**Enrollment Planning:**
**Issues, Principles, and Next Steps for UNC-Chapel Hill**

*An faculty discussion paper*

*Pete Andrews, Chair of the Faculty*

**Introduction**

- Between 1999 and 2007, UNC General Administration projects that demand for public higher education by North Carolina residents will increase by a cumulative total of about 42,000 students.¹
- Of these, about 40,000 will be undergraduates, and 2,000 graduate and professional students.
- The number of additional undergraduates projected *per year* will rise from about 3,800 in 2000 to nearly 7,000 in 2007, then level off but probably not decline significantly.²
- These projections are expected to prove roughly correct. The issue for President Broad and the General Administration is, therefore, what combination of our 16 campuses and the community colleges will serve these students?
- President Broad has therefore requested that each campus submit an estimate by early November of how much of this demand they project they could accommodate over the 10-year period. The choice is ours—UNCGA has not required that each campus accepted a proportional share of this growth—but any choice we make, including no growth, will have significant consequences.

**Goal: Can we turn enrollment-growth needs into an opportunity?**

It would be easy to approach this request simply as a threat to the quality and intimacy of the Chapel Hill campus, or as yet another burden on already burdened faculty, support staff, facilities already in dire need of renovation, and the carrying capacity of the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro.

Can we, however, identify creative ways of using these enrollment demand pressures—at some acceptable level of growth—as opportunities to enhance our mission and quality, and to improve the living and learning environment of UNC-Chapel Hill?

Examples might include
- seeking funding for classroom renovations and the proposed science complex that would also help us to better serve increased enrollments; and
- significantly developing the south campus area as a livable mix of improved housing, academic and student life facilities, and perhaps even public/private commercial ventures to provide services and amenities and lessen dependence on Franklin Street alone.
- developing more joint majors between the College of Arts and Sciences and the professional schools, as a distinctive opportunity of a Carolina education?
- considering programmatic initiatives that might attract funding and serve undergraduates, as well as our research mission, at the Horace Williams site?
How might UNC-Chapel Hill choose an appropriate level of increased enrollments?

This is perhaps the central question for our discussion: more on this at the end.

Scenarios for UNC-Chapel Hill

- UNC-Chapel Hill currently has approximately 24,000 students, of whom about 15,000 (63%) are undergraduates and 9,000 are graduate and professional students. Its enrollments have grown by about 2.5% over the past 10 years, and by 20% in the past 20 years (1977-97).

- For graduate and professional students, UNC-Chapel Hill could accommodate about 50% of this projected demand without significant increasing in its recent rate of growth. This would amount to 1% (90-98 students) per year, or perhaps 200-300 more on campus in any given year depending on the mix of one-, two-, and greater than two- year graduate degree programs. A 50% share would be consistent with UNC-Chapel Hill's status as one of the state’s two Research I campuses, which offer most of its graduate and professional degree programs. Note however that this estimate does not include any increase in out-of-state students, who are a major fraction of our normal applicant pool. Adjusting for this would require either additional growth or accommodating somewhat less of the in-state demand.

- For undergraduate students, several scenarios need to be considered:

  ⇒ **Scenario 1: “Natural rate of increase.”** At Carolina’s recent rate of growth, we would increase by about 1.2% (185-208 students) per year. Assuming a four- to five-year graduation rate, this would mean increasing by a total of 800-1,000 undergraduates in any given year. Note however that this would accommodate only 5% of the projected increase in demand, or 4% if it included the current 18% admissions of out-of-state and foreign students.

  ⇒ **Scenario 2: Deans’ projections, assuming additional resources.** Each of the deans was asked to estimate how many additional students their units could potentially anticipate in 2002, assuming additional state funding for faculty and facilities, and these growth rates were then projected forward to 2007. The sum of these estimates would add up to as much as a 12.5% increase (3,000 students) by 2007. This includes both undergraduate and graduate/professional students, and out-of-state as well as in-state students. However, particularly for the College of Arts and Sciences it does not incorporate analysis of capacity constraints, nor decisions about how that growth would (or could) be shared among academic majors—nor about how the College would want to plan its future enrollment mix among majors, and associated costs. It would require substantial additional state resources for both salaries and capital facilities, and careful consideration of non-academic impacts and constraints as well.

  ⇒ **Scenario 3: Proportional share of projected increase.** If Carolina were to accept a proportional share of the projected statewide increase (13%), and continue our 18% out-of-state admissions, we would have to admit an estimated 585 additional undergraduates per year in 2000, rising gradually to 1,066 additional undergraduates per year in 2007. At 4-5 year graduation rates, this would amount to 3,500 to 4,300 additional undergraduates present at any given time. Adding the current rates of increase in graduate/professional students, as above—and not including any additional G/P admissions to maintain current...
ratios of graduate to undergraduate students, or to provide more teaching assistants—the total additional student population at any given time 10 years from now would increase by 3,700 to 4,600 students, or 15-19%.

- **Quality of students:** Increasing enrollments anywhere in this range should not reduce the quality of our student body, since it represents merely an enlargement of the existing applicant pool, unless it were to erode the quality of the Carolina educational experience as perceived by the best applicants. In fact, any increase less than the statewide projection would presumably increase the quality of the student body in purely academic terms, since it would imply greater selectivity. However, any increase less than a proportional share (Scenario 3) will also make it more difficult for North Carolina’s best students to get into Carolina, and cause an increasing proportion of the state’s future leaders to have to attend other campuses instead. It could also affect our efforts to maintain and increase the diversity of our student body.

**What would happen if we don’t grow?**

- We would protect somewhat the current scale of the university and the towns of Chapel Hill and Carrboro, and avoid some of the negative impacts of additional growth (see below).
- But it would be harder and harder for good NC students to be admitted, including our own.
- We would risk being perceived as unwilling to try to serve the state by doing our share of meeting a statewide need for higher education; and our alumni would be a declining fraction of the state’s leadership.
- Greater growth would go to some other campuses in the UNC system, and some shift in capital funding priorities would probably go with it.
- Greater growth would also go to the community college system, including some shifting of capital funding, and pressure would also increase for us to admit more junior transfers from these institutions.
- Greater growth would also go to North Carolina’s private colleges, who already get a state subsidy for NC students’ tuition (increased this year) and would undoubtedly ask for more.

**Peer comparisons**

- Among our peer institutions nationwide, most are considerably larger, and one smaller. UC/Berkeley has about 30,000 students; UCLA 34,000; the University of Michigan 37,000; and the University of Texas 48,000. The University of Virginia has about 22,000.
- “Flagship” universities in other states are usually but not always one of the two largest universities. UCLA is the largest university in the University of California system, followed by Berkeley; Michigan is 2nd largest, behind Michigan State; SUNY-Albany and SUNY-Stony Brook are 2nd and 3rd, respectively, behind SUNY-Buffalo. In Virginia, UVA is virtually tied for 3rd largest with Virginia Commonwealth, behind both Virginia Tech (27,000) and George Mason (24,000).
• Several states even support multiple Research I universities: for instance California, Michigan (U. of Michigan, Michigan State, Wayne State, perhaps soon Western Michigan U.); Pennsylvania (Penn State, Pitt, Temple), and Virginia (UVA, Virginia Tech, Virginia Commonwealth).

• Within the UNC system, NCSU is currently the largest campus, at close to 28,000; UNC-Chapel Hill is second, at 24,000; followed by ECU (18,000) and UNC-Charlotte (16,000). UNC-Charlotte actively seeks to grow at a greater than proportional rate, and could exceed 25,000 students by 2007, which would make it larger than UNC-CH is today. NCSU reportedly is considering growing to a maximum of 31,000; ECU’s aspirations are not yet known.

**Impacts of growth, and constraints**

• **Faculty**: The legislature funds faculty positions by formula, at a ratio of one faculty member to every 15 students. Since the College of Arts & Science now has 20 students for each faculty member, receiving additional faculty at a ratio of 15 to 1 would be a net benefit to the College, all else being equal. Each new faculty member, however, also requires an office, parking, research space and equipment (especially in laboratory disciplines), and other resources. By UNCGA’s own standards, UNC-CH already has a deficit of office space and a severe deficit of research space.

• **Classrooms and teaching laboratories**: According to a recent UNCGA study, UNC-CH could accommodate some additional students by increasing classroom utilization from 28 to 35 hours per week, especially in late afternoons and evenings. However, many existing classrooms are already severely in need of renovation and upgrading even to serve the existing student population adequately, and any significant enrollment increase would require additional capital expenditures for new classrooms as well as renovation of existing ones.

• **Academic support services**: Increased enrollments will also add to demands on all academic support services, such as advising and career counseling, many of which are not automatically funded by state appropriations or student fees.

• **Housing**: UNC-CH currently has on-campus housing available for less than 7,000 of its students (not including married-student housing), and off-campus student housing throughout Chapel Hill and Carrboro is fully saturated. Any significant increase in enrollment would therefore require additional on-campus housing construction, and increased commuting from outside Chapel Hill will add to existing pressures on parking. Housing is a self-financed service; UNC-CH currently could finance additional housing for up to 500 more students.

• **Transit and parking**: Any significant enrollment growth would obviously add to the campus’s transit and parking needs, probably requiring even greater expansion of peripheral parking and public transit. Conversely, it would also expand the market to support better mass transit.
• **Student life:** Each additional student increases the critical mass to support currently underutilized services, but also adds an additional strain on services that are already at capacity. On campus, for example, increased enrollments would require expansion of food services (but also provide a market to offer them at more locations). Off campus, it would increase the market but also the pressures on Franklin Street. A significant expansion and diversification of student-life services on South Campus, accompanying an increase in housing there, would be a necessity but perhaps also an opportunity. Space for many student-life activities is already at or over capacity (meeting rooms for student organizations, for instance, and the workout facilities in Fetzer Gym), and some student-life facilities have little prospect for future expansion (e.g. the basketball arena).

**Proposed Guiding Principles**

• **Maintain the quality, traditions, and distinctiveness of Carolina degrees and educational experience.** These are its most vital assets for continuing to attract the highest quality students and faculty. They include for instance its small-campus feel, public-Ivy reputation, ease of interdisciplinary study across department and school units, active and widespread engagement in public service, and others.

• **Maintain and enhance our mission as an outstanding research university.** We are one of the best, and seek to be the best public research university. This includes nationally distinguished graduate and professional programs, as well as high-quality undergraduate education in a research-university setting.

• **Maintain commitment to our distinctive mission for graduate and professional education.** Under any scenario, the University would plan to absorb about 50% of the anticipated growth in graduate and professional education, reflecting our mission and our commitment to high-quality graduate and professional programs. Enrollments in these programs should be determined on their merits, based for instance on quality of applicants, markets for their graduates, and capacity to serve them well, not on trying to maintain any fixed ratio of graduate to undergraduate enrollments. However, we will need to examine the needs and opportunities for more teaching assistants to serve a growing undergraduate student body. We will also need to balance this projected in-state increase with out-of-state students, who are a major and high-quality percentage of our normal graduate/professional applicant pool and an important resource which we attract to North Carolina.

• **Maintain and enhance our own niche in the UNC system.** We should not compete on size for its own sake, but on our mission, quality, and service to North Carolina. This may mean accepting the inevitability of other UNC institutions growing larger than we, just as some public institutions in other states are larger than their most distinguished universities. We should oppose any proposals that would erode the quality and distinctiveness of what we provide to the state as North Carolina’s premier research university.

• **Manage our existing facilities and enrollments efficiently.** We will be most convincing in articulating the necessary limits on our enrollment growth if we can demonstrate efficient management of our existing facilities and enrollments. For facilities, this means correcting under-utilization of classrooms, and giving renovation priority to making more of them usable...
more of the time. For enrollments, this might include such steps as shortening average time to degree (improving availability for required course sequences? increasing use of summer school? simplifying requirements? role of credit for distance-learning courses and other transfer credits? incentives?), and increasing use of study-abroad and academic year-away programs, to serve as many students as we can consistent with quality and mission.

- **Increase enrollments to the extent we can without sacrificing mission and quality.** We should do what we can to serve the state’s growing needs, and not adopt a no-growth policy.

- **Increase recruitment for excellence and diversity of student body.** In a period of increasing demand for higher education, we should increase our efforts to recruit students purposefully to achieve increased quality and diversity. Possible steps might include expanding the Honors program; joining the National Merit Scholars program, and increasing merit scholarships generally; increasing personalized faculty recruitment of promising applicants; better publicizing Carolina’s strengths and opportunities in the sciences; and better publicizing (and delivering on) the distinctive value of a research university that brings its research perspective to its undergraduates.

- **No enrollment growth without capital commitments in advance to serve it.**

- **No enrollment growth without commensurate commitment of additional faculty and academic support.** Carolina is currently committed to increasing its faculty commitment to direct engagement with its undergraduates, remedying what its students have perceived as important deficiencies (e.g. freshman seminars, faculty advising). President Broad herself has urged us to take these perceptions seriously and fix this. We must let additional enrollments overwhelm these efforts.

- **No significant reduction in proportion of out-of-state students.** There is nothing inherently sacred about the current 18% out-of-state enrollment cap, but our out-of-state students are a vital part of both our quality, our diversity, and our attractiveness to the best in-state students as well. They are also an important link to our out-of-state alumni.

- **No significant increase in junior transfers.** Significantly increasing junior transfers simply to meet enrollment demand could add disproportionate costs to upper-level instruction, especially perhaps in the sciences, lengthen average time to graduation, and erode many of the values of the four-year residential experience.

- **No major reliance on distance-learning to increase undergraduate enrollments.** We should actively explore its potential as it continues to develop, and use it ourselves where it adds value to our teaching. However, at this point the extent of that potential remains unproven, as does its attractiveness to the students who would be most qualified for admission to UNC-Chapel Hill, and also its efficiency: to do it well may require greater cost and faculty time than traditional courses, rather than less.6

- **Plan on no off-campus BA degree programs.** This is under consideration by some other campuses, but seems incompatible with maintaining the identity of a UNC-Chapel Hill degree and the residential college experience it represents.
How might UNC-Chapel Hill choose an acceptable level of increased enrollments?

• **Capacity limits**: determine key capacity constraints (housing, classrooms, and offices for additional faculty, for instance), and the time and costs necessary to solve them. These define in some sense the outer bounds of the rate at which enrollments could be allowed to grow.

• **Mission and values**: Within the limits of how much and how fast we could grow, identify how much additional enrollment could benefit UNC-Chapel Hill—both directly, in supporting program growth in areas of excellence and in recruiting an outstanding and diverse student body, and indirectly, e.g. in justifying new facilities that are needed to achieve our goals as well as serve increased numbers of students—in maintaining and increasing its value to North Carolina?

• **some reasonable share to meet the state’s needs**: Given our capacity limits and our mission and value to North Carolina, how much of a share of the increased demand can we responsibly offer to serve?

• **Other suggestions …..?**

---

1 These projections are based on expected demand for public higher education only. They are based on actual and projected counts of NC high school graduates (by NC Department of Public Instruction and Western Interstate Council on Higher Education), census data for older North Carolinians, and 7-year weighted averages of enrollment participation rates for each age group at each of UNC’s campuses. They include recent and projected in-migration to North Carolina, but do not include out-of-state students; nor do they include any campus-by-campus constraints based on facility capacity limits. They also do not include any significant rise in future college-going participation rates, which could also occur.

2 Enrollment demand after 2007 will depend significantly on such factors as undergraduate and graduate participation rates (i.e. will increasing numbers of North Carolinians want to go to college, and to continue on to graduate and professional degrees); and what role will competition from other institutions, such as the rising number of Internet-based programs offered by out-of-state institutions, play in serving this demand.

3 Adding science majors, for example, might require far higher costs than adding humanities majors (e.g. for new teaching laboratories), but it might be essential to the College’s goals and students’ demand for particular majors.

4 UNC-CH now has one of the highest yield rates of admitted applicants of any public university nationally, and also one of the highest retention rates for its students. Additional steps to attract the best of our applicants could include enlarging the Honors program, adding National Merit Scholar and other merit scholarships, and increasing involvement of faculty in personalized recruitment contacts.

5 This requires some additional analysis by field and degree levels of students, since the new UNCGA funding formula distinguishes makes distinctions among these.

6 Note also however that President Broad anticipates legislative approval for state funding of extension and distance-learning enrollments, replacing the current self-financing principle: this may open the door to faculty expansions to serve them, both here and elsewhere in the UNC system.