



University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Chapter

Statement Against Cuts to Library Funding

Outgoing UNC-Chapel Hill Provost Robert Blouin has announced that the funding of the UNC Library will be cut by \$2 million in the current academic year and by \$3 million the following year. The AAUP chapter at UNC Chapel Hill strenuously objects to such cuts at an R-1 research university of UNC-Chapel Hill's stature, which these cuts would put at risk.

The Provost plans "large-scale cancellations of scholarly journals and databases and reduced purchasing of books and multimedia items." He also informs us that he regards "survey input from faculty members and researchers" to guide acquisition decisions to be mere "nuance." We do not regard meaningful input by faculty, and by the highly trained experts who staff our libraries, as a matter of "nuance" but as a vital precondition to the mission we are all expected to perform. Our collective input into such decisions is a crucial aspect of shared university governance.

Journal subscriptions and other research materials are expensive in these days of oligopolistic price-gouging by transnational publishing corporations. For years Chapel Hill faculty have worked in close collaboration with our librarians in finding, prioritizing and streamlining our research materials. These efforts must continue. However, the draconian cuts now planned for our Library commons will inflict grave harm to faculty and students and must be rejected.

These cuts are, moreover, completely unnecessary. There are other ways of reducing costs. Let's start with the obvious one: pressing the UNC Board of Governors to divest the \$164 million in fossil fuel holdings in the UNC-Chapel Hill Endowment.¹ A mere \$5 million of the divested funds could be used to make good the shortfall in the Library's funding, while using the remainder to meet other critical needs.

Another option would be to temporarily reduce the huge salaries of our administrators. For example, if the annual salaries of the Chancellor and Provost (\$620,000 and \$493,000 respectively) were each reduced to a mere \$200,000 for two years, their excess salaries would make up 35.6 percent of the \$2 million demanded from the Library budget this year, and 23.8 percent of the \$3 million to be cut from the Library next year. Scores of other high-level administrators with similarly stratospheric salaries could help the Library by taking temporary compensation cuts, as our research has revealed (["Op-ed: UNC should cut from the top"](#)). Through these reductions, the cuts to Library facilities could be avoided and our administrators could win public praise for their sacrifice—at a time when such praise is in short supply.

The AAUP calls on the UNC Board of Governors to rescind the austerity cuts inflicted on Chapel Hill by the BOG's own business model. We further call on our campus administration to exhaust every remedy, including pursuing the two we suggest here, before proceeding to cut our Library holdings, jeopardizing the achievements of UNC faculty, researchers, librarians, and students, and undermining the national reputation of UNC-Chapel Hill.

¹ Calculated from the latest [2020 UNC System Endowment Annual Report](#), UNC Chapel Hill holds \$164 million, or 4.5 percent of its \$3.642 billion endowment in "Energy and Natural Resources," i.e. fossil fuel and fossil-fuel intensive holdings.