ENROLLMENT, SO FAR. We are not likely to have a firm estimate of our enrollment before the second week of classes, and won’t know the final enrollment numbers until the census date, August 27. Right now, we believe the enrollment will be similar to last year’s. We’ve graduated record numbers of students the past two years and, despite increases in freshmen, those numbers will not be completely offset by new students. If the enrollment trend is true, we will be below our budget target and will likely have to reduce our budget next year up to $1 million. I believe this will be our last year of budget adjustments due to enrollment shortfalls. We have many indicators suggesting we will have modest growth in the future. Some of those indicators are listed below - all are good news!

FRESHMAN CLASS. As of this morning, the freshman enrollment stood at 1,096; last year at this time it was 1,035. The final tally for last year was 1,020. We expect this year’s class to level out somewhere around 1,080 which is a about a seven percent increase. This is the largest class in five years, and our best prepared ever! Remember, we’ve been increasing admissions standards for the last four years and it is paying off with better retention. This year’s retention number won’t be known until census date, but current numbers show it to be four to six points above last year.

HOUSING OCCUPANCY. The number of on-campus residential students has surpassed 2,000, and Dr. Jones had to open Belk Hall for overflow. That’s very good news for us. It means we will have more resources to maintain our housing system and funds needed to enhance our residential living programs. This is the best housing occupancy we’ve had since the opening of Cypress Hall.

WHY DO WE SET ENROLLMENT TARGETS WE CAN’T SEEM TO REACH? During the budget briefing to campus leaders, one individual asked why we continue to set enrollment targets higher than we seem to be able to reach. Good question! First some background: In the fall of 2009, the institution set a budget target for 2010 based on approximately 7,100 students, believing we would reach that level because of our historic enrollment growth. We came up a bit short in 2010, when just over 6,900 students enrolled, but fell way short in 2011 with an enrollment of only 6,251. No one anticipated the impact of the economy or of the number of students who lost financial aid eligibility because they failed to show satisfactory academic progress. If we had been required to adjust our budget all at once, we would have had to reduce our budget by more than $4 million. So, the short answer is that UNC General Administration has been working with us to lower our target incrementally to create a soft landing. It is certainly easier to cut $1 million in successive years than $4 million all at once. This approach also gives us a chance to increase enrollment, which lessens the cut we are forced to make.