

RESOLUTION 26

A RESOLUTION TO BE ENTITLED
AN ACT TO ESTABLISH THE ASSOCIATION'S LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES FOR
THE 2009-2010 SESSION OF THE NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Short Title: 2009 Legislative Priorities Act (Public)

Sponsored by: Association President DOUCETTE (corresponding)

Signatories: Vice President (LPA) CLEVINGER

First Reading: January 23, 2009

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(Initial Edition)

Referred to: _____ Committee on Legislative & Public Affairs _____.

1 **WHEREAS,** in many past sessions of the Association, formal legislative priorities were
2 adopted to guide the organization's advocacy efforts in its meetings with members
3 of the North Carolina General Assembly; and,
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5 **WHEREAS,** the last meaningful set of such priorities was adopted over two years ago, and
6 included items that are now either i) already accomplished or ii) of dubious value
7 to the Association and its mission; and,
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9 **WHEREAS,** adopting a revised set of legislative priorities that reflect the Association's core
10 mission and the current economic climate is both timely and appropriate to ensure
11 proper representation of student interests in the upcoming 2009-2010 session of
12 the North Carolina General Assembly; now, therefore, be it
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14 **RESOLVED,** that the University of North Carolina Association of Student Governments adopts
15 the attached document entitled "The University of North Carolina Association of
16 Student Governments 2009-10 Legislative Priorities" as its legislative priorities
17 for the upcoming session of the N.C. General Assembly.

The University of North Carolina Association of Student Governments 2009-10 Legislative Priorities

1. No Legislature-Initiated Tuition or Fee Increases

Two years ago the UNC Board of Governors adopted a four-year plan to improve predictability in the tuition- and fee-setting processes. Under the plan, tuition and fee increase requests are initiated by the respective institutions, capped at a maximum of 6.5% over the previous year's rates, and reviewed by the Board of Governors for adoption.

This process has worked exceptionally well in its first two years, and provided total tuition/fee increases well below the 6.5% cap. The predictability this plan provides is invaluable to students, their parents and the universities.

The Association asks the General Assembly to respect this plan as it has been adopted and implemented by not adding additional tuition or fee increases beyond the final decision of the UNC Board of Governors.

2. Adequate Funding for the University in the Economic Downturn

The national recession and its impact on the North Carolina economy have significantly reduced state government revenues, leading to 7% budget reductions for most state agencies and 6% reductions for the University in the current fiscal year.

These cuts have a significant negative impact on the quality of education at each institution, in particular slowing students' progress toward graduation due to reductions in available course sections, loss of faculty positions and other reductions.

The Association firmly supports the budget request made by the UNC Board of Governors, and calls upon the General Assembly to protect the taxpayers' investment in higher education by adequately funding the University throughout this economic downturn.

3. Energy Efficiency Savings Retained by Campuses

The state currently funds the energy needs of the 17 institutions within the University as well as the various other centers, programs and other entities under the University umbrella. This represents a substantial recurring expenditure that could potentially be reduced with newer, more energy efficient technologies.

The Association believes the General Assembly should provide positive incentives for institutions to conserve energy and protect the environment. Specifically, the Association supports policy changes that would allow institutions to retain any funding from energy savings that result from the implementation of environmentally-friendly technologies.

4. Tax-Free Textbooks

In addition to the tuition and fee rates set by the Board of Governors, students also pay a substantial amount for course-required textbooks each semester. According to the US Government Accountability Office, the average undergraduate paid \$915.00 in the 2006-2007 academic year for course textbooks.

The retail sales tax on these books amounted to an additional \$61.76 on top of that figure. This essentially amounts to a “knowledge tax” on students and detracts from the investment in their education.

The Association supports abolishing the knowledge tax. Specifically, the Association supports an amendment to N.C. General Statutes §105-164.13 (“Retail sales and use tax”) to create a sales tax exemption for school instructional material assigned by a course instructor at postsecondary educational institutions.

5. Tuition Surcharge Exemption

Students who exceed 140 attempted credit hours (or 110% of the credit hours required for their course of study) are required to pay an extra tuition surcharge in addition to their normal tuition and fee rates if they remain enrolled longer than four years.

This policy is intended as an incentive for students to graduate in a timely fashion, but provides no flexibility for the universities in dealing with bona fide contingencies that would merit an exemption from the surcharge (e.g. a documented medical debilitation, military deployment, and so on).

The Association supports creating a narrow exemption to the surcharge regulations that would enable institutions to hold certain students harmless for a limited number of credit hours in the event such bona fide contingencies arise.

6. Student Vote on the Board of Governors

The University of North Carolina Association of Student Governments is the only entity designated to “represent the interests of students in the deliberations of the University of North Carolina Board of Governors.” The President of the Association serves as an *ex officio* member of the Board, with all rights and privileges except a vote.

The Association recognizes that *ex officio* membership on the Board is a tremendous asset and not something to be trivialized. At the same time, however, as the Association has matured into a better representative of its students, the Board of Governors has remained the same.

The Association supports amending N.C. General Statutes §116-6.1(b) to provide the student member of the Board with voting rights. In addition, the Association supports striking the ability of the President to have a designee serve in his/her absence as currently included in §116-6.1(a).