

Policy on Student Fees

I. Purpose. The Board of Governors is responsible for establishing fees at the constituent institutions² of the UNC System consistent with the philosophy set forth in the North Carolina constitution.

II. General Policy. 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. 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. The 2016 General Assembly enacted a special provision (G.S. 116-143.10) that caps mandatory student fee increases (including debt service fees) to three percent per year.

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. Excluding the application fee charged to prospective students, all fees set by the Board are annual fees. Once an annual fee has been established, semester rates and summer school fees shall be established by the president and part-time rates shall be reported to the president. It is the policy of the Board to act no later than March of each year to establish fees for the following fall semester.

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. Institutional boards of trustees are required to weigh the benefits of the activity, facility, or service against the fee required to provide financial support. Orientation sessions for the boards of trustees will regularly include discussions of the process followed when establishing student fees.

A. Application Fee. An application fee shall be established for each institution. Specific programs within an institution may require an application fee different from the fee charged for most students and the Board may set different fees according to program needs.

B. General Fees. Fees generally applicable to all students shall be established by the Board of Governors. Six general fees are authorized: athletics, association of student government, health services, student activities, educational and technology, and campus security.

C. Fees Related to the Retirement of Debt Incurred for Capital Projects. Fees generally applicable to all students that provide revenues for the retirement of debt shall be fixed by the Board of Governors at the time of the borrowing. Indebtedness fees may not include components for operations and maintenance but shall reflect the cost of servicing the debt at the coverage levels required in Board resolutions and other documents authorizing the debt. Any subsequent changes in fees require Board approval. Indebtedness fees expire when the related debt is retired unless otherwise authorized by the Board of Governors.

D. Special Fees. Fees applicable only to students engaged in particular activities or courses of study shall be established by the Board of Governors when needed. These fees will not be used to provide general academic revenues that are provided from campus-initiated tuition increases.

III. Process for Establishing Fees. The process shall be initiated at the beginning of the fall semester and contain the following steps:

A. Instructions Issued. The senior vice president for finance and administration shall issue instructions to the chancellors calling for them to initiate a review of fees.

B. Fee Committee Review and Recommendations. Campuses wishing to submit requests for fee changes will conduct a process that includes meaningful participation by and input from students. A student involvement form signed by the student body president, or designee, should be included with any fee increase request. Each chancellor shall establish a fee review committee with representatives of all aspects of campus life, including, but not limited to, representatives from business affairs, student affairs, the financial aid office, and the student body. The committee shall conduct a complete review of student fees from a zero-based budgeting perspective and shall make recommendations to the chancellor for establishing fees effective with the upcoming fall semester. The review will include an examination of alternative resources, including available institutional reserves, to determine if other funding is available to provide the services in lieu of establishing the fee. The review will include a reassessment of the existing operating methods to ensure that operations are performed in a cost-effective manner. If the committee determines that an increase in a fee is needed, the committee shall attempt to decrease another fee so that the total cost of education for students does not increase. In order to ensure that all students are able to meet the increased cost of education, the university's financial aid officer, working with the committee, shall determine that sufficient financial aid is available, from whatever sources are possible.

C. Chancellor Recommendations. The chancellor shall review the recommendations of the committee and present recommendations to the board of trustees for review and approval. Before a chancellor makes recommendations to the board of trustees, the recommendations of the fee review committee will be shared with student government leaders so that students may inform the chancellor of their perspectives on the proposed changes.

D. Board of Trustee Recommendations. The recommendations, as approved by board of trustees, will be forwarded to the president for review.

E. President Recommendations. When the review is completed, the president will present fee recommendations to the Committee on Budget and Finance for consideration by the Board of Governors.

Each step in the process shall be an iterative and comprehensive review of the previous step, resulting in changes to the fee recommendations as deemed appropriate.

IV. Distance Education Fees. Section 400.1.1[R](II)(b) of the UNC Policy Manual defines distance education and off-campus programs.

A. For fee-charging purposes, a distance education program is one designed to deliver 80 percent or more of the direct instruction through distance education or off-campus, as defined in Section 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.

B. Effective fall 2022, students enrolled in distance education programs as defined above will be assessed certain mandatory fees, including the campus security, educational and technology, and association of student government fees, and will not have access to other services and activities supported by the other Board-approved mandatory fees unless they pay the appropriate additional mandatory fee.

C. Students not enrolled in distance education programs will be assessed all mandatory fees regardless of how their courses are delivered in a given semester.

V. Other Charges

A. Housing and Dining Charges. Each chancellor is authorized to establish charges for on-campus student housing and meal plans. Housing and dining charges shall be set in the context of developing the campus all-funds budget. The campus board of trustees shall approve student housing and meal plan charges by March 1 of each year for the following academic year. Approved charges shall be filed with the president prior to the beginning of the academic year.

B. Miscellaneous Service Charges. Each chancellor is authorized to establish miscellaneous service charges for items such as transcripts, diplomas, caps and gowns, special examinations, late registrations, and replacement of I.D. cards. A schedule of such charges shall be filed with the president prior to the beginning of each academic year.

VI. Other Matters

A. Effective Date. The requirements of this policy shall be effective on the date of adoption by the Board of Governors.

B. Relation to State Laws. The foregoing policies as adopted by the Board of Governors are meant to supplement, and do not purport to supplant or modify, those statutory enactments which may govern the activities of public officials.

C. Regulations and Guidelines. These policies shall be implemented and applied in accordance with such regulations and guidelines as may be adopted from time to time by the president.

¹This new policy adopted by the Board of Governors replaces the original Section 1000.1.2, *Policy on Tuition with Respect to Student Exchange Programs with Institutional Abroad*, which was repealed in its entirety by the Board of Governors on September 16, 2021.

²Consistent with G.S. 116-143, no tuition or fees may be charged to students in the high school program at the North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics. However, the Board of Governors may approve, upon the recommendation of the NCSSM Board of Trustees, the imposition of fees, not inconsistent with actions of the General Assembly for distance education services provided by NCSSM to nonresidents and for students participating in extracurricular enrichment programs sponsored by the school.