

**MEMORANDUM**

February 24, 2004

**TO:** Tim Jones  
**FROM:** Dr. John C. Cavanaugh, President  
**SUBJECT:** University policies recommend by the governor

---

The University of West Florida Board of Trustees, meeting on February 20, discussed in detail the issues raised in Chancellor Debra Austin's memo of February 16. Following are UWF's responses.

**Targeted Incentive Program**

There are many questions as to the effectiveness of such a program and its impact on other academic degree programs.

If the state indeed provides the resources necessary to increase enrollment through additional funds for faculty and facilities, then the program would work fine, providing that funding for other academic programs remains adequate. There are some issues that need to be addressed, however. Specifically, nursing associations restrict the student-faculty ratios such that we would have a difficult time increasing enrollments. Also, regarding the teaching profession, UWF believes that teachers who achieve their certification through lateral or alternative means would have to be included in the headcount. That is a major program on our campuses.

Finally, a few general thoughts:

It is important to recognize that university students are adults who have the free will to choose their own degrees and professions. Often, those decisions are first made in high school and then change during the first few years on a campus. If the state is seriously interested in providing targeted professionals for Florida, then perhaps the state should provide universities with funds to increase outreach and educational efforts to high schools and lower division students.

As a regional comprehensive university, UWF strives to meet the needs of the communities we serve. All of Florida's public universities do the same, though their service areas differ. If, for example, there are few engineering jobs in

Northwest Florida, the area from which we draw the bulk of our students, we may not entice many students into that profession. Consequently, UWF would be unable to compete for the targeted incentive program because our first allegiance is to the region we serve.

Conversely, if there is a need for additional “widget-makers” in Northwest Florida, for example, should that not be a critical need for which UWF should be eligible for incentive money?

### **Block tuition**

As long as the provision simply “authorizes” universities to establish block-tuition fees, there is no problem with the proposal, as UWF would be able to consider all the ramifications and nuances of creating such a fee structure. However, if the provision is “mandated” with specific parameters, then it usurps the local authority promised to the local boards of trustees.

The block-tuition proposal has advantages and disadvantages. It certainly would provide a means and incentive for students to finish in four years and give parents incentive to encourage their children to do just that. It also could create additional revenue from students who take just 12 credit-hours and pay for 15. However, I don’t think the purpose of the block tuition proposal is to increase revenues from students. Many students, especially those in the upper division, take only 12 credit-hours for a variety of reasons. It may be because of restrictions placed upon them because of employment requirements, family obligations or simply because the course work becomes more demanding and they want to maintain a high GPA. Because all these reasons are valid, students should not be penalized by being forced to pay a block-tuition fee for courses they do not take.

### **University billing statements**

UWF takes no exception to this proposal, though the fiscal elements of the “true costs” of a student’s education would have to be determined.

### **Excess credit hours**

UWF takes strong exception to the provisions in this proposal.

UWF does not disagree with the concept of excess hours, but it does disagree with the level. Rather than the 10-percent threshold, a 150-credit-hour threshold might be more appropriate. That would capture those students who are not making appropriate degree progress and still preserve the students’ ability to change majors without penalty.

As proposed by the governor, this provision discourages students from double majors and from minors, which will hurt the UWF Honors Program. It severely penalizes students who change majors because they did not know their expertise from the beginning. It strongly discourages students from taking elective courses that could make them better citizens, such as courses in government, political science, art, music, history, etc. It could severely penalize transfer students.

### **Non-Degree Programs**

UWF takes strong exception to the provisions in this proposal.

The proposal to charge out-of-state tuition to non-degree seeking students harms professionals who are required to take academic courses to meet certification requirements. It penalizes people who might want to take a course here and there simply to improve a skill set required in their jobs. It penalizes members of the military and their dependents, of whom we have many, who want to take a few courses before beginning a degree program.

As regards both the excess credits and non-degree proposals, UWF strongly embraces the concept that individuals have the right to choose their profession and to manage their educational careers in the way that optimizes their success. We do not believe that students should be corralled into professions prescribed by economic forecasters who predict shortages in professions, nor to force students to immediately enroll in degree programs. Yes, public universities have a societal obligation to provide the academic programs that will lead to placing graduates on the street in critical areas. We can offer incentives. We can increase our outreach. We can publicize our programs, encourage our students and work cooperatively with high school guidance counselors to prepare students for real-world choices.

But we should not do so with financial penalties that have the effect of removing free choice from individual lives.

Deleted: .¶