

2014-15 state budget still not passed

By Amy Tsai

Summer State & National Editor

Nearly a month after the new fiscal year started, state legislators have no finalized budget for 2014-15 and little to show for weeks of negotiations.

Proposals from Gov. Pat McCrory, the N.C. Senate and the N.C. House were all finalized by mid-June. At press time, legislators had not yet reached a final compromise on the different proposals.

UNC-system President Tom Ross criticized McCrory's proposal for a 2 percent system-wide budget reduction — almost \$56 million. Only McCrory proposed additional cuts to the UNC

system.

"While we will continue to search for additional efficiencies and savings, we cannot continue to shift the costs of higher education from the state to students and their families," Ross said in a May statement.

North Carolina operates on a biennial budget, and policy analysts have said starting a budget's second year without finalized provisions is historically common for the state.

Mitch Kokai, a spokesman for the conservative-leaning John Locke Foundation, said budget deliberations almost certainly missed the fiscal year deadline under past Democratic leadership. "The uncommon thing

is to finish the budget in time before July 1," Kokai said. "I think we've gotten a little spoiled by the fact that Republicans have been able to do that in recent years."

There was never the threat of a government shutdown. Before the start of the new fiscal year, state budget director Art Pope issued instructions for state agencies to calculate their funding for July with the 2013-15 budget enacted last year as a starting point.

But the state's Republicans, who gained control of both legislative chambers in the 2010 elections, had promised to avoid dragging out budget negotiations like Democrats in years past, said Rob Schofield, a spokesman for the left-leaning N.C. Policy Watch.

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"They've found out the same things that past leaders have found out, and that's that democracy is tough and complicated stuff," he said.

Proposals about K-12 education, such as what teachers will be paid and how many teachers can be hired, have been particularly divergent during this year's budget deliberations, Schofield said.

Kokai said state agencies and local governments can better plan their individual budgets when the legislature finalizes the state budget by July 1 — otherwise, they may have to guess the levels of state funding.

The N.C. House passed a 5 percent average pay raise for

K-12 teachers, compared to the Senate's 11.2 percent average and McCrory's 2 to 4.3 percent average, depending on experience. K-12 teachers have been under a pay freeze for five of the past six years.

At the center of controversy was the N.C. House's original proposal to use lottery earnings to fund teacher salary increases.

The (Raleigh) News and Observer reported it obtained a fiscal memo, sent to legislative staffers before the House voted on its budget, projecting lottery earnings at \$59 million — compared to \$106 million estimated in the budget.

Van Denton, director of communications for the N.C. Education Lottery, confirmed

the numbers reported by The (Raleigh) News and Observer were correct.

Rodney Ellis, president of the N.C. Association of Educators, said he would like to see a salary increase of at least 5 percent for all educators, regardless of experience.

He said he disagrees with using lottery earnings to fund teacher pay and instead, the state should end tax breaks to the wealthy.

"I don't believe we're making the right choice in terms of basically gambling or depending on proceeds from gambling to fund teacher salaries," he said.

Contact the desk editor at state@dailytarheel.com.

All UNC spring sports end without championships

By Pat James

Summer Sports Editor

Men's, Women's Lacrosse

After impressive regular seasons, both the North Carolina men's and women's lacrosse teams fell short of their ultimate goal.

The men's team entered its ACC Showcase matchup with Virginia with a 10-3 record. UNC held an 8-5 lead heading into the third period, but lost 13-11 to prevent them from repeating as conference tournament champions.

The loss resulted in UNC traveling to Denver to take on the No. 5 seed Pioneers in the first round of the NCAA Tournament, where it lost 9-5.

The women's team entered the year with lofty expectations after winning the national championship last season and opening the year as the No. 3 team in the country.

And through the first 11 games of the season, the team lived up to those expectations — going undefeated and climbing up to the No. 1 ranking.

But UNC dropped four of its next seven games, including a 9-7 loss to Syracuse in the ACC Tournament, and entered the NCAA Tournament as the No. 3 seed.

After winning in the first round, UNC hosted Virginia. And after holding a 9-4 lead in the second half, UNC was shutout for the remainder of the game and fell 10-9.

Men's, Women's Tennis

The North Carolina men's and women's tennis teams saw their seasons end after deep runs in the NCAA Tournament.

The men's team opened the season as the No. 43 team in the country, but became a common fixture at the top of the polls by the end of the season.

UNC entered the NCAA Tournament at 24-5 and advanced to the Sweet Sixteen,



DTH FILE/KENDALL BAGLEY

Taylor George advances the ball toward the net during the women's lacrosse team's NCAA game against the University of Virginia on May 17. This loss took the Tar Heels out of the tournament.

where it defeated Georgia to reach the Elite Eight for the first time in 22 years.

In the quarterfinals, the Tar Heels fell 4-2 to Oklahoma. The team finished with a school record 27 wins.

Behind the freshman duo of Jamie Loeb and Hayley Carter, the women's team achieved its best season in program history.

After opening the season as the No. 3 team in the country, the Tar Heels went 23-4 and entered the ACC Tournament as the No. 1 seed — but lost in the semifinals.

UNC entered the NCAA Tournament as the No. 7 seed and won its first three matches without surrendering a single point.

UNC then upset No. 2 seed Alabama in the Sweet Sixteen and took down Stanford to advance to the national championship against UCLA.

But despite reaching the championship for the first time

in program history, UNC fell 4-3 to end its season.

Softball

The North Carolina softball team entered the year looking to build off last season's birth in the NCAA Regionals, but a lack of consistency punished the team.

UNC was unable to execute out of the gate — not improving to above .500 until March 8. But the team concluded the regular season at 23-25 and 14-11 in the ACC and entered the ACC Tournament as the No. 4 seed.

After defeating N.C. State in the quarterfinals, the top-seeded Seminoles defeated the Tar Heels 9-1 to end UNC's season. The team finished the season at 24-26 — making it the first time in 17 years UNC finished below .500.

Contact the desk editor at sports@dailytarheel.com.

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