



# THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA SYSTEM

April 1, 2020

Dear Chairmen Horn, Fraley, and Clemmons

Thank you in advance for your leadership in responding to the current crisis facing North Carolina and the country. This pandemic is having widespread impacts on our institutions, which we will feel for months to come.

Please find the UNC System's input for the House Select Committee on COVID-19 detailed in the following pages. This report includes input from various divisions within the University of North Carolina System Office and their institutional contacts. With the recent passage of the **Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act**, we are still awaiting federal guidance on the acceptable usage of those funds. Additionally, due to the rapid response from our institutions, we continue to refine the cost estimates as more information comes to light. We will include more details on those items upon receipt.

Again, thank you for your leadership and for the state's response to this unprecedented crisis. This crisis will have significant long-term impacts on the state and the University, so your support of our University System at this moment in time is greatly appreciated!

Sincerely,

Bill Roper  
Interim President  
University of North Carolina System



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## UNC System Input for the House Select Committee on COVID-19

### **Grants to UNC System institutions to cover reimbursements**

UNC System Institutions have now made the decision to require students to vacate student housing, with the exception of a small number that have been granted waivers. Similarly, dining halls have been transitioned to take-out only and operations significantly reduced. At the special BOG Meeting on March 30<sup>th</sup>, we announced a plan to refund student meal and housing fees on a prorated basis, but there are hard costs associated with providing these services.

### **Recover Costs Incurred**

Provide funding relief for one-time costs to transition to online instruction, facility sanitation, and other emergency expenses. Provide personal protective equipment (PPE), masks, gloves, etc. and funding to help defray cost associated with sanitizing and providing PPE for public safety officers and other employees. Additionally, our universities are working with local governments to support their needs during the crisis.

### **Assist Employees in Receipt-Supported Activities impacted by the emergency**

Due to the cancellation of conferences, performances, and closure of campus facilities, receipt-supported activities have lost a significant portion, if not their entire revenue stream. These employees, which include a significant number of students, are paid with non-state funds, but are significantly impacted by shutting down our universities and cancelled meetings. Students working at their institutions are not eligible for state Unemployment Insurance. Examples would include employees in dining halls, bookstores, NC Arboretum, and at event centers. This funding would provide emergency assistance to support employees and other critical functions normally funded through receipts.

### **Enrollment Growth for UNC System Institutions**

The current crisis create an uncertain future for our institutions. The University of North Carolina enrollment funding request went to funding actual enrollment in arrears, so we are seeking the allocation of enrollment funding, based on the actual education delivered (\$29,075,005). H. 966 would have appropriated \$75,000,000 into a reserve for enrollment growth for the education sector. We seek this funding now to assist in stabilizing our universities.

### **Digital Learning**

The coronavirus forced over 14,000 faculty members across the UNC System to move over 50,000 face-to-face courses online in a matter of weeks. This abrupt, unanticipated move online reflects a herculean effort by our faculty and staff. But it has also exposed the gaps in our current online infrastructure, support systems and offerings. Most universities and faculty are not adequately equipped to teach large numbers of students online and at scale while ensuring those students are successful. In other words, we are currently using online technology to enable “emergency teaching online” to support short-term academic continuity. To ensure student continued progress and success, we will need a more strategic approach in the summer and possibly the fall.

While it is hard to estimate how long the coronavirus crisis will continue to impede normal University operations, the experience makes clear that the University must put in place the necessary



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infrastructure so as to continue to deliver high-quality academic programming during the current crisis and be prepared for future disruptions and changes to the market.

To better prepare for large-scale online learning in the summer and possibly the fall, the UNC System must invest in instructional design expertise to help faculty redesign their in-person courses to state of the art online courses. We must also invest in proven supports that will help students—many of whom will be learning online for the first time—succeed in their courses and stay on track to a degree (advising and coaching, academic support). And we must develop a small number of fully online degree programs in high-demand fields like cybersecurity to help North Carolina's adult students, veterans, and others prepare for the post-COVID19 economy.

## **UNC System Policy Input for the House Select Committee on COVID-19**

### **Provision waiving any repayment of state financial aid due to withdrawals caused by COVID-19**

For example, in addition to holding harmless the students who withdrew due to COVID-19, we could also seek language along these lines:

"In the case of any pandemic or other biological or natural event which causes the University or a constituent institution of the University to transition to distance education or other alternative modes of instruction deliver in order to protect the health and safety of its employees and its students, students receiving need-based financial aid from the state shall not be required to repay any such aid due to withdrawal caused by the event, provided they re-enroll at the same institution or another UNC constituent institution upon the resumption of normal operations."

### **Waiver of interest request on student balances**

State law (GS 147-86.23) requires that we charge interest and penalties on unpaid student bills. There is a clause that allows an agency to waive the penalties "for good cause," but it does not allow us to waive the interest charges. We wish to explore options to waive both the interest and penalties for this semester. The UNC System is working with the Attorney General, who has the authority to address this issue.

### **Carryforward:**

To the extent possible, the UNC System requests flexibility on implementation of the year-end carryforward process. Institutions are already experiencing back orders for routine items, and purchasing guidelines that dictate payment upon delivery may create significant issues as those items purchases take place in the next fiscal year.

## **Regulatory Flexibility for Educator Preparation Programs (EPPs)**

### **1. Clinical Practice Requirements**

- For teaching candidates seeking licensure this year, revise the requirement in 115C-269.25 that candidates complete a clinical practice internship of a minimum of 16 weeks over the course of two semesters to 8 weeks or the amount practicable.



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- Excuse teacher candidates enrolled in courses with early field experience requirements for the Spring 2020 semester from the field experience requirements (115C-269.25(c)). Allow EPPs to utilize alternative options for affected students to fulfill the early field experience requirements (ex: remote teaching, simulated environments, video, etc).
- Ensure that the State Board creates similar flexibility on clinical practice requirements for licensure candidates in other leadership and student service areas whose clinical placements have been interrupted.

## 2. Program Entry and Licensure Requirements

- Under 115C-270.15:
  - Waive the requirement that affected teaching candidates complete their licensure examination at least once in the first year of licensure for affected students.
  - For those in their third year of licensure and unable to complete the examination, provide flexibility to complete the examination by the end of 2020.
  - Modify other examination requirements under SBE LICN 003 for teaching candidates seeking initial professional licensure for Fall 2020, but require those candidates to pass those examinations before the start of the 2021-22 school year.
- Under 115C-269.15:
  - Provide EPPs the authority to grant provisional admission for those who have not met the Praxis CORE cutoff score. This will permit students to register for fall 2020 upper division courses, provided they meet the Praxis CORE testing requirement prior to the end of the 2020-21 academic year.
  - Provide EPPs the authority to grant provisional admission for those who have not met the minimum 2.7 GPA requirement. This will permit students to register for fall 2020 upper division courses, provided they meet the 2.7 GPA requirement prior to beginning the clinical internship semester.
  - Allow those pursuing residency licensure to enter a program without having completed testing and entry requirements prior, provided that they complete said requirements by the end of the 2020-21 school year.

## 3. Flexibility on Documentation, Accountability Sanctions, and Licensure Expiration

- Due to disruption in public schools and EPPs, delay the implementation of sanctions for educator preparation programs by a year.
- Allow EPP's to use alternative means of collecting signatures from district personnel who mentor and coach educator preparation candidates, such as allowing for electronic forms and signatures or moving the documentation process to the online licensure portal.
- Grant lateral entry teachers whose licenses were due to expire in June 2020 an additional year to complete testing requirements.



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## **Teachers' and State Employees' Retirement**

There is a desperate need for health care workers, and UNC Health Care reports that a number of recently retired nurses could come back to serve the state during this crisis should we grant a short-term waiver to TSERs six month break in service requirement. This may also assist in education.

- Request to change G.S. 135-1 (20) to move the break in service from six months to thirty days for retirees to return to work.
- Request to change G.S. 135-3(8)(c) to remove the earnings limit for work performed from March 1, 2020 through December 31, 2020 related to COVID-19, the compensation limitation outlined in this section will not be applicable to beneficiaries who are reemployed for an employer participating in the Retirement System.
- This change will assist with nurse and teacher shortfall, helping to quickly reemploy recent retirees.

## **Reporting Deadlines**

As in-person Board of Governor meetings have been suspended, we seek an extension for reports to the legislature that require approval. From a reporting standpoint, it would be beneficial if deadlines for reports due in the next 3 months could be moved out 3-6 months.