

April 28, 2005

## Task Force on Enrollment Growth and University Size

This is the report of The Task Force on Enrollment Growth and University Size, which was formed and has operated in light of Senate Document 0104F. At its inception its members were:

Chris Bell, Faculty (Associate Professor of Economics)  
Keith Bramlett, Faculty (Lecturer of Sociology)  
John Bucher, Student Affairs representative  
Brian Butler, IDC  
Peg Downes, Faculty (Professor of Literature and Language)  
Dee Eggers, Faculty (Assistant Professor of Environmental Studies)  
Archer Gravely, Institutional Research Director  
Bruce Larson (Co-chair), IDC  
Bill Massey, Chancellor's appointee  
Dwight B. Mullen, Diversity/Multicultural Affairs representative  
Mark Padilla, Provost  
Dan Pierce, IDC  
Leanna Preston, CSAC Representative  
Irene Rossell (Co-chair), IDC  
Scot Schaeffer, Admissions Director  
Porscha Yount, SGA representative

Due to a scheduling conflict Tarik Glenn served in place of Porscha Yount as SGA representative during Spring 2005. Dwight B. Mullen had an administrative leave during Spring 2005.

The essentials of SD 0104F are reproduced in the following **Rationale, Goals and Terms of task force.**

**Rationale:** The UNCA Guiding Concepts specify that UNCA will provide a superior liberal arts education and is “small by choice, seeking no more than 3500 students.” This cap was established in 1991. The estimated Fall 2004 headcount will be 3461. Because the university budget is determined by enrollment, it is imperative that a decision be made this year whether to remain within this enrollment

cap. In addition, there is a need to clarify the language in the Guiding Concepts, which does not specify whether “students” should be enumerated using headcount or FTE.

**Goals:** By the April 2005 Senate meeting, 1) make a recommendation to the Senate and to the Chancellor whether university enrollment should continue to grow; 2) if further growth is recommended, make additional recommendations on the extent, rate, and nature of growth; (3) clarify how UNCA “students” will be defined (i.e., fall headcount, annual headcount, FTE, etc.).

**Terms of task force:** Academic year 2004-2005. The chair of the Task Force shall make periodic progress reports to the Faculty Senate at times to be determined by the Chair of the Faculty Senate and the Chair of the Task Force.

The Task Force met regularly during Fall 2004 and Spring 2005 to fulfill its charge and it examined a wide range of materials, including:

- Language in UNCA Guiding Concepts relative to total enrollment, 1986-2001
- NC Public High School Graduates: History and Projections
- Fall Enrollment Report: Five Year Trend
- Enrollment History and Projection Summary
- SCH-Change Funding Model Regular Term: 2005-06 Request for Enrollment Change
- SCH-Change Funding Model Regular Term: 2006-07 Request for Enrollment Change
- SCH-Change Funding Model Distance Education: 2005-06 Request for Enrollment Change
- Fall 2003 Enrollments: COPLAC Schools, UNC Office of the President Designated Peers, UNC Schools, Peer Comparison Summary
- Recommendations from Dan Keith Ray (July 12, 2004) on UNC Asheville Strategic Vision and supporting PowerPoint slides (April 26, 2004)
- Student Enrollment Profile: Ten Year Trend (Fall Semesters)
- Institutions With FTE Enrollment 3,000 - 5,000: Fall 2003
- Institutions With FTE Enrollment 3,000 - 5,000: Fall 2003 (Sorted by Control and Carnegie [Classification])
- Baccalaureate-Liberal Arts (BA-LA) & Baccalaureate-General (BA-GEN) Enrollment Comparisons: Fall 2003
- List of 25 largest BA Liberal Arts Institutions: Fall 2003
- List of 25 largest BA General Institutions: Fall 2003
- Institutions With FTE 3,000-5,000: Fall 2003
- Profile of Institutions With FTE 3,000-5,000: Fall 2003
- Budget Impact of Increasing 25 Undergraduates (Cat 1) Instate FTE

- Budget Impact of Increasing 25 Graduates (Cat 1) Instate FTE
- Spring Enrollment Report – Five-Year Trend
- Spring 2005 Student Profile (preliminary)

In addition to regular meetings, it held three forums:

- The first was held 18 November 2004 in the Owen Conference Center and was focused on the question “What do we value at UNCA?”
- The second was held on 27 January 2005 in the Owen Conference Center and addressed the question “If UNCA were to grow, what would we want that growth to look like?” In relation to this five general strategies were stated to structure discussion: (1) expanding existing undergraduate programs; (2) adding additional undergraduate programs; (3) adding selected graduate programs; (4) expanding the MLA program; and (5) expanding distance learning opportunities.
- The third was held on 14 April 2005 in the Laurel Forum and provided an opportunity for the UNCA community to discuss the preliminary recommendations of the Task Force.

The regular meetings and forums were supplemented by a variety of communications sent by faculty, staff and students to members of the Task Force.

### ***Recommendations***

The recommendations of the Task Force build upon its deliberations in relation to the materials it gathered, the forums it conducted and the communications it received, all considered in light of the *Vision* (approved by the Board of Trustees on November 8, 2001), *Mission* (approved by the Board of Trustees on August 24, 2000), *Guiding Concepts* (approved by the Board of Trustees on March 11, 2001) and *Institutional Goals* (approved by the Board of Trustees on January 23, 2002) of UNCA.

#### **How will UNCA “students” be defined (Goal 3)?**

***Recommendation 1.*** UNCA students should be defined as annual full-time equivalent students.

***Recommendation 2.*** UNCA should continue to employ policies and practices to gradually reduce (but not eliminate) the difference between the number of full-time equivalent students and student headcount.

**Recommendation 3.** UNCA should continue to employ policies and practices to gradually reduce the difference between the fall and spring full-time equivalent enrollments for the same academic year.

*Discussion.* State funding for UNCA is based upon the number of annual full-time equivalent students and serves as one basis for R1. It is also thought that students engaged in full-time study will be best able to benefit from the “superior liberal arts education” (*Mission*) that UNCA provides.

The development of a “diverse and collaborative community” (*Guiding Concepts*) necessitates frequent and ongoing interactions among a relatively stable body of students, faculty and staff. The purpose of R2 and R3 is to provide for such frequent and ongoing interactions by developing a relatively stable body of students. The reductions mentioned in R2 and R3 should be *gradual* so they do not result in a loss of economic diversity among students. R2 also recognizes the possibility of career advancement and personal growth that part-time education can provide, as well as the important contributions that part-time, often non-traditional, students make to student learning.

### **Should UNCA enrollment continue to grow (Goal 1)?**

There is necessarily some overlap between the questions of growth (Goal 1) and the nature of growth (Goal 2).

**Recommendation 4.** UNCA undergraduate enrollment may grow to a maximum of 3500 annual full-time equivalent students.

**Recommendation 5.** UNCA should explore opportunities for graduate programs consistent with its mission.

**Recommendation 6.** UNCA should continue to explore opportunities to gradually increase the percentage of its residential students.

*Discussion.* The undergraduate enrollment goal of UNCA has been roughly the same since 1986.

- The 1986 *Guiding Concepts* state that “UNCA intends to grow to an ultimate size of 5000 headcount, 3800 undergraduate and 1200 graduate students by 1995.”
- In the 1991 *Guiding Concepts* the number of students dropped to 4300 (3500 undergraduate and 800 graduate) with the target enrollment to be reached by 1995.

- In 1996 the *Guiding Concepts* state that UNCA “will move toward a size that allows for growth while maintaining its focus on a collaborative learning environment: a maximum headcount of 3,500 students, at least 1200 of whom will be residential. UNCA will grow in quality as it reaches its target enrollment.”
- Finally, the 2001 *Guiding Concepts* note: “In order to facilitate collaboration, and especially collaboration among faculty and students, UNCA is small by choice, seeking no more than 3500 students, with a constantly growing proportion of residential students.”

Recommendations R4-R6, at least with respect to undergraduate students, are consistent with the *Guiding Concepts* that have led UNCA for the last twenty years and which have helped it achieve a prominent position among public liberal arts universities.

The treatment of graduate enrollments in the *Guiding Concepts* is striking, going from a 1200 student goal in 1986, to 800 in 1991, to no mention at all in 1996 and 2001. There are at least four elements at work here. First, there was the discovery, rather the creation, of the public liberal arts niche in higher education in the 1980s which led to the formation of the Council of Public Liberal Arts Colleges with UNCA as one of its founding members. Second, there was the increased identification of UNCA with its liberal arts mission and the formal recognition of that mission by the UNC System. Third, there was the division of institutional responsibilities between UNCA and Western Carolina University set out in a letter by President Friday of the UNC System. And fourth, there was the development of the Asheville Graduate Center; one of the rationales for the construction of Karpen Hall was that the Asheville Graduate Center would be housed there. In summary, the treatment of graduate enrollment in the *Guiding Concepts* over time has grown out of an increasing recognition by UNCA and the UNC System that the primary mission of UNCA is to offer “a superior liberal arts education” to undergraduates.

UNCA presently has one graduate program, the Master of Liberal Arts. The MLA program was developed in the 1980s and enrolled its first students in the 1988-89 academic year. During the 2004-05 academic year it enrolled 23 full-time equivalent students. The, perhaps unique, appropriateness of the MLA program for a university whose primary mission is undergraduate liberal arts education is pointed to by the *Mission* of UNCA: “To enhance and extend the undergraduate programs, UNCA offers an interdisciplinary Master of Liberal Arts.” R5 provides for the exploration of additional graduate programs under the condition that they are consistent with UNCA’s mission.

Selecting specific targets for undergraduate and graduate enrollment is in many respects a challenging task, for there is no magic formula to determine exactly what those numbers should be. It should, in fact, be noticed that no graduate enrollment target is given in R5. In selecting targets, therefore, consistency with plans over time is an important consideration and that consistency is discussed in the paragraphs above. Another factor that is important is the experience of other colleges and universities, and it is that experience that will

now be addressed. In relation to this there is much to be learned from an examination of data on institutions with full-time equivalent enrollment from 3,000 to 5,000 (please see the attached).

The attachment shows *U.S. News and World Report* rankings for liberal arts colleges (*America's Best Colleges*, 2005 edition) combined with the Carnegie Classification data for Baccalaureate Colleges-Liberal Arts, i.e., schools that are similar to UNCA. The schools are sorted by type of control—private or public—and by FTE. It is noteworthy that:

- All private institutions, with the exception of Siena College, are ranked above UNCA, and all private institutions, with the exception of Bucknell University, are smaller than UNCA.
- All public institutions, with the exception of the University of Puerto Rico-Cayey (which isn't ranked), are ranked below UNCA, and all public institutions are larger than UNCA.

All rankings are imperfect, of course, and that of *USNWR* is no exception, yet it is hard to avoid the conclusion that ranking depends upon type of control and FTE enrollment. UNCA is a public university, of course, and will remain so in the future. It appears, however, that there might be some risk to UNCA's ranking as it moves toward higher enrollment.

This last point is supported by consideration of *USNWR*'s ranking of the top five public liberal arts colleges (*America's Best Colleges*, p.89), shown below.

Institution	USNWR Rank	USNWR LA Tier	FTE	Total Headcount	Undergrads	Grads
VMI	1	2	1,333	1,333	1,333	0
St. Mary's College	2	2	1,853	1,922	1,922	0
U. of Minnesota-Morris	3	3	1,781	1,861	1,861	0
UNCA	4	3	3,018	3,446	3,410	36
Richard Stockton College	5	4	6,067	6,881	6,540	341

Here two things stand out:

- All schools ranked above UNCA have smaller enrollments.
- All schools ranked above UNCA have no graduate programs.

It is easy to infer too much from the data above. In the last ten years, for example, UNCA moved from tier 4 to

tier 3, so improvement in rank can take place at the same time that enrollment increases. Whether this happens or not depends upon the quality of university administration and the commitment of faculty and staff, as well as resource availability.

The information above could easily be made into an argument that UNCA should not grow at all and should eliminate its MLA program. Why, then, should undergraduate enrollment be permitted to grow to 3500 FTE and opportunities for graduate programs be explored? Why bear the risk growth seems to represent?

One reason is plan consistency, as was previously noted. The creation and maintenance of a consistent message over time is important for institutional success, and changes in plans entail significant risks in themselves. In relation to this it should also be noted that UNCA has, as part of its routine budgeting activities, already submitted enrollment forecasts for the next two years. These forecasts, along with actual enrollment data for academic year 2004-05, are shown below.

Year	Undergraduate FTE	Graduate FTE	Total FTE
2004-05	3,088	23	3,111
2005-06	3,213	25	3,238
2006-07	3,331	30	3,361

R4 is consistent with these projections. Due to the time required to develop new graduate programs, R5 will not affect graduate FTE during the forecast period.

The most important reason for increasing undergraduate enrollment to a level supported by the *Guiding Concepts* of the last twenty years, however, is the projected increase in North Carolina Public High School Graduates through 2013. According to the Controller's Office of the North Carolina Board of Education (2/05/2005), the number of graduates per year will have grown from a recent low of 56,770 in 1996 to a high of 79,667 in 2013. These students will need to have opportunities to attend public institutions of higher education in North Carolina and many will want the opportunity to attend its public liberal arts university. Since those students will be more ethnically and racially diverse than at present, this provides an opportunity for UNCA to "Create, maintain, and enhance an academic community that is diverse and collaborative" (*Institutional Goals*).

Now the percentage growth of graduating high school students between 1996 and 2013 is 40.33% and UNCA's 1996 FTE was 2,538. If UNCA's undergraduate FTE were to grow, therefore, at the same rate, UNCA's 2013 enrollment would be 3,562. A 2013 undergraduate enrollment target of 3500, consequently, shows that UNCA will have made a solid contribution toward meeting the educational needs of the citizens of North Carolina. Making such a contribution should be beneficial to UNCA as it articulates its requests for a projected Phase II Bond Referendum.

Probably the main concern about enrollment growth expressed at the first two forums was the possibility that UNCA's present sense of intimacy—physical and social—will be reduced, and there may be no more important issue than this. Will the recommended growth necessarily lead to decreased intimacy? The answer is assuredly “No.” Excellent administration, the commitment of faculty and staff, as well as expanded resource availability can forestall such a decline and may even improve intimacy. Developments along the lines posed by the integration of Academic Affairs and Students Affairs, the Integrated Liberal Studies program and the additional financial resources that will come to the university through expanded undergraduate enrollment and expanded activity by University Relations can make it happen.

#### **What will be the extent, rate and nature of UNCA growth (Goal 2)?**

The extent of UNCA growth has already been addressed and to a certain extent so has its nature. The recommendations that follow focus on the rate of growth, evaluation and future planning activities.

**Recommendation 7.** During academic years 2005-06 and 2006-07 undergraduate FTE enrollment will increase at the rate set by UNCA's budgetary plans. Subsequent growth will be gradual, so that undergraduate student quality and diversity, both broadly interpreted, as well as the quality of the undergraduate experience, will increase.

**Recommendation 8.** UNCA should be rigorous in evaluating its departments, programs and curriculum in light of its size and liberal arts mission.

**Recommendation 9.** Beginning in academic year 2005-06, UNCA should reexamine its vision, mission, guiding concepts and institutional goals in light of these recommendations.

**Recommendation 10.** UNCA will work determinedly to acquire needed resources.

*Discussion.* R7 specifies the rate of undergraduate growth. The rate conforms to existing budgetary plans and provides, through its subsequent gradualness, opportunities to discuss the significance of a 3500 FTE enrollment maximum for UNCA. Since most enrollment growth will take place at the undergraduate level, and as regular assessment is necessary for the advancement of undergraduate learning, UNCA will need to be rigorous in evaluating its departments, programs and curriculum so as “to provide the liberal arts experience at its best” (R8). The role of distance education in expanding undergraduate enrollment will be relatively small due to R2.

The *Guiding Concepts* of UNCA have been reviewed on a five-year cycle since 1986, which means that they should be reviewed again in 2006 (R9). Typically they have been examined in a process that has considered UNCA’s vision, mission and guiding concepts; in the last iteration, as a part of UNCA’s institutional effectiveness procedures, a set of institutional goals were developed, too. Historically the review process has been guided by the Institutional Development Committee/University Planning Council. In light of the formation in Spring 2005 of a Strategic Planning Group headed by the Chancellor, who should guide this review should be determined jointly by the Faculty Senate and the Chancellor. Newly reviewed planning documents will help to focus and ground UNCA’s enrollment growth.

Finally, enrollment growth will bring with it a host of resource challenges. Additional students will require additional resources and no resource will be in greater demand than space. To some extent the need for additional resources can be minimized by reducing the difference between the number of full-time equivalent students and student headcount (R2) and by reducing the difference between the fall and spring FTE enrollments (R3), but increasing the residential character of UNCA (R6) will require the construction of new dorms, and curricular and programmatic developments (R8) will require new facilities. Indeed, there are many programs that are stretched for space at this very moment. It is essential, therefore, that all members of the UNCA community should work determinedly to acquire the resources needed for enrollment growth (R10) so that UNCA may realize its vision “to provide the liberal arts experience at its best.”

***Recommendation 11.*** UNCA will convene a broadly constituted group, including members of the Faculty Senate, to consider student enrollment prior to each biennial enrollment projection, beginning with the Spring 2006 semester.

*Discussion.* Broadly-based, regular and timely campus input with respect to enrollment planning will help ensure that the interests and knowledge of the UNCA community will be utilized in the most effective way.

Attachment  
 Carnegie Classification: Baccalaureate Colleges - Liberal Arts  
 Institutions With FTE Enrollment 3,000 - 5,000: Fall 2003

USNWR Tier	Institution Name	State	Control	FTE	Total		Grads
					Headcount	Undergrads	
2	HOPE COLLEGE	Michigan	Private	3,001	3,068	3,068	
1	WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY	Connecticut	Private	3,024	3,221	2,730	491
1	SMITH COLLEGE	Massachusetts	Private	3,114	3,159	2,682	477
3	SIENA COLLEGE	New York	Private	3,164	3,379	3,379	
1	BUCKNELL UNIVERSITY	Pennsylvania	Private	3,600	3,676	3,484	192
3	UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT ASHEVILLE	North Carolina	Public	3,018	3,446	3,410	36
4	SHAWNEE STATE UNIVERSITY	Ohio	Public	3,308	3,693	3,693	
4	CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY-MONTEREY BAY	California	Public	3,397	3,760	3,362	398
Not Ranked	UNIVERSITY OF PUERTO RICO-CAYEY UNIVERSITY COLLEGE	Puerto Rico	Public	3,753	3,987	3,987	
4	EVERGREEN STATE COLLEGE	Washington	Public	3,952	4,380	4,103	277
4	FORT LEWIS COLLEGE	Colorado	Public	3,983	4,182	4,182	
4	CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT UNIVERSITY	Virginia	Public	4,385	4,812	4,680	132
4	MESA STATE COLLEGE	Colorado	Public	4,879	5,765	5,699	66

UNCA Office of Institutional Research

10/19/2004 (Sorted by Control and Carnegie Classification by Bruce Larson with new material on 2/20/2005)