



Office of the Commission

Commission on Campus Equality & Student Equity
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

07/17/20

Dear Roadmap Implementation Taskforce and University Leadership:

The Commission on Campus Equality and Student Equity is the representative body of the minority undergraduate and graduate students of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. We have recently entered a period of rigorous review of the Fall 2020 plans as recently presented by university leadership.

The commission, representing the most marginalized and underserved communities on campus, has had the opportunity to engage with students, faculty, and staff - even some of whom were on-campus during the recent outbreak of COVID-19 among our student-athletes and athletic staff.

It is for these exact reasons that we address the leadership of both the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of North Carolina system in requesting more equitable educational offerings for the Fall semester; and, furthermore request that these equitable expectations extend into all decision-making for the extended future of our institution and system.

It is the interpretation of the Commission that students will be at-risk if we overwhelmingly allow student return without adequate safeguards, the kind of safeguards that our university cannot equitably ensure on a large-scale. In fact, some would call into question the efficacy of our community standards at UNC being that our student athletes were on campus after COVID-related policies began taking place and a large cluster of students and faculty still swiftly contracted the virus.

We challenge our leaders to evict the mindset of the “traditional college experience” as there is currently no way for our students and faculty to safely engage in any sort of educational experience that will be deemed traditional and still be equitable. Instead, we request that university leaders, beginning with our own chancellor, become more creative in creating policies and more equitable in their thinking.

We do not discount that there are students who will need access to residence halls and employees who are concerned about being furloughed or laid off due to lack of students returning physically; however, the recommendations we make to the university heavily incorporates these crucial concerns.

THEREFORE, we make the following recommendations on behalf of our student peers to the leadership of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and UNC System:

Recommendations:

- I. The University must adopt more transparent and equitable accountability measures. The Commission wishes to express its disappointment in the way the Chancellor and the Provost have handled Fall 2020 planning. As the flagship of the University System, we expect more and we expect better. It is our hope that the university leadership will use their positions to enhance dialogue and relations with the university-system in regards to a more remote and EQUITABLE Fall 2020.
- II. The University creates the “Distance Learning and Technology Assistance Program” to support students in need of internet and technology services. This program should provide each student that opts for all virtual courses with a loaner MiFi Mobile Internet Device and a loaner laptop, and/or partner with a large-scale internet provider to provide local off-campus students with reduced internet pricing, if any.
 - A. This program should be available to remove the inequity of students returning to campus due to lack of stable internet at home or live in rural areas without adequate access to internet.
 - B. This program should be available to all students, providing that the student’s household (whether dependent or independent) does not already have an established internet connection.
- III. The University changes the on-campus living process to an Application-Only process, with only students in the following categories being approved for an on-campus residence hall slot:
 - A. At-Risk students with no access to equitable educational resources or has demonstrated housing needs (especially first-generation, Carolina Covenant, and marginalized students)
 - B. International students
 - C. Student-Athletes (if sports continue to be offered)
 - D. Students in graduate and professional programs (i.e. nursing, law, etc.)

In this same regard, the University shall adopt strict policies on prohibiting students residing in residence halls from having off-campus guests - both during the day and overnight.

*Students taking all virtual courses should not be allowed to live in a residence hall unless they fit into one of the above categories
- IV. Each course being offered in Fall 2020 shall be offered in a FULLY virtual format, regardless if the class is being offered in-person or not. There should be both a synchronous and asynchronous accessible platform for each course.
 - A. This allows for a more equitable educational experience by ensuring our students do not have to disrupt their academic and degree plans due to them not wanting

to risk their lives to enroll in a course required by their degree that is only offered in person.

- B. The Commission makes this recommendation understanding that there are some families that cannot financially afford to extend their child's education and lack the socioeconomic privilege of being able to afford the resources to ensure they could do so; therefore, we expect that many families will be sending students back to campus at the risk of infection simply to ensure they graduate on time and can take a required course only being offered in-person.
- V. The University adopts strong policies regarding the use of the Alert Carolina system to update the Carolina community regularly (weekly at a minimum) on how many new cases exist and whether these cases were students, faculty, and/or staff - in such a way that no private or identifying information is revealed
- A. Alert Carolina has been used as a way of effectively communicating tornado warnings, cases of the mumps, and similar health-related concerns in the past. We expect that this will not cause widespread hysteria but will instead better inform our Carolina community of the status of the campus and allow for a more transparent "off-ramp" system to be enacted.
- VI. The University shall adopt the "Spring 2020 Equitable Grade Exclusion" policy allowing students who:
- A. chose the Pass/Fail option for a course in Spring 2020 and earned a score of "Fail" OR;
 - B. did not choose the Pass/Fail option and Earned a C or below in a Spring 2020 course;
- to engage in one of the following options:
1. re-take up to two courses in which they earned the aforementioned grades and have the original attempt excluded from the calculation of their cumulative grade point average (GPA) OR;
 2. Retroactively withdraw from the courses in which they earned the aforementioned grades - with no history of the course attempt being included on the transcript. This option shall also include no minimum hrs to which students must be enrolled.

While the Commission understands that some graduate and professional programs may re-calculate their own GPA for students wishing to apply to post-undergraduate programs; It is the interpretation of the Commission that this policy allows for students to have a more equitable experience in a course than they may have been offered during the turbulent Spring Semester.

Furthermore, students should have until Fall 2021 to interact with the above policies.

- VII. The University, due to the growing (& justified) outcry of students, shall re-evaluate the way that the Office of Student Aid and Scholarships disseminates CARES Act Funding. CARES Act funds should be used specifically for COVID-related expenses, including expenses that may be anticipated. It is our hope that, when re-evaluating the policy, the University chooses to simply give a set amount to each student, as funds last, without application. We request that the students' current financial aid not be a factor considered since financial aid covers REGULAR college-related expenses and students require a substantial INCREASE for COVID-related expenses. The following students should be the primary recipients of the set amount of CARES ACT funding:
- A. Covenant Scholars
 - B. Pell-Grant Eligible students who are not Covenant Scholars
 - C. International Students
 - D. Students who sought funding from the Student Impact Fund but were denied
 - E. Out-of-State Students
 - F. Students who do not fit in the above categories but demonstrate a need for COVID-related funding.

Students should not be asked about their current financial situation nor should there be any sort of application or form to submit to receive CARES ACT Funds. Each student should receive the same amount based on the tier the student is in, with Tier 1 being Covenant Scholars (receiving the most) and Tier 5 being students who do not fit in the aforementioned categories (receiving the least). This includes if the student is already receiving more than their expected cost of attendance - once again, the overage they receive is for college-related expenses not COVID-related expenses.

- VIII. The university allows students who are not staying on campus and have all of their courses remotely to opt out of the UNC-System Health Insurance requirement at each student's discretion. Blue Cross and Blue Shield of NC's Student Blue plan primarily benefits students wishing to seek services at Campus Health and parts of the UNC Health Care system. Many of our out-of-state students and international students will be visiting out-of-network providers, to which their enrollment in Blue Cross and Blue Shield will serve no purpose.
- IX. The university shall provide overwhelming support, both financially and mentally, for our facilities staff. We request that not only do they have a substantial amount of medical-grade PPE but that they also not be furloughed or laid-off as a result of low student presence on campus. Instead, we ask that you re-assess the talents of these facilities workers and see if they can support the university in other ways that will allow them to maintain their full employment (i.e. tutoring, virtual wellness assistants, virtual success coordinators, virtual assistants, etc.)
- X. And, finally, we request that by **July 31st** the University Leaders, alongside Student Leaders, participate in a "Mock-Academic Day"; where leaders will engage in a

simulation of the very policies being enforced among students. This will not only demonstrate your commitment to ensuring that the community guidelines are truly applicable to the in-person experience on campus but will also attest your commitment to the safety and well-being of our community. We request the following individuals participate:

- A. Kevin Guskiewicz, Chancellor
- B. Bob Blouin, Provost
- C. Amy Hertel, Chief of Staff - Chancellor's Office
- D. Jonathan Souls, Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs
- E. Sibby Anderson-Thompkins, Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer
- F. Charles Marshall, General Counsel
- G. Alan Blattner, Director of Carolina Housing
- H. Ken Pittman, Executive Director of Campus Health Services
- I. Desiree Rieckenberg, Dean of Students

Upon agreement, the Commission will provide an applicable schedule (similar to that of the typical Carolina student) for the participants to follow.

By interacting in these simulations of the exact community guidelines the university is imparting on our student community, it is our expectation that University leaders will see the failures of the truly unreliable safeguards featured in the Roadmap to Fall 2020.