to amend Board Policy 100.1.1 (Policy on Establishing Tuition and Fees)

UNC Policy 400.1.1[R](II)(b) defines distance education and off-campus programs.

For fee-charging purposes, a distance education program is one where 80% or more of the direct instruction of the program is delivered through distance education or off-campus as defined in UNC Policy 400.1.1[R](II)(b). There may be a requirement for the student to attend the main campus for a portion of the program, but that requirement is minimal.

Students enrolled in distance education programs as defined above are assessed the Campus Security, Ed & Tech, and Association of Student Government fees.

Students enrolled in on-campus programs (those where greater than 20% of the direct instruction is delivered on-campus and there is a requirement for students to attend the main campus) are assessed all mandatory fees regardless of how their courses are delivered in a given semester.

The Task Force recommends that these changes take effect in Fall 2022.



AGENDA ITEM

A-4. Flexibility and Transparency in Student FeesAndrew Kelly and Jonathan Pruitt

Situation: The UNC System currently charges seven student fees to all students enrolled in face-to-face instruction. Under current policy, fee revenues must be used for the specific purposes for which each fee was approved.

Background: G.S. 116-11 states that the Board of Governors “shall set tuition and required fees at the institutions, not inconsistent with actions of the General Assembly.” The Board of Governors may adopt policy to provide further detail about the establishment of tuition and fees, as long as the policy is consistent with state law. Policies adopted by the Board related to tuition and fees are located in Chapter 1000 of the UNC Policy Manual. Section 1000.1.1 of the UNC Policy Manual governs the setting of undergraduate and graduate tuition rates, lays out the process for the approval of tuition and fees, and requires that the Board act by February of each year (or as soon as possible thereafter) to establish the System’s tuition rates.

While the Board of Governors may adopt different fees in any given year, the Board currently has in place the following seven fees that are general, as opposed to program-specific, in nature: athletics fee; health services fee; student activities fee; education and technology fee; campus security fee; debt service fee; and the UNC System Association of Student Governments fee.

Fee revenue is not state-appropriated. Instead, in accordance with authority provided in state law, the University is authorized to maintain fee revenue in trust funds. Fee revenue must be used for the specific purposes for which each fee was approved by the applicable approving authority—generally either the institution’s board of trustees or Board of Governors.

The restrictions on fee revenues provide a level of accountability, but can also make it difficult for universities to respond to emerging needs in a particular fee-supported activity or area. Across the nation, other universities take a different approach, charging a broader fee (sometimes called a “comprehensive fee”) with a range of allowable uses across which the revenue from the fee can be spent. This approach is usually coupled with annual reporting on how fee revenues are spent.

Assessment: The Task Force will consider opportunities for greater flexibility and transparency in the use of student fee revenues.

Action: This item is for information only.



TASK FORCE ON PRICING, FLEXIBILITY, AND AFFORDABILITY

February 16, 2021

Outline

1. Defining distance education for fee-charging purposes

- a) Review of December 17th discussion
- b) Draft definition and review of campus feedback
- c) Discussion of potential recommendation to Budget and Finance

2. Flexibility and transparency in student fees

- a) Review current policy
- b) Alternative approaches
- c) Campus feedback



DEFINING DISTANCE EDUCATION

Review and Discussion of Campus Feedback

December Action

- Task System Office to consider moving to a consistent, program-based definition of distance education across the System:
 - Whether students pay mandatory fees would depend on the degree program they choose to enroll in rather than the courses they choose in a given semester.
 - This is already the approach at 7 campuses, with 2 more planning to move in this direction.
- For today's meeting:
 - Draft a proposed policy for campuses and this Task Force to consider
 - Solicit additional campus feedback on the option
 - Assess the effect on revenue and student affordability under program-based definition of distance education

Definitions of Distance Education: Texas

(8) Distance Education--The formal educational process that occurs when students and instructors are not in the same physical setting for the majority (**more than 50 percent**) of instruction

(9) Distance Education Course--A course in which a majority (more than 50 percent) of the instruction occurs when the student(s) and instructor(s) are not in the same place. Two categories of distance education courses are defined:

- A. Fully Distance Education Course--A course which may have mandatory face-to-face sessions totaling **no more than 15 percent** of the instructional time.
- B. Hybrid/Blended Course--A course in which a majority (**more than 50 percent but less than 85 percent**), of the planned instruction occurs when the students and instructor(s) are not in the same place.

(10) Distance Education Degree or Certificate Program--A program in which a student may complete a majority (**more than 50 percent**) of the credit hours required for the program through distance education courses.

Definitions of Distance Education: Florida BoG

Metric	Courses – definition	Metric	Programs – definition
Fully Distance Learning Course	100% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. All special course components (exams, internships, practice, clinical, labs, etc.) that cannot be completed online can be completed off-campus.	Fully Online Program	100% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. All program requirements that cannot be completed online can be completed off-campus.
Primarily Distance Learning Course	80-99% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the course.	Primarily Online Program	80-99% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the program.
Hybrid Course	50-79% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the course.	Hybrid Program	50-79% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the program.
Primarily Classroom Course	Less than 50% of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. This designation can include activities that do not occur in a classroom (i.e., labs, internships, practice, clinical, labs, etc.).	Primarily Classroom Program	Less than 50% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the program.

Definition of Distance Ed: Florida BOG

Metric	Programs – definition
Fully Online Program	100% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. All program requirements that cannot be completed online can be completed off-campus.
Primarily Online Program	80-99% of the direct instruction of the program is available using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There is a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the program.

Draft Proposal

For fee charging purposes, a distance education program is one where **#%** of the direct instruction of the program is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space, or both. There may be a requirement for the student to attend campus or another explicit geographic location for a portion of the program, but that requirement is minimal.

Students enrolled in distance education programs as described above are assessed the Campus Security, Ed & Tech, and Association of Student Government fees.

Students enrolled in on-campus programs (those where any of the direct instruction is delivered on-campus and there is a requirement for students to attend campus or another explicit geographic location) are assessed all mandatory fees regardless of how their courses are delivered in a given semester.

Key decision points:

1. What should threshold be?

- 100%
- 80% or more
- 50% or more

2. Are these the only fees that distance education students should be charged?

3. What about optional fees for DE students?

What is the appropriate value for # in the template?

- 9 universities believe the threshold should be 100%
- 5 universities believe 80% or more is a more appropriate barometer for distance education
- 1 university preferred to use 50% or more to align with SACS COC policy
- 1 did not state a percentage but urged consistency with UNC policy on academic program review

Appropriate Percentage	Count	Institutions
100%	9	ASU, ECU, ECSU, FSU, NCCU, UNCA, UNCC, UNCW, WSSU
80% or more	5	N.C. A&T, UNC-CH, UNCG, UNCP, UNCSA
50% or more	1	WCU
Align definition with SACS COC/BOG Policy	1	NCSU

Impact on student costs and campus finances?

- Most of our institutions do not anticipate a major revenue shift as a result of their preferred threshold in the proposed definition
- Any impact to student costs and campus finance will largely depend on the percentage of distance education at each institution
- The proposed definition would:
 - Simplify the administrative process and establish stronger consistency across the system
 - More appropriately align fees with students who have access to them and are more likely benefiting from those services
 - Stronger transparency in the billing process and overall oversight in revenue projections

Should the task force consider a fee for distance education solely dedicated to supporting students learning online?

- 13 universities believe that the task force should consider a fee for distance education students
 - Specialized technology and additional resources are needed to support student learning online and student success
- 3 universities believe the task force should not consider a system-fee for distance education at this time
 - UNC-CH believes we should first examine existing student services and campus infrastructure, along with expanding student fee applicability to distance education
 - UNCG would appreciate the flexibility for each campus to determine if a fee is necessary
 - WCU would rather wait, considering impact of student costs on enrollment in

Distance Education Fee	Count	Institutions
Yes	13	ASU, ECU, ECSU, FSU, N.C. A&T, NCCU, NCSU, UNCA, UNCC, UNCP, UNCW, UNCSA, WSSU
No	3	UNC-CH, UNCG, WCU

Question: Optional Fees for Distance Education Students

- 12 universities believe that the task force should allow distance education students to opt-in for certain on campus services
- What fees should be included in such options?
 - Student Health Services
 - Student Activities (i.e., Student Recreation Center or Athletics)
 - “All or nothing” approach
- 3 universities do not support creating an optional fee package for distance education students due to:
 - Large administrative burden to manage and too complex
 - Unpredictable revenues would reduce the ability to sustain current service and staffing levels

Optional Fee Package for Distance Ed Students	Count	Institutions
Yes	13	ASU, ECU, ECSU, FSU, N.C. A&T, NCCU, NCSU, UNCC, UNCG, UNCSA, UNCW, WCU, WSSU
No	3	UNCA, UNC-CH, UNCP



DEFINING DISTANCE EDUCATION

Potential Recommendation

Potential Recommendation

UNC Policy 400.1.1[R](II)(b) defines distance education and off-campus programs.

For fee-charging purposes, a distance education program is one where 80% or more of the direct instruction of the program is delivered through distance education or off-campus as defined in UNC Policy 400.1.1[R](II)(b). There may be a requirement for the student to attend the main campus for a portion of the program, but that requirement is minimal.

Students enrolled in distance education programs as defined above are assessed the Campus Security, Ed & Tech, and Association of Student Government fees.

Students enrolled in on-campus programs (those where greater than 20% of the direct instruction is delivered on-campus and there is a requirement for students to attend the main campus) are assessed all mandatory fees regardless of how their courses are delivered in a given semester.

The Task Force recommends that these changes take effect in Fall 2022.



FLEXIBILITY AND TRANSPARENCY IN STUDENT FEES

Review of Current Policy

UNC Policy 1000.1.1(II) (Establishing Fees):

The Board of Governors is responsible for establishing fees at the constituent institutions of the University consistent with the philosophy set forth in the North Carolina constitution. **Fees will be charged only for limited, dedicated purposes and shall not be used to defray the costs of general academic and administrative operations of campuses, including academic programs and faculty and administrative salaries and benefits.** Consistent with the above citation, the Board will make every effort to keep fees for students as low as possible while providing the revenues needed to support the purposes for which the fees are charged. Each year, the Board establishes the fees listed below. All fees established shall be based upon the recommendation of the chancellor, the institutional Board of Trustees, and following his or her review, the President.

1. Although the General Assembly provides for most of the instructional costs of institutions through State appropriations, **institutions traditionally rely entirely on student fees to finance a number of activities, services, and facilities.**

Review of Current Policy

Six-month tuition and fee approval process

September 2020	The System Office provides guidance and instructions to Chancellors, Chief Academic Officers, and Chief Finance Officers.
September 2020 through Early December 2020	Campuses undergo rigorous process to determine tuition and fee requests, which is then approved by the Board of Trustees.
Early December 2020	Chancellors submit tuition and fee requests to the System Office.
December 2020 through February 2021	A tuition and fee committee within the System Office reviews requests.
January 2021	Campus tuition and fee proposals are initially presented at the Board meeting.
February 2021	A workshop is held to allow for further discussion of tuition and fee proposals. Board of Governors considers tuition and fee proposals.

Strengths and Weaknesses of Current Approach

Strengths

- Provides transparency and clear guidance for how each fee may be used
- Ease of tracking and reporting
- Allows the campus to generate revenue to support activities and align them with particular expenses
- Promotes equity and fairness among students
- Provides clear delineation for budget and management purposes

Weaknesses

- Limits flexibility
- Makes it more difficult for campuses to make changes in services quickly, especially during emergencies or in response to strategic needs
- Student fee groups “compete” with one another for fee increases subject to the current 3% legislative cap
- Current policy results in layering on versus appropriately repurposing to meet the needs of students and campus

Approaches in Other States: Virginia

State Council for Higher Education in Virginia

- Fee revenues (including student health, athletics, student unions and recreational facilities, recreational and intramural programs) are considered “auxiliary enterprises” which fall under unrestricted funds: “monies that an institution may use for any purpose it deems necessary.”
- SCHEV Chart of Accounts: “Institutions are encouraged to operate each category of auxiliaries on a self-supporting basis and classify all expenditures according to their intended use in order to provide an accurate presentation of the actual use of auxiliary funds. There is no expectation or requirement that individual components of auxiliary systems, such as a particular dormitory, be self supporting.”

Approaches in Other States: Virginia

James Madison University (Virginia)

Undergraduate Tuition and Fees

Entering Students (2020-21) - Per year

In-state tuition: \$7,250

Comprehensive fee: \$5,080

Room and board*: \$11,588

Total in-state: \$23,918

Out-of-state tuition: \$24,150

Comprehensive fee: \$5,080

Room and board*: \$11,588

Total out-of-state: \$40,818

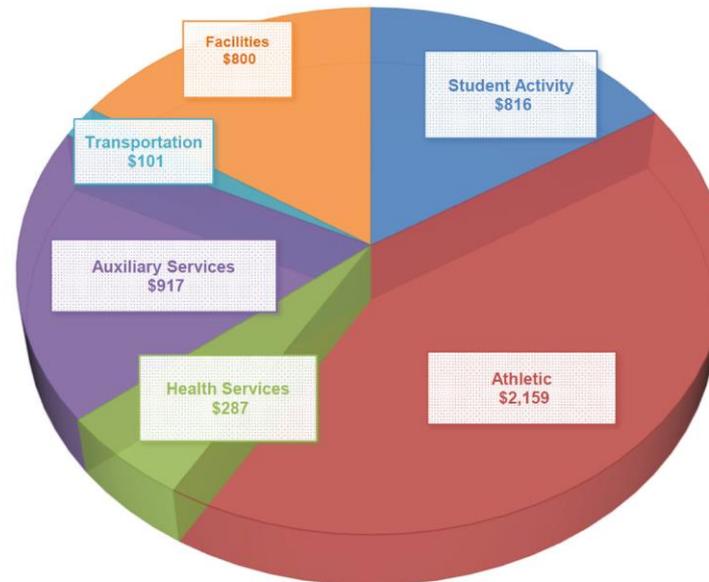
The James Madison University Board of Visitors approves one comprehensive fee.

The fees shown represent an allocation of the comprehensive fee (\$5,080 based on expenditure budgets for FY 2021, not individual fees.

Note: This pie graph distribution is reported on Appendix D-2: Full-Time Undergraduate Mandatory Non-Educational and General Fees by Fee Item on the SCHEV website.

Note: Distribution by STATE PROGRAM is reported on Appendix D-1: Full-Time Undergraduate Mandatory Non-Educational and General Fees by Program.

AUXILIARY COMPREHENSIVE FEE EXPENDITURE BREAKDOWN FOR FY21



Transportation Services \$101
Support of the university's transportation services

Student Health Services \$287
Non-academic programs, departments, and services that support and promote student health and wellness (Student Health Center)

Facilities \$800
Maintenance, operations, and support of non-academic campus buildings

Auxiliary Services \$917
Non-academic programs, departments, and services that facilitate student well-being, success, safety, and support

Student Activity \$816
Non-academic programs, departments, and services that offer a variety of extra-curricular student activities and learning opportunities (Madison Union, Marching Royal Dukes)

Intercollegiate Athletics \$2,159
Support of the intercollegiate athletic programs for men and women

[Intercollegiate Athletics SCHEV program fee, as reported on SCHEV D-1, is \$2,159. This figure represents an allocation of the comprehensive fee based on all program expenditures for Athletics]

Approaches in Other States: University System of Georgia

“Auxiliary enterprises and student activities are functions and activities that relate to the mission of the USG institution including, but not limited to: Housing; Food Services; Student Health Services; Student Activities; Intercollegiate Athletics. . . Parking; Transportation; Stores and Shops; Vending and Other Services; and Student Activities (fee-based student activities and functions).

..

Each institution shall develop and update annually a **five-year plan** for each auxiliary enterprise operation that defines the level and manner of service to be provided, planned expenditures, and sources of revenue, including projected fee requirements.”

“Auxiliary enterprise operations **shall operate on a self-supported basis** with revenues derived from student fees and other non-state sources, **except as provided below.**

1. Institutions may choose to operate some auxiliary enterprise activities on a loss basis, but must indicate in their five-year plans how the costs of such activities will be covered by revenues generated through other auxiliary operations and must also provide an alternative plan reflecting, rightsizing of operations, or the elimination or privatization of the auxiliary...”

Campus Feedback: Flexibility and Transparency in Student Fees

Q: Should the Task Force consider a revised policy that would allow universities to combine different mandatory fees into a single fee with a set of allowable uses, and then allow for flexibility across those allowable uses?

Favor a Revised Policy*	Count	Institutions
Yes	8	ASU, ECU, FSU, N.C. A&T, NCCU, UNCA, UNCC, UNCG
No	7	ECSU, NCSU, UNC-CH, UNCSA, UNCW, WCU, WSSU

Q. Which fees would lend themselves to such an approach, and which should remain separate?

	Fee (Number of Universities)
Keep separate	Debt Service (6); Athletics (3)
Combine	Single fee w/ exception of debt service (3); Single fee w/ exception of debt service and athletics (3); Single/comprehensive fee (2)

Campus Feedback: Flexibility and Transparency in Student Fees

Q. What are the potential drawbacks to additional flexibility around student fees?

“The University Budget Office thoroughly reviews a 5-year budget projection and review of current uses of each student fee to ensure that fee receipts are being utilized as approved. This would be very hard to accomplish if all are combined. Some accountability, especially between organizations would be lost.”

“Long-term impacts of this could include decreased student trust and support for new fees. If additional flexibility around student fees is coupled with expanded reporting on uses of fee revenue, it may achieve usage benefits while still providing the necessary transparency to numerous campus stakeholders. In practice, it may be difficult to find the appropriate balance between these considerations with any change.”

“There are potential increased costs to administer this form of charging fees, shifting additional oversight to university-level budget offices.”

“This will truly pit one group against another and will have negative impact to the narrative of groups who feel they are not receiving their fair share. We can provide as much transparency as available, the story will still not come out as an equitable process.”

Campus Feedback: Flexibility and Transparency in Student Fees

Q. What changes could create both flexibility and transparency?

“As an alternative to creating a combined comprehensive fee structure, the task force may want to consider providing campus leadership with additional discretion to realign fee revenues/expenses on a one-time basis under emergency conditions.

“Special authority” under these circumstances could be paired with mandatory reporting/disclosure to student leadership (which would help address transparency concerns created through the “special authority” designation).”

“I would think we possibly could improve transparency using a data mart system which displays all revenues and expenses at detailed level for each activity or department.”

“For transparency, we would suggest a periodic review every three to five years to determine how the comprehensive fees are being/have been allocated.”

“Provide an itemized bill to the students and provide annual reports available on the campus website.”

“Campus level Board of Trustees approval provides both flexibility and transparency.”

What other flexibilities should the Task Force consider with respect to student fees?

- Some allowance for flexibility in use of funds in the case of an emergency such as the pandemic.
- The Task Force should also consider adding flexibility provisions that would be approved by each campus's Board of Trustees for prescribed reasons.
- Smaller universities encouraged the Task Force to examine the percentage cap on fees and its differential impact on small versus large campuses.
- One university proposed tying the statutory cap to an index of some kind.
- Some institutions are interested in flexibility to charge a “special fee” for distance learning courses or programs.

THANK YOU

CONNECT



www.northcarolina.edu



[uncsystem](https://www.facebook.com/uncsystem)



[@UNC_system](https://twitter.com/UNC_system)



[@UNC_system](https://www.instagram.com/UNC_system)

QUESTIONS?

CONNECT



www.northcarolina.edu



[uncsystem](https://www.facebook.com/uncsystem)



[@UNC_system](https://twitter.com/UNC_system)



[@UNC_system](https://www.instagram.com/UNC_system)