

Statement of UNC President Erskine Bowles on the draft House budget

UNC President Erskine Bowles today released the following statement on the preliminary 2009-11 state budget released today by the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Education:

We understand completely the severity of this recession and the extremely difficult choices the House is being forced to make to balance the State budget. North Carolina is no different than every other state in the union. While we are grateful that the proposed budget cuts are less than those in other states like Florida, there should be no question in anyone's mind that the \$337 million reduction in state funding proposed for our public universities would have a severe and lasting negative impact on student access and the quality of education our universities can offer our students.

ACCESS: Student access to a public college education would be severely restricted in North Carolina. In addition to increasing tuition for every UNC student by \$256 (10.3% on average)—thereby pricing higher education out of the reach of many North Carolina families—the draft House budget would also reduce funding for need-based aid available to North Carolina families by over \$24 million. As a result, we would be unable to provide aid for over 9,700 eligible students. Inadequate need-based aid would not be the only added barrier to a UNC education. The draft House budget also proposes to cap our 2010-11 enrollment at current levels, resulting in thousands of North Carolina students from every walk of life being denied admission to a UNC campus.

QUALITY: The net funding reduction of \$337 million proposed by the House equates to an 11.1% budget cut. If cuts of that magnitude are implemented, students on every UNC campus can expect to see 1) larger classes; 2) less student advising and counseling; 3) higher faculty/student ratios; 4) lower retention and graduation rates; 5) delayed classroom upgrades and laboratory renovations; 6) fewer security personnel; 7) reductions in library services; and 8) reductions in maintenance.

STIMULUS: House fiscal staff have indicated that any federal stabilization funds applied to the proposed education budget would simply be used to offset state funding, which is completely contrary to the whole purpose of the President's stimulus package aimed at preserving educational access and quality. In fact, the federal legislation requires that states use the funds "in such a way as to mitigate the need to raise tuition and fees for in-state students."