

OPINION: My college is robbing me. Here's the bill to prove it.

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Emma Schambach North Carolina Campus Correspondent @EmmaSchambach on Sep 14, 2020 at 5:00 AM EDT

Student Accounts - Fall 2020 - Account Activity

Description	Date	Amount
Health Insurance Waiver	7/16/20	-\$1,308.40
Student Health Premium	7/6/20	\$1,308.40
Health Service Fee	7/6/20	\$123.50
Transportation Services MSC	7/6/20	\$77.50
Food Service Facilities MSC	7/6/20	\$10.00
Educ & Tech Fee	7/6/20	\$311.00
Safety and Security Fee	7/6/20	\$15.00
University Fees	7/6/20	\$1,097.00
49er Card Access MSC	7/6/20	\$7.50
Tuition Graduate In-State	7/6/20	\$2,168.50
UNC System Student Assoc Fee	7/6/20	\$0.50
Term Balance:		\$3,810.50
Term Balance Including Estimated Aid:		\$3,810.50

Editor's note: The views in this opinion editorial are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect those of Campus Reform or of its parent organization, the Leadership Institute.

"'Woke' universities who claim to be bastions of social justice, loudly fighting for liberal policies, seem to be strangely quiet when it comes to the injustice of taking college students' much needed cash during a global pandemic."

The University of North Carolina-Charlotte is taking students' money for services it won't provide, claiming it is insurance for the future of the university. Meanwhile, students, many of whom are out of work due to COVID-19, need that cash today to afford basic necessities.

UNC-Charlotte, like many colleges across the country, is charging me for products and services even though students like me won't have access to them. Despite moving almost all classes online this fall in response to COVID-19, UNC-Charlotte elected to charge full-time in-person tuition and fees to all students. But, if I'm not on campus, why am I being charged for transportation services, food facility fees, tech fees, safety and security fees, and university fees meant to cover on-campus clubs and activities?

Students will be paying \$1,670 in fees this year, despite campus operating at limited capacity, and on a very shortened schedule. My bill this semester, like the bills of other full-time students who used to receive their instruction traditionally, features \$1,097 in “university fees” alone, whereas distance education students who, like myself and most of my classmates, will access their classes 100 percent online and pay \$0.

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In response to students' justified outrage at being charged these fees for services we won't have access to, the university sent out an email stating, “A student's tuition and fees charges are based on program type, not course delivery. Distance Education tuition and fee rates are applicable only to a designated Distance Education degree program.”

If you paid for a shirt from an online store, and were sent a picture of that shirt, but not the actual product, you would be able to complain to customer service and would be offered a refund. Why is it that universities are allowed to charge for full-time, in-person instruction but only deliver online courses to students? That's like the store who sent you a photo of the shirt saying, “you were charged for the product type, not the product itself” and charging you the full price of a shirt for the picture. That store would undoubtedly go out of business.

In a free-market economy, customers are free to shop at stores that better fit their needs. Universities, however, are unfairly immune to the effects of a competitive free market. Many of my classmates and I feel like we are being robbed of the quality education and college experience we are paying for.

When asked if the university ever considered prorating student fees this semester by *Carolina Journal*, university officials avoided the question, instead spewing nonsense about the financial risk the university would be taking in reducing fees. So students are supposed to foot the bill and absorb the risk? The school is worried about the financial burden it may face in later years if it reduces fees for students moving their education online this semester. In the meantime, I'm worried about the financial burden I'm facing today.

With a job market destroyed by COVID-19 shutdowns, I'm worried about how I'll afford rent, groceries, and other necessities today, while the university uses my money as insurance for the future.

[RELATED: Law firm vows to investigate colleges nationwide. Millions of students could benefit.]

UNC-Charlotte isn't the only school receiving backlash for the hefty bill this semester, UCSD students are also outraged at the prospect of paying full-price for lesser education, as *Campus Reform* reported. I, like many students across the U.S., am panicked about paying

full price tuition and fees for a lower-quality education, an education that has become indispensable in our country, especially in light of the suffering job market and economy.

With the cult-like belief that no degree means no job in our nation, students don't have the luxury to postpone or opt-out of a four-year degree if we expect to find work. "Woke" universities that claim to be bastions of social justice, loudly fighting for liberal policies, seem to be strangely quiet when it comes to the injustice of taking college students' much-needed cash during a global pandemic.

Universities that claim to support their students and put their students' needs and education first are placing the entire liability for the effects of COVID-19 on those students, many of whom are unemployed, deeply in debt, and terrified of what the crumbling economy will mean for our futures.

UNC-Charlotte, and schools across the country, exist to give students a better future. Instead, they're robbing us of it. It's time that changes.

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Emma Schambach is a North Carolina Campus Correspondent, reporting liberal bias and abuse at the University of North Carolina - Charlotte. She is pursuing a degree in Political Science and Communication Studies and was admitted as an early entry student to receive her Masters in Communication. Emma is the President of the Network of Enlightened Women at UNCC, Founding Chairwoman at Young Americans for Freedom at UNCC, and State Communication Director at North Carolina Federation of College Republicans

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