$150.00 CAMPUS INITIATED TUITION INCREASE (CITI), CAMPUSWIDE PROPOSAL

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The UNC Board of Governors adopted a policy statement on October 12, 2006, establishing a 6.5 percent limit on the rate of annual increase for campus-initiated tuition and general fees (Athletics, Health Services, Student Activities, and Educational & Technology Fees) for undergraduate resident students. This figure is the average annual increase in undergraduate resident tuition rates since 1972. The amount of the increase may be allocated among tuition and fees in a manner that most effectively provides revenues to meet campus needs. (Effective 2008-09, the 6.5 percent cap may be reduced for any year in which the General Assembly provides a specific campus a recurring increase in operating funds that is in excess of 6 percent.)

Board policy also stipulates that campuses must set aside at least 25 percent of the new tuition revenues to be added to the campus pool of need-based financial aid. Additionally, at least 25 percent of the revenues must be used for increasing faculty salaries, unless the average ranked faculty salary for a campus is at or above the 80th percentile of the average ranked faculty salary for that campus’ peer institutions as approved by the Board of Governors.

In keeping with Board of Governors’ policy, UNCG seeks approval for a campus initiated tuition increase of $150.00 (6.2% increase, when added to the planned fee increase of $66). This CITI would be applied to all resident and non-resident students, including both undergraduate and graduate students. Revenues from this increase would be used to support need-based financial aid (25%), faculty salary increases (25%), and graduate student assistantship funding (50%).

II. IMPACT ON TUITION & FEE LEVELS

In 2006-07, resident undergraduates were charged $3,813 ($2,308 tuition and $1,505 in required fees). Adding the proposed increases in tuition ($150) and fees ($66), the new rate for 2007-08 would be $4,029. Non-resident undergraduates would see their total tuition and fees increase from $15,081 to $15,297.

III. PROJECTED CITI REVENUES & ALLOCATIONS

Based on the current budgeted FTE of 13,800 students, the projected revenues from a $150.00 CITI would be $2,070,000. Half of these funds would be targeted to address need-based financial aid and faculty salary increases (an allocation of $517,500 for each purpose). The remaining half, $1,035,000, would be allocated for the support of graduate assistants at UNCG.
IV. JUSTIFICATION FOR GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIP SUPPORT

Support for graduate assistantships is consistently among the top priorities of the UNCG faculty, as revealed in surveys conducted by the Faculty Senate’s Budget Committee. The recruitment of outstanding graduate students is a highly competitive endeavor and the size of stipends for graduate assistants, the level of tuition remission, and the availability of other benefits such as health insurance are key factors in recruiting top students to our graduate programs. Unfortunately, the financial packages offered by UNCG to graduate students in virtually all fields fall far short of those provided by universities with which we compete or those with which we aspire to compete. UNCG seeks to improve its standing in this regard by making graduate assistantship funding a priority for new funding through the CITI and other sources.

The most extensive recent analysis of data on graduate student funding was published in the summer of 2002 by the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES). Based on data from the 1999-2000 National Postsecondary Student Aid Study, this analysis showed that 30 percent of full-time, full-year master’s students received assistantships and 62 percent of full-time, full-year doctoral students in the life and physical sciences received assistantships in contrast to 56 percent of full-time, full-year doctoral students in the humanities and social/behavioral sciences.

The average value of stipends received by master’s students in the 1999-2000 academic year was $7,300, while the average stipend received by doctoral students was $11,700. The value of stipends for graduate students tends to be the highest in science and engineering. The NCES analysis showed that nearly 30 percent of those in the sciences received stipends in excess of $15,000. In contrast, the mean value of assistantships for master’s programs at UNCG during the 2002-03 academic year was lower than the 1999-2000 NCES mean for all six of the professional schools. In the College of Arts & Sciences, the mean assistantship level for master’s programs in the sciences was above the general NCES 1999-2000 average while the means for programs in the humanities and behavioral/social sciences were just slightly above $7,300. At the doctoral level, the mean value of 2002-03 assistantships at UNCG was below the NCES 1999-2000 level for all professional schools and the College. Even without adjusting for the three-year difference in the age of the data, the mean stipends for some UNCG doctoral programs fall more than $5,000 below the mean from the NCES study.

The three most recent surveys of graduate student support are based on data from the 2003-04 academic year. They include the Binghamton University Survey of First Year Graduate Stipends. This survey, now in its third year, was designed to replace the National Survey of Graduate Assistantship Stipends that was conducted by the University of Nebraska between 1981 and 2000. UNCG is a participant in this survey, as are four of our peer universities. The second of these surveys was the 2004 Cornell Higher Education Research Institute (CHERI) survey of compensation for teaching assistants. This study collected data from 2003-04 as well as data from several intervals going back to 1975-76. The third survey, conducted by the University of North Dakota, also collected information on graduate teaching assistant (TA) stipends and on tuition remission.
The Binghamton survey had 73 participating institutions for 2003-04, largely public doctoral granting universities. The average (mean) stipend provided to TAs in master’s programs was $9,670 (median of $9,559) and the average stipend to TAs in doctoral programs was $11,714 (median of $12,000). The survey also provides data on minimum and maximum stipends, graduate assistant stipends funded with internal sources (tend to be slightly lower), and graduate assistantship stipends funded with external sources (tend to be slightly higher). In contrast, first year TAs at UNCG received stipends that averaged $1,440 less than the survey average at the master’s level and $3,561 less at the doctoral level. When the comparison group is limited to UNCG’s four participating peer institutions (Miami University of Ohio, Binghamton University, University of Alabama, and Bowling Green State University), first year TAs at UNCG received stipends that averaged $518 less than the peer group as the master’s level and $3,275 less at the doctoral level.

In addition, the Binghamton data show that nearly 50 percent of institutions (25 percent of our peer institutions) provided all first-year graduate assistants with a health insurance package. All four of our peer institutions also provided all first-year graduate assistants with full tuition waivers. The data on the 73 participating universities revealed that while there was some variation in patterns of tuition remission, the median tuition paid by all types of first-year graduate assistants was $0.

Cornell’s 2004 survey (CHERI) included a total of 111 universities. The survey data for 2003-04 show that a minimum TA stipend of $5,929 placed a university at the 25th percentile, a minimum stipend of $9,916 placed a university at the 50th percentile, and a minimum stipend of $12,463 placed an institution at the 75th percentile. The mean stipend for doctoral TAs at UNCG for 2003-04 was $1,763 below the minimum stipend of universities at the 50th percentile in the Cornell survey. The survey also found that 56 percent of responding universities offset at least some of the cost of health insurance. Nearly 85% of the universities remitted at least half of the tuition cost and about two-thirds provided full tuition waivers.

The Graduate School of the University of North Dakota collected data on stipends for master’s level teaching assistants from 2000-01 through 2003-04, and on stipends for doctoral level teaching assistants for 2003-04. A total of 45 universities (primarily doctoral granting public universities) participated in the 2003-04 survey. The mean stipend for first year master’s level TA in 2003-04 was $10,615. This figure is actually lower than the 2002-03 mean of $11,299, a result the study authors attribute to different universities responding in the two different years. The mean stipend for first year doctoral TAs for 2003-04 was $11,355. The mean stipend for master’s level TAs at UNCG in 2003-04 was $2,385 below the mean of the North Dakota survey. The mean stipend for doctoral TAs at UNCG for 2003-04 was $3,202 below the mean of the North Dakota study. Forty-nine percent of the participating universities reported that health insurance was a fully paid benefit for TAs. Ninety-six percent reported that both master’s and doctoral level TAs received tuition remission. For seven of the 45 responding universities, however, there were some variations in the tuition remission arrangements for master’s and doctoral students.

While there are many variations in the universities participating in the stipend surveys and in the manner in which data are collected, the overall pattern is clear. The average stipends provided to
graduate assistants at UNCG fall well below national standards. In general, average graduate assistant stipends for master’s students appear to be $1,500 to $2,500 below where they need to be to be competitive. Stipends for doctoral graduate assistants are between $2,000 and $3,500 below the level where they would be competitive. In some selected disciplines, the gaps are even larger. The lack of competitive stipends is made even worse by the fact that fewer than 20 percent of UNCG’s graduate assistants receive vouchers for health insurance, and just over half receive a tuition waiver that covers at least a portion of tuition. Furthermore, fees are not covered by waivers at UNCG.

UNCG has a rich and growing array of graduate programs and has been remarkably successful in attracting strong graduate students. Graduate education, however, is an increasingly competitive environment, and continued success in graduate education at UNCG is going to require a very significant increase in funding to support graduate students. Recognizing the challenges UNCG faces in maintaining and strengthening its graduate presence, a substantial amount of new resources will be committed toward the support of graduate assistants.

The chart below shows the projected needs of UNCG’s graduate assistantship program. The total need exceeds $4.1 million, and therefore the proposed CITI would help to address only a portion of these costs. Other funds would be provided through the enrollment-change budgeting process, new allocations from UNC General Administration for support of graduate assistantships, and the expansion budget request process.

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**Graduate Assistantship Support Needs, 2007-08**

- **Raising Assistantship Stipends**
  - Master’s Level ($1,400,000)
  - Doctoral Level ($864,500)
  $2,264,500

- **Health Insurance**
  $562,500

- **Full Tuition Waivers**
  $1,341,461

**TOTAL**
$4,168,461

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