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Chapter Six: Federal Compliance

Introduction

UNC maintains its commitment to integrity in part through compliance with federal and state regulations. As stated in the [University mission](#) [Pres-2], “The University of Northern Colorado believes that its distinctive service to society can only be offered in a student-centered atmosphere of integrity that is grounded in honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.” The University demonstrates integrity by complying with federal and state laws, closely following its own Board-approved policies, accurately communicating its programs and costs, and offering curricula and services that meet high academic standards.

Institutional Compliance with the Higher Education Reauthorization Act

UNC complies with the requirements of the Higher Education Reauthorization Act of 1992, as amended in 1998. Various documents related to Title IV compliance, including the program participation agreement (PPA), eligibility and certification renewal (ECAR), and default rate reports are available in the documents room. Title IV also includes other responsibilities, involving an extensive array of reporting requirements for institutions that participate in federal financial aid programs. Information taken from several of these reports follows.

UNC’s default rate in the Federal Direct Loan Program for 2000-01 was 3.1%, compared to the national average of 4.4% for public four-year institutions. The University’s 2000-01 default rate for the Perkins Loan Program was 9.2%, slightly below the national average of 9.5%. Default rates are below those that require management plans.

The Student Right to Know Act requires each institution to report graduation rates for entering freshmen cohorts and to make the information available in publications. The [graduation rate information](#) required by the act is published on the University Web site. The graduation and transfer out rates for the fall 1997 entering freshmen cohort were:

Entering full-time freshmen	1,905
Graduated from UNC within 6 years	897 (47.1%)

Transferred out during 6 years	748 (39.3%)
Enrolled at UNC during fall 2003	37 (1.9%)
Total graduated, transferred out, or still enrolled	1,682 (88.3%)

Campus crime statistics [Fin/Ad-13] are reported annually, as required by the Student Right to Know Act and the Campus Security Act. The campus community is notified of the reports each fall, and they are easy to access online.

Several other required federal reports are available in hard copy. They include the Equity in Athletics Annual Report [Ath-8], Integrated Post-Secondary Education Data System (IPEDS) [IRP-7] reports (Institutional Characteristics, Completions, Salaries, Fall Enrollment, Fall Staff, Employees by Position, Financial Aid, and Finance), and the Annual Report of Teacher Preparation Completers [CoE-36].

Federal Compliance Visits to Off-Campus Locations

UNC offers degree and licensure programs across the state. It also uses technology to serve out-of-state students. The outreach helps fulfill the University’s statutory mandate to serve all of Colorado [EXT-55, p. IV-A-1, p. IV-C-1]. UNC offers degree programs at nine sites in Colorado, including three that offer four or more degree or licensure programs. The Annual Institutional Data Update [IRP-10] UNC submits to the Higher Learning Commission lists the degree program sites. While courses are offered at each site, all admissions, registration, financial aid, and tuition and fee payments are managed from the main campus. Thus, none of the off-campus sites meet the federal requirements to be a stand-alone site.

Credits, Program Length, and Tuition

UNC operates on a semester schedule. Fall and spring semesters are approximately 16 weeks long. Summer term has distinct sessions – a 12-week session, two six-week sessions, and four three-week sessions. An eight-week educator’s session is also offered in mid-summer. It was developed to meet the needs of educational professionals, continuing UNC’s historical and statutory mission in teacher education [EXT-55, p. I-J-1, p. I-N-1]. In addition, the University meets the needs of adult, nontraditional, and working students by delivering classes through Web-based and interactive-video formats and in evenings or on weekends [EXT-55, p. IV-D-1]. Instructional contact time determines course credit hours, regardless of format or semester schedule.

The University offers degree programs at the bachelor, master’s, educational specialist, and doctoral levels. The array of programs is determined largely by the institution’s mission to be a “comprehensive baccalaureate and specialized graduate research university with a continuing commitment to its historical role in the preparation of educators.” The Colorado Commission on Higher Education approves each degree program at UNC. Degree program requirements vary appropriately by degree and discipline. Colorado Commission on Higher Education policy requires state-supported public four-year colleges and universities to limit bachelors’ degree programs to no more than 120 credit hours. Exceptions have been approved for nursing programs, landscape architecture, various engineering

and engineering-related programs, and teacher preparation programs. The policy is based on the traditional view of undergraduate study, with students enrolled full-time (15 credit hours each semester) for eight semesters or four years.

During the past few years, the University has worked to reduce credit hours required for each undergraduate degree program to no more than 120. While the effort has been a challenge for many undergraduate programs, the process is almost complete. Four of 27 undergraduate teacher licensure programs still need to reduce credit hours, which they expect to do by fall 2004. The Undergraduate Council, in tandem with the Professional Education Council and the Council of Deans, has reviewed credit hours for all programs. In addition, the *UNC Catalog* [AA-1] has been reformatted to specify credit hour requirements for each program. UNC's last NCA report indicated that students graduating from teacher licensure programs completed an average of 162 credits, compared to 132 credits for students in other programs. In 2002-03, students graduating from teacher licensure programs completed an average of 143 credits, compared to 131 credit hours for students in other programs.

The Graduate School requires a minimum number of credits hours for degrees (30 semester hours beyond the baccalaureate for the master's, 30 beyond the master's for the educational specialist, and at least 64 beyond the master's for the doctorate). Many graduate programs meet additional accreditation requirements for academic or professional associations, such as American Psychological Association, Council for the Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs, National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, National Association of Schools of Music, and American Speech-Language-Hearing Association. Some accrediting agencies require an extensive array of courses, resulting in credit-hour requirements that exceed the minimum required by the University.

The classroom experience for undergraduate students at UNC includes extensive contact with full-time faculty members; about two-thirds of all undergraduate courses are taught by full-time faculty, and fewer than 20% of undergraduate courses are taught by graduate teaching assistants. Classes range from fewer than five students to large lecture or activity classes with more than 100. More than 55% of the undergraduate courses taught during academic year 2002-03 enrolled 25 or fewer students. Fewer than 2% of the undergraduate courses enrolled more than 100 students. Full-time faculty teach more than 84% of graduate-level courses. More than 55% of graduate courses enroll 10 students or fewer. As detailed in Criterion Two, UNC directs a higher percentage of its state-appropriated budget to instruction than any other Colorado public university.

UNC has [differentiated tuition based on residency](#) (Colorado resident or non-resident) and level of study (undergraduate or graduate). The University charges four basic tuition rates: resident/undergraduate, non-resident/undergraduate, resident/graduate, and non-resident/graduate. [Tuition rates](#) are published in the *Freshman Viewbook 2004* [Adm-2, p.28], the *Transfer Viewbook 2004* [Adm-3, p.20] and online. UNC participates in two programs sponsored by the [Western](#)

[Interstate Commission for Higher Education \(WICHE\)](#) that provide reduced tuition to non-resident students. The [Western Undergraduate Exchange program \[EXT-44\]](#) allows students from participating states to attend UNC and pay 150% of resident/undergraduate tuition, savings of about \$7,800 per year. The [Western Regional Graduate Program \[EXT-18\]](#) allows graduate students from WICHE states to pay resident/graduate tuition in select UNC programs [EXT-20].

To help programs and to provide clear information to consumers, the University annually reports data about applicants and enrolled students in the [Fall Fact Book \[IRP-4\]](#), which is also online. It includes information about student characteristics, enrollment, financial aid, and degree completions. Additional reports on the Web site focus on individual academic programs (Program Profiles), college guide information (Common Data Set), graduation rate disclosure information (Graduation Rate Disclosure), and undergraduate attrition and cohort retention (Undergraduate Attrition and Cohort Retention).

Advertising and Recruitment Materials

The accreditation status of UNC is accurately reported in advertising and recruitment materials. Three prominent examples include the following:

- The *2003-2004 UNC Undergraduate and Graduate Catalog* relates, in the introductory list of accreditations and affiliations (page v), “since 1916, the University has been fully accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.” The Catalog also contains a list of the additional organizations that accredit UNC programs.
- An [HCL Web site](#) devoted to UNC’s preparation for the self-study report provides contact information for the Higher Learning Commission.
- The *Freshman Viewbook 2004* reports on page 32: “Since 1916, the University has been fully accredited by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools.” Other organizations that accredit UNC programs are also listed.

Resolution of Student Complaints

Based on its mission, beliefs, and values, UNC offers a variety of methods for students to resolve complaints. These include those outlined in the [Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook \[DoS-2\]](#) and [Honor Code \[DoS-3\]](#). Other relevant sources include the [Board Policy Manual \[BOT-1\]](#); the [Registrar’s Office \[Reg-5\]](#); services related to health and safety [Fin/Ad-11], including Student Counseling, Health Services, Health Insurance, Crime Prevention, and Police Services; and many student support services such as [Career Services \[CarServ-1\]](#), the [Center for Human Enrichment \[MCA-2\]](#) and other centers on campus that provide tutoring, the [Center for International Education \[ISS-1\]](#) the cultural centers [MCA-7], the [Dean of Students Office \[DoS-1\]](#), the [Disability Access Center \[DAC-1\]](#), [Drug Prevention Education](#), [Legal Assistance for Students](#), and the [Women’s Resource Center \[Aux.5\]](#). Other services and policies

that may help students with particular concerns are available through [Student Financial Resources](#) [SFR-2], [Student Activities](#) [St/Act-2], and the [College Transition Center](#) [Reg-1].

Faculty, staff, and administrators serve as role models and mentors to students. Accordingly, employees model high standards of professionalism. As discussed in Criterion One, the expectation for high standards is communicated in several written documents, including Board Policies 1-1-305, 2-3-601, and 2-3-602. Titled “Academic Freedom and Professional Ethics,” they outline faculty responsibilities to practice intellectual honesty, demonstrate respect for students, protect students’ academic freedom, demonstrate respect for colleagues, and be an effective teacher and scholar.

To encourage and foster academic excellence, the University also expects students to conduct themselves in accordance with generally accepted norms of ethical behavior and scholarship. Expectations for student academic conduct, and the sanctions for misconduct, are outlined in the *Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook*. Undergraduate appeals for academic decisions are handled by the Provost’s Office. Graduate appeals are handled by the Graduate School. Information on the student appeals process is in the *Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* and in the *Board Policy Manual*. The Academic Appeals Board comprises four faculty and four each graduate and undergraduate students. Graduate and undergraduate students participate in graduate and undergraduate appeals, respectively. Final appeal processes for both graduate and undergraduate academic matters are described in the *Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* and in Board Policy 2-1-206. Disciplinary procedures outlined in the *Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook* provide appropriate due process and are educational and developmental in nature. Records of previous actions of the Academic Appeals Board are in the documents room.

The University offers a variety of procedures that allow faculty, staff, and students to contest administrative and academic decisions. In every instance, the appeal procedures and the rights granted to the parties exceed the minimum requirements of due process and other applicable laws, rules, and regulations. UNC procedures are designed to achieve fundamental fairness with regard for the rights of all segments of the University. The Dean of Students is charged with oversight of disciplinary procedures and works in concert with the Office of Academic Affairs regarding academic appeals. All due process and appeal procedures for students are contained in the *Student Rights and Responsibilities Handbook*. A file of student complaints [Pres-13] is available in the document room.

Summary

UNC considers compliance with federal and state policies and regulations to be essential to its maintenance of a student-centered atmosphere where integrity is grounded in honesty, trust, fairness, respect, and responsibility.