

# Incentive changes worry filmmakers

By Samantha Sabin  
Staff Writer

*This article appeared in an earlier edition of The Daily Tar Heel. It has been updated and edited for space.*

JULY 10 — North Carolina was where UNC senior Erin Sands could see herself starting her filmmaking career.

It's diverse, with both the coast and the mountains bordering it — but talks in the state legislature of cutting the 25 percent tax rebate on film projects are leaving Sands in limbo. "I need to go where the jobs are, and there might not be any options here," she said.

Sands is among a group of UNC student filmmakers who once thought of spending their postgraduate years filming in North Carolina, but are now reassessing their options.

Both the proposed state Senate and House budgets recommend changing the film incentives, with both suggesting the state turn the current 25 percent film tax credit into a grant program — leaving productions with no guarantee of receiving any money.

A feature-length film would have to spend at least \$10 million in qualifying expenses to qualify for the grant, under the Senate's plan.

The discussions come as the expiration on the current film incentives approaches on Jan. 1. The current incentives give productions a 25 per-

cent refundable tax credit on expenses when they spend a minimum of \$250,000.

The N.C. Film Office reported in 2013 film crews spent more than \$244 million in N.C. and employed over 13,000 full-time workers. Productions like Showtime's "Homeland," "Iron Man 3" and "The Hunger Games" have been filmed here.

In April, Director of the N.C. Film Office Aaron Syrett said the current incentives made North Carolina one of the top three states in the industry, behind New York and California.

"(The film incentives) saved thousands of jobs, and it can create many more," he said. "If the incentives are not reinstated, you will see this industry leaving North Carolina — it's that simple."

Sands, a communication studies major from Cary, wanted nothing more than to move to Wilmington after graduation — it would be easier on her and her family.

But now, she's starting to look at places like New York, California and Georgia, which have better film incentive plans.

"As a production student, I need to go where the jobs are going to be," Sands said.

Senior communication studies and studio art major Andrew Allen expressed similar concerns. He may not have been as set on North

## PROPOSED PLAN

- Changes it from a tax credit to a grant program
- Productions apply for grants with no guarantee of approval
- Full-length filmmakers would spend \$10 million to receive a rebate that would not exceed 25 percent of their costs
- Spending to qualify for grant varies by production type

Carolina as Sands, but he still considered it as a top choice.

"Since I know North Carolina currently has a good number of big productions happening, I have considered pursuing a job here after I've graduated," Allen said. "But with the likelihood of this change of incentives ... I'm pretty much going to be looking for work in other states."

Budgetary constraints or not, students aren't pleased with the cutting of the incentives — their job opportunities are at stake.

"I don't know why they would be changing this," Sands said. "It works."

Contact the desk editor at [arts@dailytarheel.com](mailto:arts@dailytarheel.com).

# Towns, county pass 2014-15 budgets

The budgets were passed by June for the next year.

By Jonathan Moyer  
Summer City Editor

*This article appeared in an earlier edition of The Daily Tar Heel. It has been updated and edited for space.*

JUNE 26 — In preparation for the beginning of the next fiscal year, the Orange County Board of Commissioners, the Chapel Hill Town Council and the Carrboro Board of Aldermen have been working on their 2014-15 budgets.

## County Commissioners

The Orange County Board of Commissioners didn't want to raise taxes, but they did so when they approved their budget for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

"We raised taxes for the first time in six years because we have to continue to make up for cuts from the state," chairman Barry Jacobs said.

The board has dealt with these cuts for the past few years and has tried to avoid raising taxes, he said.

The tax revenue will go to childcare subsidies and education, both of which have been cut by the state, Jacobs said.

The budget also created a new program to address poverty in targeted neighborhoods.

"Raising taxes was new, making up for the cuts is not."

Barry Jacobs,  
Orange County Board of Commissioners chairman

## Chapel Hill Town Council

The Chapel Hill Town Council listened to its residents asking for funding for affordable housing when it approved its budget.

Councilman Ed Harrison said the town allocated \$690,000 to help reach its goal of putting more affordable housing in Chapel Hill.

He said they also raised taxes, approving a 1-cent tax increase.

"That should go directly into the debt management tax, and so we'll build up a body of money to pay off our debts on large projects," he said.

Harrison said the money will fund both current and future projects, and he would like to see the money go toward bicycle improvements to major roads.

The town also put \$400,000 toward buying more buses, which Harrison said is desperately needed, because 43 of the 99 Chapel Hill buses need to be replaced.

"Some of them are older than a lot of UNC undergrads," he said.

## Carrboro Aldermen

The Carrboro Board

of Aldermen approved a budget with emphasis on affordable housing and town employees.

The town is hiring a new assistant to the town manager, who will focus on the affordable housing initiative which the board has been working on for the past year.

"We're really excited to have a staffer who's going to be able to devote some time and attention to that work," Mayor Lydia Lavelle said.

Some aldermen have been part of an affordable housing task force, which has tried to come up with solutions.

The budget also addresses the wages of town employees. They will now be able to get a pay increase based on their job performance, Lavelle said.

"That's something we're happy to implement, but we haven't been able to do that for the past couple of years because of the recession," she said.

The town will also put money toward maintenance. Lavelle said one such project will be repairing the tennis courts at Wilson Park.

Contact the desk editor at [city@dailytarheel.com](mailto:city@dailytarheel.com).

# UNC system withstands pressures, financial strain

By Sarah Brown  
Senior Writer

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JUNE 5 — In its first 37 years, the multi-campus UNC system never experienced the

financial strains it has been grappling with since the 2008 recession.

On June 3, state higher education leaders went to the N.C. General Assembly as part of the UNC system's University Day tradition of lobbying the legislature in Raleigh before the state budget is finalized.

The N.C. Senate's 2014-15 budget, which passed in the chamber last week, was praised by system President Tom Ross for funding faculty pay increases and allocating up to \$20 million for the system's five-year strategic plan.

But the Senate's original proposal included a provi-

sion that could have forced at least one UNC-system school, Elizabeth City State University, to close for good — the latest sign of budget cuts' impact on campuses.

The provision, which was not included in the final Senate budget proposal, mirrored a similar situation last year, when legislators took no action after discussing campus consolidation as a way the system could operate more efficiently.

Still, last year the Board of Governors said the UNC system's structure requires continuous review — and the Elizabeth City State proposal represents new cause for concern, said Ferrel Guillory, a UNC-CH journalism professor and director of the Program on Public Life.

"That's not a push to break up the system, but it is going

to put some pressure on the system to examine whether the system should continue to consist of 17 institutions," he said.

Forty-three years after the consolidated UNC system debuted, fresh tensions are swirling within its institutions as campus leaders wonder how much penny pinching their schools can handle.

Several schools have merged departments or eliminated programs — Elizabeth City State announced last fall that seven of its degree programs were up for discontinuation, including history and political science.

"It's clear through the '80s and '90s that this state made substantial investments in higher education as its principal way of thinking about economic and social development," Guillory said. "We've seen an erosion of that persis-

tent investment."

The annual budget process spurred the creation of the original 16-campus system in 1971 — legislators felt it was chaotic to have each campus proposing its own budget, said John Sanders, former director of UNC-CH's School of Government. The N.C. School of Science and Math was added in 2007 as the 17th school to the UNC system.

Now schools submit budget requests to the UNC-system General Administration, and system President Tom Ross and his staff present an all-encompassing budget to the legislature.

Guillory, who was working for the (Raleigh) News & Observer when the system was consolidated, said some administrators and faculty, particularly at UNC-CH and N.C. State University, initially thought the model would take away from their reputations.

But Sanders, a vice president to former system President Bill Friday during the system's early years, said the multi-campus structure has not homogenized the system.

He said the system model has helped schools preserve support from the state without having to individually lobby for money. Otherwise, the constant political and financial pressures would be disruptive to many universities, he said.

"I don't think all of the institutions could live under that competitive state," he said.

In a 1993 article compiled for the General Assembly, Sanders wrote that while the N.C. Constitution guarantees the UNC system's existence, the legislature has the power to dissolve universities.

Still, Sanders said he thinks the longevity of the current UNC system's structure has already been proven, given its four-decade existence.

Peter Hans, chairman of the Board of Governors, said the system's diversity offers students choices in geography and specialization and is an important characteristic to maintain.

Andrew Powell, UNC-CH student body president, said he has joined system administrators and students to meet with over 20 legislators since May. He said the focus has been on demonstrating the system's positive impact on North Carolina students.

Guillory said serving the state is integral to the UNC system's mission. "Public support helps keep us public, and it's our role to give back."

Contact the desk editor at [state@dailytarheel.com](mailto:state@dailytarheel.com).

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