

February 27, 2004

Chancellor Debra Austin
Division of Colleges & Universities
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1602
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1950

Via Electronic Transmission to Tim.Jones@fldoe.org

Dear Chancellor Austin:

Thank you for requesting our input on the four university policies contained in the Governor's FY 04-05 Recommended Budget. We have circulated the policies among our trustees and university leadership group and the following represents our collective thoughts on behalf of the University of North Florida.

- **Targeted Incentive Program**

UNF supports the goal of this policy to increase enrollments in the areas of critical state need. In fact, over the last 2 years UNF has experienced significant increases in its enrollment in several of critical areas. Enrollments in nursing increased 19.6%, elementary education increased 3.2% and we have recently expanded our engineering programs to include civil and mechanical engineering, which consequently increased 65% and over 320% respectively. We look forward to exploring new ways to build on these successes.

- **Establishing Block Tuition Policies**

UNF appreciates the Governor's recognition of the need for more flexible tuition management to be exercised by the individual university boards. In this regard, it is very important that this authority be discretionary, so that urban universities such as UNF with fewer traditional, full-time students can choose not to implement block tuition. Fall 2003 data for UNF shows that only 6.87% of enrolled students took more than 15 credit hours.

Because of the great variations among the institutions, it would be critical that each institution be able to develop its own unique policy for implementing block tuition, rather than developing a systemwide policy on this issue.

- **University Billing Statements**

The concerns expressed on this issue center on the need for clarification of what actions by the university will satisfy the spirit and intent of the policy. For example, UNF does not "bill" its students in the normal course of business, but does issue "fee statements" which contain information on tuition charges to the student per course.

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UNF is moving more and more toward “paperless” operations, which raises the question of whether e-mail notification or publication on the web should be deemed to satisfy the requirements of the policy, rather than developing, printing and mailing individual paper statements.

Almost every student has some unique, individualized aid package for their given needs and circumstances. What is to be included as “state student financial aid”?

Could broader categories be established for the reporting a per credit hour breakdown of information such as for “in-state undergraduate students taking 3 hours, 6 hours, 12 hours, and 15 or more hours”?

- **Excess Credit Hours**

UNF appreciates the Governor’s desire to address the impact of excess credit hours and non-degree seeking students on its ability to efficiently and effectively meet the critical educational needs of the state. This is a legitimate issue which should result in a healthy discussion of the benefits and disadvantages of implementing a policy to discourage additional coursework.

It may be that “excess” should be defined as 15% more than needed to graduate, rather than 10%, so that students would not be as harshly penalized for changing their majors.

We are also concerned that students who pursue a second bachelor’s degree would not be penalized for doing so. For example, one of the initiatives UNF has already undertaken to increase the number of nursing graduates is the establishment of an accelerated program toward a bachelor’s degree in nursing. The participating students already have a bachelors degree (and some have a masters degree), and they take about 40 credit hours of prerequisites to enter an accelerated program for nursing. In its first year of implementation, UNF has doubled the enrollments in this accelerated program to address the nursing shortage.

We have reviewed UNF data on the numbers and types of students who are currently classified as non-degree seeking and have specific concerns about the potential impact of this policy on the following:

- Students with dual majors
- Students in the dual enrollment program
- Senior citizens who take classes pursuant to s. 1009.26(4), F.S.¹

¹ “A state university may waive any or all application, tuition, and related fees for persons 60 years of age or older who are residents of this state and who attend classes for credit. No academic credit shall be awarded for attendance in classes for which fees are waived under this subsection. This privilege may be

- Individuals seeking teacher certification
- Individuals who are preparing to take their CPA examination.
- International exchange students
- Students who have their master's degree in nursing and are taking graduate level courses to become nurse practitioners.
- Applicants for graduate programs who are awaiting admission decisions and taking prerequisite requirements.

Further, we are concerned about the impact of this policy on students who transfer from community colleges without having met their foreign language requirements. This policy may also have a significant impact on retention and graduate rates because of the financial inability to continue. Lastly, we are concerned about the potential impact on financial aid.

All of UNF's concerns as outlined can be addressed through further clarification of the proposed policies, and through the ability of each university board to establish its own institutional policies to implement the goals and strategies contained in the Governor's recommendations.

Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide meaningful input into the process of developing public policy on these important issues.

Sincerely,



John A. Delaney
President

c: Carol C. Thompson

granted only on a space-available basis, if such classes are not filled as of the close of registration. A university may limit or deny the privilege for courses which are in programs for which the State Board of Education has established selective admissions criteria. Persons paying full fees and state employees taking courses on a space-available basis shall have priority over those persons whose fees are waived in all cases where classroom spaces are limited.