

## NC PROMISE PODCAST – DECEMBER 2018

Welcome to 30 Brave Minutes, a podcast of the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of North Carolina Pembroke. In 30 Brave Minutes we'll give you something interesting to think about. The topic of for today College Affordability and NC Promise. In this episode the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, Jeff Frederick, is joined by: David Ward, UNCP's Provost and Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs, Lois Williams, UNCP's Associate Vice Chancellor for Enrollment, and Jodi Phelps, UNCP's Director of University Communications and Marketing. Get ready for 30 Brave Minutes!

At the start of the academic year in August approximately 20.4 million students descended on college campuses to either begin or continue their education. 13.4 million of those came to a four-year university, like UNC Pembroke. About 7 million attended community college. According to the nation center for education statistics about 56 % of America's college students identify as women, 44 % as men. 61 percent of all students are full-timers, 39% take part-time loads as they juggle work, raise children, parent parents and otherwise juggle life, while working toward a degree. Blacks and Hispanics attend college in higher numbers than ever, a wonderful reminder that the American dream and a diverse culture are co-travelers in the twenty-first century. The majority of college students are under the age of twenty-five, but second career, workforce development, advance degree needs, post-military service and other changes have led to about 40% of college students being over the age of twenty-five. By the end of the academic year in May, nearly four million, about a fifth of all college students will walk across the stage to the sounds of Elgar's Pomp and Circumstance, put on a gown of academic tradition and gleefully toss the cap into the air in celebration of receiving an associate's, bachelor's, master's, professional, or doctoral degree. And the only folks more relieved than the students who poured their heart, soul, and a lot of coffee into the late nights, lab reports, and term papers, will be the parents, spouses, partners and friends, who kept quietly reminding them, "You can do this." A few constants are clear among all students who start down the path toward a college degree. First of all the understanding that college brings value. Some of that value comes in the form of the wallet. A college grad across all disciplines earns on an average, one million dollars or more over the course of a lifetime or

about \$20,000 per year over a half century of work. Students also understand the non-economic value of the college experience. Lifelong friendships are formed, educational odysseys are completed, road trips are taken, mentors are found, and campus life is sampled in all its many forms: concerts, speakers, study abroad, ballgames, social and academic groups. College is hard work, but it is fun. Next, students understand that the value of college is also connected to cost. According to the College Board which tracks such matters a fairly typical in state education at a public university costs on average about \$24,000 per year. A year of school at a private college is more than twice that: about \$50,000 per year. The value of a college degree comes at a cost. UNC Pembroke has always been comparatively more affordable. The average cost for a full-time undergraduate in-state student, who lives in one of the campus dorms and has a meal plan is about \$17,000, or about 30 percent less than the College Board average. And since 90 percent of UNC Pembroke grads are employed or in grad school within a year of walking across the stage, which is a very high number, being part of Brave Nation has always been of great value. UNCP students graduate with less student debt than state or national averages. US News and World Report compiled a study placing the average American college student debt at \$37,000. Meanwhile UNCP grads have a comparative bargain with only about \$23k in debt. But the bargain only matters if the value is there. As consumers we are always happy to find a bargain, but we need to know that quality and value are present as well. So, in this case, what is the value of a UNCP degree and a UNCP experience? Does the degree lead to a career in healthcare or business or teaching? Can you find a pathway to grad school in fields like computer science or social work, counseling, or some other field that excites your passion? Are there programs in the arts like theatre or music? How practical is it? Are there resources if I want to start my own business? What if I want to do research in biotechnology or chemistry or physics? What if I want to be an artist? Can I take classes where I might learn about cyber-security or other cutting edge areas, and will I get taught by professors or just by whichever grad student they assign to me? In this case, the answer to all of those questions is yes. UNC Pembroke offers 41 degrees across three different academic units and twenty-three academic departments, plus grad school options in a number of areas. The University has great internships, undergraduate research opportunities and study abroad opportunities. Best of all, under a new program called NC Promise a first-class college education at UNC Pembroke is more affordable than ever. Our

topic for today: College affordability and NC Promise. Let's start at the beginning. How do you fill out a college application? When does that get started? How would you even apply to a place like UNCP?

WILLIAMS: You would begin by going to our website: [uncp.edu/apply](http://uncp.edu/apply). That would get you to our application and it is as simple as filling it out. It's a pretty straightforward application. Once you complete the application we begin communicating with you about missing items that you need in order to complete your file so that we can make an admission decision. That means your transcripts, your test scores, and your personal statement. That is how it begins and we do encourage people to apply early. Right now it is not too late. We are still accepting applications, but we encourage people to get things in as soon as possible.

FREDERICK: If I'm not sure if I want to apply are there opportunities to come visit or open houses?

WILLIAMS: Absolutely. We have a slate of open houses and visits in the spring. Again, that information is on our website, as well. The important thing I think is to visit and to visit multiple times, if possible. Open houses are great ways to visit. We roll out the red carpet for you and try to make sure that all of UNCP is there for you. To really get a personalized and individualized experience we encourage you to come back and sit in on classes, have one-on-one time with our faculty. It is a combination of visits that give you the answer to whether it is a right fit for you.

PHELPS: Some students may live quite a distance from Pembroke. We have international students, for example. Some students may live in China. One of the interesting things we deployed last year was a virtual tour and it is a virtual reality tour so students who live a distance from campus still have the experience and the ability to come and kind of look around and see a sampling and watch different videos and kind of find out at least on the surface if it is right for them, And then they can come and visit in person, too. That is a really easy entry point for a lot of students.

WARD: I would just also add that while the application process itself is geared towards traditional students, seniors in high school. It can also be for non-traditional students at any time, but I think for that high school student it is never

too early to begin thinking about college. It is never too early to begin visiting a college. Sophomores, juniors, that is when you really should be figuring out which college is right for you.

FREDERICK: And to do that I could start on your website, which has lots of interesting things about the University?

PHELPS: Yes, lots of interesting things about the university. You can just go to [uncp.edu](http://uncp.edu) and start from there. The virtual tour is right there on the homepage. You can learn a little bit about where we are, who we are, the admissions process, and all sorts of stuff.

WARD: You can learn about the various academic programs, you can explore in-depth even the titles of the courses that you may end up taking.

WILLIAMS: One of the things that I love about UNCP is the willingness for our faculty to listen to prospective students and hear them out, and engage with them and talk to them a little bit about what their department is, or if they want to maybe pursue mass communication or nursing or social work. You know, I have experienced a number of times our professors jumping in and so I always encourage prospective students to reach out to the department as well, if they really are considering a specific program.

FREDERICK: So, let's talk a little bit about NC Promise. How does it work? How does it affect what people pay for college? What are some of the details?

PHELPS: So the NC Promise Tuition plan represents an increased investment by the state of North Carolina in our students. Essentially what it does is it takes our tuition price and the portion that is paid for by the student is reduced to \$500 for instate and \$2,500 for out of state students.

FREDERICK: That's for tuition?

PHELPS: For tuition only per semester. It is important to remember that the total cost of attendance also includes other things like books and student fees and such. So your total bill will be a little bit bigger, but the price of tuition that you are going to pay is either \$500 or \$2,500 per semester. What that represents over the

course of four years is a savings of \$10,000, which is significant. I don't know about you guys, but when I went to college a million years ago, it was really expensive and so even saving that \$10,000 is very significant.

WARD: If you think about it, I believe you mentioned that the average UNCP student is graduating with \$23,000 in debt? So, right on the face of it, that means that \$23,000 debt would now be \$13,000.

FREDERICK: That is great note-taking skills by you. If you want to come to college, I have got a place for a young student like you.

PHELPS: One of the things that I like to point out is NC Promise is automatic with admission to the institution. So there is no additional scholarship paperwork or other forms you have to fill out. When you get your admission decision, you are automatically an NC Promise student. It applies to all undergraduate students regardless of where they came from, transfer, on-line, distance Ed, any type of student.

WILLIAMS: It applies to all students. Current students, not just the incoming class.

FREDERICK: That is important. So if I am already here, I am going to be able to take advantage of the benefits and I don't have to fill out any additional forms, if I am a current student?

WARD: That is correct. It immediately changes and I think perhaps, just as important, going back to what you shared at the beginning in terms of value, the state is funding the difference. So, the university will not actually see a reduction in dollars available for us to spend on our academic programming, on our salaries for faculty, on the host of things that we spend money on. We will be kept whole. The savings is for the student and for the family of the student. It is not a reduction in what we have available to us at the institution. I think that is critical.

FREDERICK: Did this apply to all University of North Carolina schools?

PHELPS: It applies to three schools in the UNC system.

WARD: The three good ones.

PHELPS: The three best ones in our opinion. UNC Pembroke, Western Carolina, and Elizabeth City State University. Those three institutions, if you look at the map of North Carolina, they are strategically and geographically located throughout the state. They almost triangulate the state, so one of the core tenants of the program is to provide access to an affordable education. Geographically they are giving access and opportunity to all those different regions.

WARD: In many ways this program is an extension of the historical commitment that North Carolina has had to making higher education available and accessible at the lowest cost possible to the learner. There aren't many states that have that commitment written into law.

FREDERICK: Right there in the state constitution. How exciting is that? So what you're saying is that NC Promise is not only set out for geographic reasons, but also is a pretty good indication that the state kind of likes what is going on at UNC Pembroke. Wouldn't you say?

PHELPS: We think so.

WARD: I think it is a clear statement and an investment in UNC Pembroke and the wonderful things that are going on, as you mentioned. I think, going back to that quality question that I spoke to earlier, our intention is to actually improve the quality, to continually work on ways for our faculty to be more innovative, to bring tools to bear for them to be innovative, to open avenues of communication and discovery for students that didn't exist before. NC Promise from our standpoint is simply shining a light on what we know is high quality education and giving us the opportunity to share that with a larger number of students.

FREDERICK: Now what if I live just twenty minutes away, but my zip code is South Carolina? Can I take part in that as well?

PHELPS: Absolutely. \$2,500 per semester is the out-of-state rate that students will pay, so you will benefit from the North Carolina Promise tuition plan as well.

WARD: In fact, we like using bigger numbers, so at \$2,500 tuition per semester would translate for an out of state student to a four year savings of \$40,000 relative to today's price.

PHELPS: \$40,000 is a lot of money! That is a down payment on a house, or a car. When you are starting out your career and you are young that is significant.

FREDERICK: So an out of state student who wants to save all of that money can come here and save \$40,000 and still take advantage of the small class sizes that make UNC Pembroke what it is?

WARD: Absolutely. In fact, when you think about it in these terms, it allows an out of state student to really, in most situations, to attend a high quality University of North Carolina campus at what would be the equivalent of their in-state tuition, wherever they are. And I can guarantee you the small class sizes that we have, the attention that we give the individual students and their individualized learning is unmatched by any other public institution.

FREDERICK: Wow! So an in-state North Carolina student saves about \$10,000 over four years and an out-of-state student saves about \$40,000. But I know in addition to tuition there are some other costs. What are some of the other costs and how does the financial aid process work if I might need some additional loans or help to pay the balance?

PHELPS: Some additional costs are fees, room and board, and living expenses. In order to take advantage of financial aid you do need to file the Free Application for Student Aid. It is a free form and you complete that form and the information comes to the school. We then put together a financial aid package for you that includes any institutional money that you are eligible for, state funds that you are eligible for and the federal funds for which you are individually eligible for.

WARD: and that application is commonly called...

PHELPS: ...the FAFSA.

WARD: If an applicant does a FAFSA and sends it to us we will review their academic transcripts as well as their financial need and then, ultimately they will

get what we call "a financial aid package," which really will outline all the different options. There are options for the student. They do not have to accept those options but we do the work on our end to identify the various sources of money that might be available for each and every student to help them pay for those other fees.

FREDERICK: Do you have help if a family is having trouble filling out the FAFSA? Can you give them some help with that?

PHELPS: Absolutely. They can come in and visit us or we can pick up the phone and talk to them that way and walk them through the process.

FREDERICK: Now when you get a student loan for some part of the balance, when do you have to pay it back?

PHELPS: You begin repayment six months after you leave school, which for most students is six months after you graduate.

WARD: Unless they continue to graduate school, because the intent on that six month grace period is the period in which the student either enters educational programs, such as a masters or doctoral degree or becomes employed and has a steady source of income.

FREDERICK: Okay, what if I am a part-time student, like a working nurse who has an RN degree but needs a BSN? Does this still apply to me in those situations?

PHELPS: Yes. Financial aid still applies to you and also there is a part-time rate for tuition that would apply. But students are eligible for financial aid on a part-time basis.

FREDERICK: What if I have been to three or four different schools and I've got a bunch of different credits from a bunch of different places and I have a need, and I'm working and I have a family? Can I take advantage of this? Do you have programs that are either already on board or coming on-line to help me get finished?

WARD: We do. Essentially what will happen is a transfer. So transfer students, regardless of whether they are actively and currently enrolled in another institution and just transferring from that one institution to us, or whether they were someone who either already has an associate degree or has a collection of credits from other institutions, they can apply. We will review their transcripts from the previous institutions, we will make assessments about what credits transfer, and how it fits into an overall plan of study. We even have some degree programs that are specifically designed for students who may have a collection of programs. We have an Interdisciplinary Studies program that allows students to take a non-traditional route to a bachelor's degree.

FREDERICK: So, if I am a traditional, first-time college student I can take advantage of NC Promise. If I am already at UNC Pembroke I can take advantage of NC Promise. If I'm transferring from a community college, or even another four-year institution I can come to UNC Pembroke and take advantage of this. If I am a part-time student I can take advantage of this. Even if I have got a bunch of credits from everywhere and I haven't been to school for a while I can take advantage of this! Everybody except graduate programs.

PHELPS: Correct. Everybody except graduate students will be able to benefit from NC Promise.

FREDERICK: Wow!

\*\*\*We'll return to our panel in just a moment. UNC Pembroke and the College of Arts and Sciences are changing lives through education. To learn more about our 16 departments, college highlights and news, as well as to find past episodes of 30 Brave Minutes or our digital journal Bravery, explore our website. You can also support our academic programs by clicking on the donate button. Additional news and events may be found by following us on Facebook at UNCP College of Arts and Sciences. Remember wherever you hope to go, whatever you plan to do, you can get there from here.

FREDERICK: What kind of academic programs is UNCP known for? What are the range of some of the kinds of degrees that (are available)?

WARD: We have a broad range of programming, from the arts and music and theatre to hard sciences in biology, physics, and chemistry, to pre-professional programs, or professional programs such as nursing. We have social work at the undergraduate level, we have criminal justice, and we have creative programs that link pathways for students. For example, we have a three-plus-two program. If you are interested in engineering, students spend three years with us and get an applied physics bachelor's degree, they'll spend two years at NC State, and they will get a bachelors in Mechanical Engineering. They end up with two different bachelor's degrees over the course of that time. Literally, it ranges the gamut. Of course we have our core disciplines that provide opportunities for future historians, and political scientists. I think you will find that we have a whole collection of programming that really meets pretty much most needs today.

FREDERICK: So about all of the traditional majors you would expect to find on a college campus you can find here. And the ones you don't you can start here and make good progress and finish somewhere else.

WARD: That is correct.

FREDERICK: Tell me about campus life. I know UNCP is not as big as some other universities. What kind of stuff is there to do here for students?

PHELPS: You know the one thing when I interact with students and talk to them, the one thing that keeps coming up is they tell me that they have more opportunity here than they would have had anywhere else. I think that really resonates with me, that a student, you know, maybe has an opportunity to be a leader, or create their own club, or make their own way. We have over 90 clubs and organizations for students to participate in. We have Greek life, we have division II athletics, who happen to have several championship teams. In fact, our girl's soccer just won a championship recently for the Peach belt. So, you have a lot of opportunity to attend athletic events. You have the opportunity to attend events through student organizations on campus. We have Givens Performing Arts center, where we bring in a variety of programming, you know, from a Michael Jackson tribute band a couple of months ago. We have...

FREDERICK: Now all of you are moonwalking?

PHELPS: I was actually moonwalking. They brought everybody on stage and it was pretty cool. We have Broadway and musicals and all sorts of things that are on campus. The residence hall association here is phenomenal. So for traditional resident students, they are constantly providing programming and activities for them to take a part of. I think it all goes back to the opportunity. When we provide a robust campus life experience for our students we are giving them the opportunity to learn and to grow and to enhance their academic pursuits, so it all is really complementary to one another.

WARD: I think it is really important, you know, student fit is important to success. If a student feels comfortable that they feel like this is home, then they are going to perform well and be successful academically. Not every student will feel that fit, okay? That's why the visit and getting to know us is so important on the front end. If you are looking to, frankly, go through your college education and not interact with your faculty, this is not the campus for you, because your faculty will get to know you. They will go out of their way and you will not be able to just hide. I think at the end of the day that serves the student well, but again, it is about knowing that on the front door, and understanding that when you get here, that you are going to be taught by faculty, by full faculty members, not grad students, and not only that, your faculty members are going to know you and they are going to reach out to you and the positive part of that is that they are going to push you on good days, and they are going to support you on those days where you may be struggling a little.

FREDERICK: So there is an advantage to coming to a school like UNC Pembroke to really finding a mentor.

WARD: That is correct. I think every student, or almost every student can identify, "who was that person?" Truthfully sometimes it is a person working in Student Affairs, who reached out and made a special difference in that student's life and got them involved in a particular avenue, or something. We have a group right now who have done extraordinary work with the model UN. That is a growing group of students and their level of excitement for what they are involved in. I literally have spoken to at least two members of our model UN team who have said that when

they first got here they didn't know where they would fit. Well they found where they fit and they can't imagine being anywhere else.

FREDERICK: So some students will come for the Honors College, some will come for the traditional campus life, some will come for the range of programs. I know there is a new business building that is in the process of being built. A \$36 million business building, there is a Health Sciences study going on to bring new programming to the university.

WARD: We are not done. Our list of programs is not done. Our sporting events are not done. Our campus isn't done. We are growing and expanding, but we are doing so in a way that will allow us to keep that personal touch, because we believe that as we develop new things, bring on new programs, bring on new facilities, because frankly, our students deserve and need to learn in state-of-the-art facilities, we have to do so in a manner that enables us to maintain that personal connection.

FREDERICK: How exciting! There is talk of a maker-space, where students can design prototypes, there is an entrepreneurship incubator, so that you could walk out of here with a business plan and the ability to go get some venture capital. We have got a lot of really good things that people can come and take part in. What if I am struggling? What if I come here and my first semester that calculus class, that college algebra class, that English comp class, isn't going as well as I wanted it to. Where do I turn for a little help?

WARD: The first thing I would point out is you are probably not alone. Actually, I can take out the word probably. You are not alone. Many students, regardless of whether they are transitioning from high school or transitioning from a five-year absence from an educational setting, struggle in that transition. We have support services here that include tutoring services. Every student is assigned an advisor who will work with them. We have a writing center. We have special courses with supplemental instruction. So we have a whole host of support services designed for student success. We will monitor your progress a little bit like big brother. If you are not doing well academically we are going to know about it, but not from a punitive standpoint. We are going to know about it because we are going to reach out and try and help you, by getting you into the writing center, the tutoring center, get you to the resources you need to be successful. The other piece of that, you

know, students go through different cycles in their time with us and in their college experience, so some students may struggle in their sophomore year. There is a term called the sophomore slump and they may have been so excited and energized in their freshman year that in fact they did okay, but they hit that sophomore year and it was just a little different, courses got a bit tougher, and so our support services are there for as long as you are an undergrad. It is not just for that transitioning time.

FREDERICK: So you have a library, a tutoring center, a writing center, you have all of these sorts of academic resources to sort of pull somebody up if they are having a little struggle. What about the other side of college? The bureaucracy? I know from days gone by that there can be a lot of red tape and figuring out what your bill is and when I am supposed to pay it and how do I get registered for classes and what about that parking ticket that I had six years ago that I'm sure someone was supposed to forget about? Are there people to help me through all of that at UNCP?

PHELPS: Yes, that is the student enrollment service area. The Registrar, Admissions, and Financial Aid offices. Most of those questions can be answered through the admissions process. If you are re-admitting we will be able to know if you have outstanding bills or anything like that, that we can assist you with. If you are a new student we help you figure out, walk you through filling out the FAFSA, and getting all of those things straight and figuring out what your bottom line is. Helping you make the connection between and figure out the pieces of how you are going to make up that gap if there is one. So that is handled largely by the admissions staff and the financial aid staff, very hands on, again, continuing the theme in the classroom of a very personalized experience. From the point that you apply until you matriculate and all the way through your four years.

WARD: In fact, while it is not ready now, we are in the process of redesigning some of that bureaucracy to enable students to have one single point of contact for all their bureaucratic questions regardless of whether it falls under this office or that office or another one. Our plan is to have that single point of contact or that one stop shop, if you will, in place for August, 2018.

FREDERICK: I'm sure with this NC Promise program and with all of the exciting programs already here and coming, there are going to be a lot of applicants. What are some deadlines that I should be aware of so that I can get consideration as soon as possible?

PHELPS: Financial aid is, if anything in life is first-come-first-serve that is one of them, so make sure you are at the front of the line. Don't wait. Go ahead and apply now. With the application deadline, we have a June 30 deadline, but again, because of NC Promise and the demand, we do encourage you to apply early.

WARD: We may be faced with a situation of physical capacity issues. So, that deadline. I can't encourage people enough to get in their application material - all of it - well before that deadline, because we may be faced with a situation, because of demand, having to employ a wait-list approach.

FREDERICK: So even though I could wait until the summer, my best bet is to get this thing done in the next couple of months so that everything is in soon.

PHELPS: Absolutely.

FREDERICK: And that is fine if I am a high school student and I am halfway through my year and I'm not sure what my final grades for the rest of the semester....you have a way of figuring that out?

PHELPS: Yes we do.

FREDERICK: Well, give me some information about web addresses, phone numbers, where I can get more information, so that I can let people I know that might be interested in taking advantage of this?

PHELPS: You can find all of the information you want on our website, which is UNCP.edu. If you want to get specifically to NC Promise, [uncp.edu/ncpromise](http://uncp.edu/ncpromise), it will take you to a lovely video and lots of information. From that page you can link out to all of the other steps, and apply, and degree programs and all of those things. I encourage you to call us and talk to somebody individually. That is probably the best way to get to know who we are and talk to our admissions counselors. You can do that at 910-521-6262. Give us a call.

FREDERICK: Final question. You all work for UNCP and you live it and breathe it every day. What is the best part about working here? What is the part that makes you excited to be on campus every day?

WILLIAMS: Students.

PHELPS: Absolutely. Watching them walk across the stage at commencement like we did last week, that is it, right there. That is success.

WARD: Well, as an academic, what I love the most is the connection between the faculty and the student. I see it every day. The ability for our faculty to work one-on-one with our students is not found on most campuses and it is very special.

FREDERICK: Well I want to thank our guests today - Lois Williams, Jodi Phelps, and David Ward - for telling a little bit about NC Promise. If you are interested in this program or know somebody who might be please share this podcast Thirty Brave Minutes and we'll see you back next time for another fascinating discussion.

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