

1 May 2007

TO: Harold L. Martin, Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs
FROM: Paul E. Hosier, Provost, UNC Wilmington
RE: Goals and Hallmark Strategies for Retention and Graduation

In response to the teleconference meeting on Tuesday, April 24, 2007 and per your request, I am providing you with our updated target goals for retention/graduation rates and specific strategies to achieve such. The development of these targets has been the focus of much attention at UNCW. Our initial goals were established after careful analysis of our current graduation and retention rates and our aspiration to become a leader among our peers within the comparative Education Trust institutions approved by UNC General Administration. While recognizing the value of these new goals and the challenge presented by them, UNCW is committed to achieving these revised targets.

However, it is our sincere hope that UNC General Administration recognizes that meeting our original pragmatic goals was already a stretch. Consequently, it is essential that our newly revised goals be viewed as even greater aspirations and will require us to apply substantial additional resources to achieving the goals. We ask UNC General Administration to understand that the significant increases in graduation rates are directly impacted by current retention. Significant improvement in current retention rates will require a variety of quality interventions. Our hallmarks reflect institutional initiatives already in place or ready for immediate implementation. We recognize and trust that you do as well, and that it will take significant planning, design and funding to reach the aggressive goals cited below.

Target Goals

University of North Carolina Wilmington

	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12
First Year Retention	86%	86%	88%	90%	90%
Four Year Graduation Rate (Traditional)	42%	42%	44%	46%	50%
Four Year Graduation Rate (Full-time Four Year)	69%	69%	70%	71%	71%
Six Year Graduation Rate	65%	67%	68%	69%	70%**

** UNCW will continue to increase graduation rates annually by 1% until a 75% six-year graduation rate is achieved.

Hallmark Strategies

1. **Admissions**

Over the past several years, the overall quality of our freshman class as measured by SAT scores and high school GPA and class ranking has increased. We have continued that trend in the current admission cycle. Applicants receiving an offer of admission have an average SAT of 1179, 3.8 GPA and approximately 70% fall within the top quarter of their class. In line with current research in higher education, this should result in an increase in both retention and graduation rates. Our goal as an institution is to continue this trend over the next five years while maintaining a 1% growth rate in class size.

Ultimately, UNCW intends to become second in selectivity among the 16 UNC institutions. Consequently, we feel we can move our retention and graduation rates into the top 10 of the Education Trust institutions list. Given that we are currently experiencing the largest freshman applicant pool in our history, we find the Noel-Levitz assessment "...it appears the school has a surplus of applications compared to slots available for freshman, at some point this approach could result in a shortage of students." to be unfounded. The development of our niche within the UNC system and the public recognition of our intentional quest for greater quality increase our confidence that this trend of increased applicant pools and applicant quality will continue.

2. **Assessment and Analysis**

As part of the development of our enrollment management functions initiated in July 2005, it was evident that we needed to expand our current understanding of admission prospects, current students and the outcomes of new student transitions. In summer 2006 UNCW initiated a pilot assessment of admission prospects using a web-based tool developed in-house. This initiative has provided ample data and support for the use of the *Admitted Student Questionnaire (ASQ)* in our current admission cycle. UNCW also implemented the use of *Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP)* in the fall of 2006. *Your First College Year (YFCY)* was administered to the freshman class during the spring advising and pre-registration period. During freshman orientation this fall, the freshmen class of 2007-08 will complete the Noel-Levitz *College Student Inventory (CSI)*. The implementation of these new assessment tools provides a robust picture of UNCW's students that complements the annual *National Study of Student Engagement (NSSE)* and *Faculty Survey of Student Engagement (FSSE)* administration and benchmarking data. We will also be adding the *Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA)* four-year longitudinal assessment to our toolbox.

We are confident that our assessment program will provide significant guidance for program development, admission profiling and strategy initiatives related to student retention. Over the course of this academic year, a number of presentations have been developed by our Office of Institutional Research for the University Planning Council, Enrollment Council, Chancellor's Cabinet and selected academic departments. During the next 3 – 5 academic years, the data should have significant impact on our ability to target students who will thrive at UNCW and improve our ability to be more proactive in implementing new strategies designed to increase student success.

3. **Academic Rigor**

Analysis of current data suggests that UNCW must improve the rigor of our students' experience. The review of four years of NSSE data and the original ASQ survey raise perception questions. Consequently, the Faculty Senate has recently initiated a discussion regarding faculty responsibility in addressing academic rigor within academic departments. The Office of the Provost continues to promote Chancellor DePaolo's goal of encouraging the faculty to own the evaluation and revision of the Basic Studies (General Education) program. A new committee and faculty chair have been appointed and charged with promoting progress towards Basic Studies reform. In addition, the College of Arts and Sciences has hired an individual to work directly with academic departments in the assessment of learning outcomes.

Two new initiatives are in place for implementation during Fall 2007. The Division of Students Affairs is initiating an Academic Convocation for all new students. A faculty member, selected by a vote of our students, will provide the

keynote address in support of the program's goals of heightening academic messages as part of the university experience. University College will introduce a University Common Reading Program through partnerships with academic departments, the freshman seminar program and student leadership organizations. This year's reading is *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini.

4. **Residential Living**

A set of 10 progress and priority measures were approved by the UNCW University Planning and Quality Council in October 2005. Measure number four states clearly the university's commitment to increasing the number of students living on campus in residential communities. The percentage of undergraduate residential students is targeted to increase from 23.1% in 2004-05 to 35% by the 2009-10 academic year. In Fall 2006 Seahawk Village (Phase I) was opened, increasing the percentage of undergraduate students living on campus to 26.8%. In Fall 2007 Seahawk Landing (Phase II) will open increasing the residential population to 32% of the total undergraduate student body. Phase III of our residential housing initiative is currently in the planning phase. Upon its completion (Fall 2009), 35% of our undergraduates will be living on campus. Students who live on campus report higher grades, express higher institutional satisfaction, and graduate at a higher percentage.

5. **Financial Aid and Scholarships**

UNCW will implement the Seahawk SOAR Financial Aid program beginning the 2007-08 academic year. This program meets 100% of an eligible student's financial aid need for four years. Any full-time student with North Carolina residency and a combined family income at or below 150% of the federal poverty level is eligible. The program provides each of the participants with access to mentors, undergraduate student research, tutoring and the guarantee of financial assistance. This new program is one part of UNCW's long-term ambition to increase financial aid and scholarship programs while improving access and attendance for academically competitive students.

In addition, UNCW has embarked on a Comprehensive Capital Campaign with a focus on raising scholarships. This activity is driven by research which suggests retention rates are lower among students with higher unmet financial needs.

UNCW has seen a rise in the number of undergraduates holding positions of employment and/or working in excess of 20 hours per week. Though there are a variety of reasons why a student chooses to work, including the desire to support a lifestyle in which they have become comfortable, a significant proportion claim they work in order to pay for their education. Raising aid to students in a variety of formats will improve our institutional ability to recruit students and improve the likelihood of retaining them through graduation.