

Growth Beyond the Classroom: A Decade of Staffing and Spending in the UNC System

April 30, 2025

Beginning in 2021, the UNC System began reporting the five-year change in employee headcount across its 16 institutions, categorizing employees by job type. The Martin Center examined these data to find out how staffing across the UNC System has changed in the past decade. Staffing and expenditures are analyzed for the system as a whole as well as for each constituent institution.

About the Data

Data in this brief come from five reports released by the UNC System.¹ The reports provide data on student enrollment, employee headcount, and salary expenditures for all years from 2015-16 through 2024-25, except for the 2016-17 fiscal year.

The reports categorize university employees by job type:

- Faculty
- Research
- Executive Administration
- Academic Administration
- Communications & Fundraising
- Academic & Student Affairs
- Fiscal Affairs
- IT
- Other Functional Professionals (includes professionals in Facilities, Health Science, Environment, Athletic Affairs, and Institutional Affairs)
- Service/Maintenance
- Technical
- Office/Clerical
- Other

Key Findings:

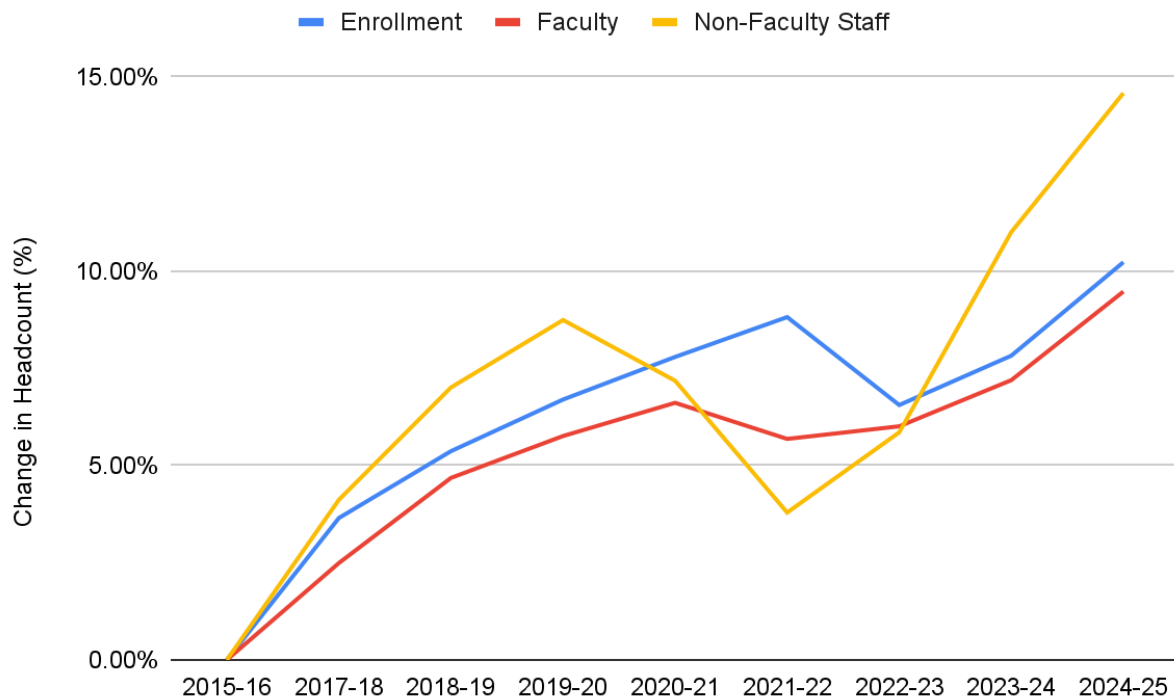
- Non-faculty hiring outpaced enrollment and faculty hiring. Across the System, enrollment increased 10.2 percent from 2015-16 to 2024-25. Faculty numbers increased by 9.5 percent. Non-faculty staff numbers increased by 14.6 percent.
- The ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 2.18 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.28 non-faculty employees for every faculty member.
- The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 16.59 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 16.7 students for every faculty member

¹ [2015-16 to 2019-20](#) (see page 25), [2017-18 to 2021-22](#), [2018-19 to 2022-23](#), [2019-20 to 2023-24](#), [2020-21 to 2024-25](#)

The University of North Carolina System

From 2015-16 to 2024-25, enrollment increased 10.2 percent from 2015-16 to 2024-25. Faculty numbers increased by 9.5 percent. Non-faculty staff numbers increased by 14.6 percent.

Change in Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The largest increase in staff occurred in fiscal affairs. In 2015-16, there were 1,343 people working in fiscal affairs across all 16 institutions. In 2024-25, there were 2,065, an increase of 53.8 percent.

Changes in Headcount

Category	2015-16	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Enrollment	224,915	233,126	236,993	239,981	242,446	244,752	239,663	242,518	247,927
Faculty	13,561	13,899	14,196	14,342	14,458	14,332	14,376	14,537	14,846
Research	2,473	2,689	2,853	2,926	3,046	3,091	3,244	3,423	3,526
Executive Admin	1,118	1,172	1,190	1,182	1,153	1,123	1,132	1,178	1,205
Academic Admin	699	757	787	798	783	748	764	783	794
Comms & Fundraising	835	984	1,041	1,115	1,100	1,058	1,099	1,168	1,193

Academic & Student Affairs	2,944	3,305	3,531	3,626	3,551	3,396	3,514	3,836	3,992
Fiscal Affairs	1,343	1,546	1,597	1,693	1,702	1,677	1,775	1,879	2,065
IT	2,031	2,144	2,195	2,262	2,258	2,225	2,304	2,423	2,553
Other Functional Prof.	2,167	2,255	2,330	2,375	2,383	2,385	2,507	2,733	2,868
Service/ Maintenance	3,921	3,951	4,022	4,090	3,976	3,745	3,808	3,869	4,015
Technical	4,102	4,330	4,361	4,396	4,301	4,256	4,290	4,495	4,613
Office/Clerical	5,990	5,936	5,964	5,931	5,754	5,394	5,301	5,473	5,480
Other	1,893	1,663	1,714	1,703	1,629	1,537	1,506	1,505	1,516

In absolute terms, total enrollment (both graduate and undergraduate) grew by 23,102. Faculty headcount grew by 1,285. Non-faculty staff headcount increased by 4,304.

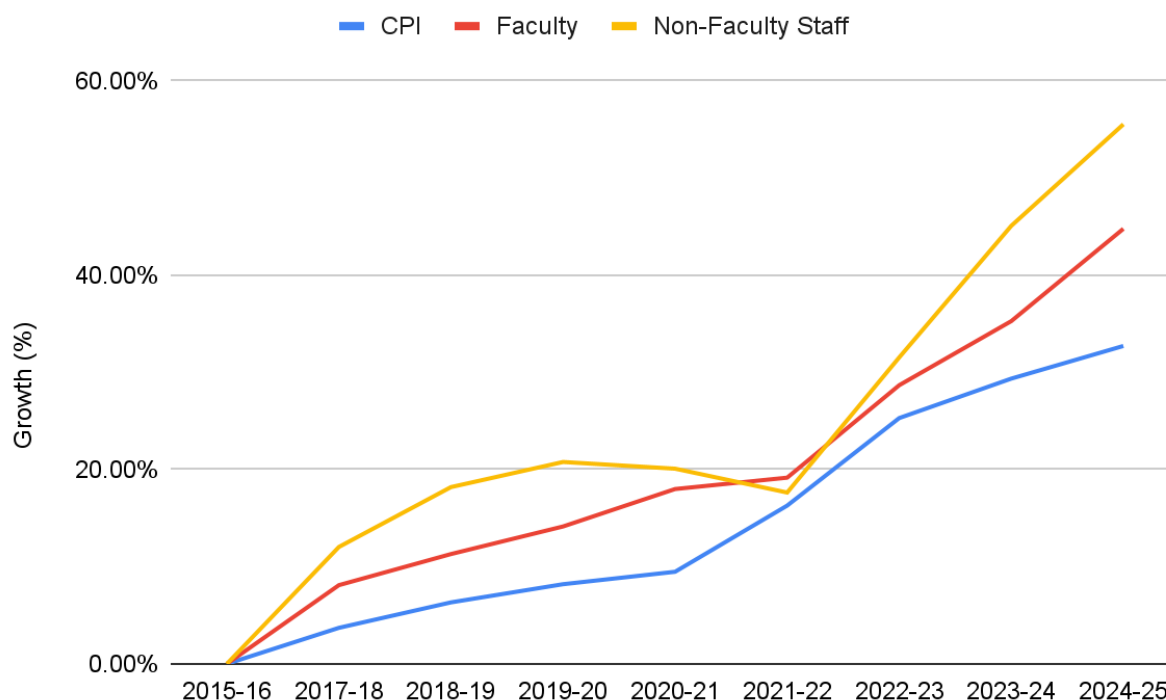
Faculty and Staff per 100 Students

University	Carnegie Research Activity Designation	Faculty	Staff
Appalachian State University	R2: High Research Spending and Doctorate Production	5.99	13.64
East Carolina	R1: Very High Research Spending and Doctorate Production	6.07	10.67
Elizabeth City State	N/A	4.34	12.00
Fayetteville State	Research Colleges and Universities	3.51	8.38
NC A&T	R2: High Research Spending and Doctorate Production	3.73	9.01
NC Central	Research Colleges and Universities	4.51	9.57
NC State	R1: Very High Research Spending and Doctorate Production	5.87	18.20
UNC Asheville	Research Colleges and Universities	6.54	14.26
UNC-Chapel Hill	R1: Very High Research Spending and Doctorate Production	13.35	31.10
UNC Charlotte	R1: Very High Research Spending and Doctorate Production	3.67	8.56
UNC Greensboro	R2: High Research Spending and Doctorate Production	4.44	8.98
UNC Pembroke	N/A	3.98	7.71

UNC School of the Arts	N/A	12.96	31.50
UNC Wilmington	R2: High Research Spending and Doctorate Production	4.10	8.44
Western Carolina	Research Colleges and Universities	4.81	9.23
Winston-Salem State	Research Colleges and Universities	4.68	10.25

The ratio of faculty and staff to students varies widely by institution. Even within university type, wide variation exists. For example, UNC-Chapel Hill and UNC Charlotte are both classified as “Very High Research” institutions, but UNC-Chapel Hill has far more faculty and non-faculty staff per student than does UNC Charlotte.

Growth in Total Salary Expenditures



Across the UNC System, salary expenditures outpaced inflation. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, salary expenditures for faculty increased by 44.78 percent. Salary expenditures for non-faculty staff increased by 55.53 percent. The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

Categories with the highest expenditure increases were Research (86.48 percent), Comms & Fundraising (81.13 percent), and Fiscal Affairs (90.97 percent). This reflects growth in headcount, increases in average salaries, and a change in the make-up of university staff.

Average Salary by Job Category

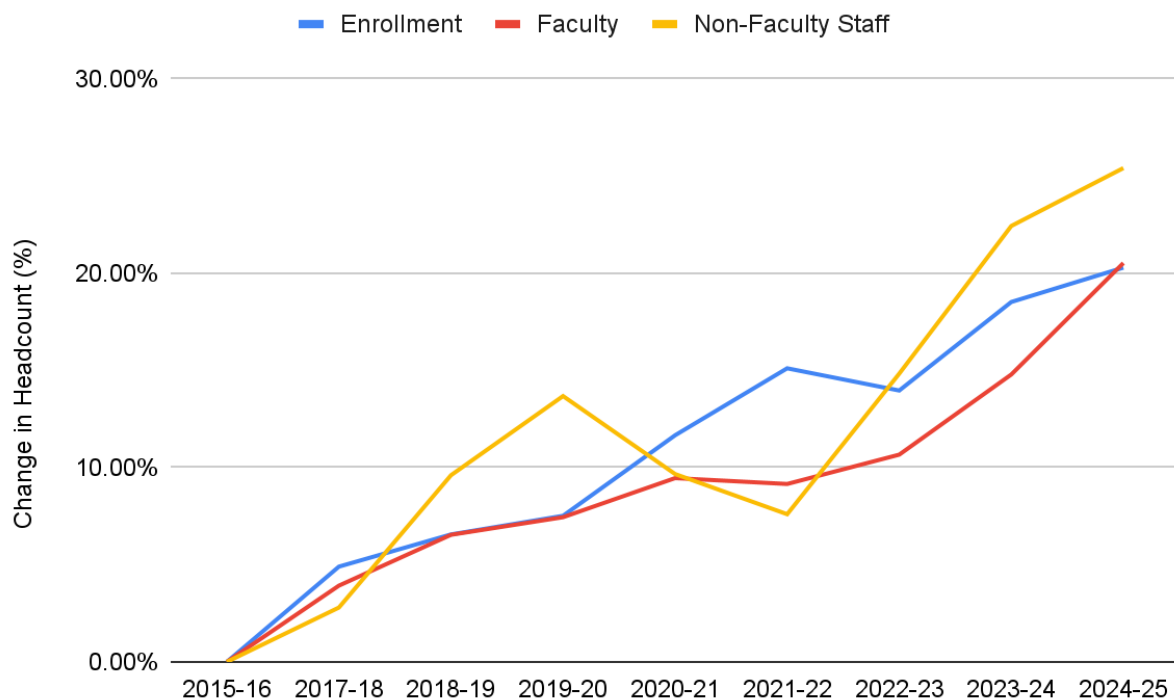
Job Category	2015-16	2024-25	% Increase
Faculty	\$100,103	\$132,608	32.47%
Research	\$62,333	\$82,131	31.76%
Executive Admin	\$142,431	\$184,724	29.69%
Academic Admin	\$99,699	\$124,419	24.79%
Comms & Fundraising	\$69,336	\$88,476	27.60%
Academic & Student Affairs	\$53,990	\$69,824	29.33%
Fiscal Affairs	\$65,891	\$81,931	24.34%
IT	\$77,528	\$88,476	14.12%
Other Functional Prof.	\$71,720	\$97,422	35.84%
Service/ Maintenance	\$30,883	\$43,922	42.22%
Technical	\$44,285	\$57,394	29.60%
Office/Clerical	\$37,477	\$49,969	33.33%
Other	\$42,645	\$56,038	31.41%
Total	\$68,926	\$91,759	33.13%

Appalachian State University

Over the past 10 years, Appalachian State has gained students, faculty, and staff. However, the growth has been uneven. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, enrollment at Appalachian State increased by 20.3 percent. Faculty headcount increased by 20.5 percent, and the headcount of non-faculty staff decreased by 25.4 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 1.65 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 1.72 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty stayed fairly flat. In 2015-16, there were 18.04 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 18.01 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The largest category of job growth was Fiscal Affairs, which added 57 employees, an increase of 126.7 percent. Service/Maintenance and Technical positions decreased.

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

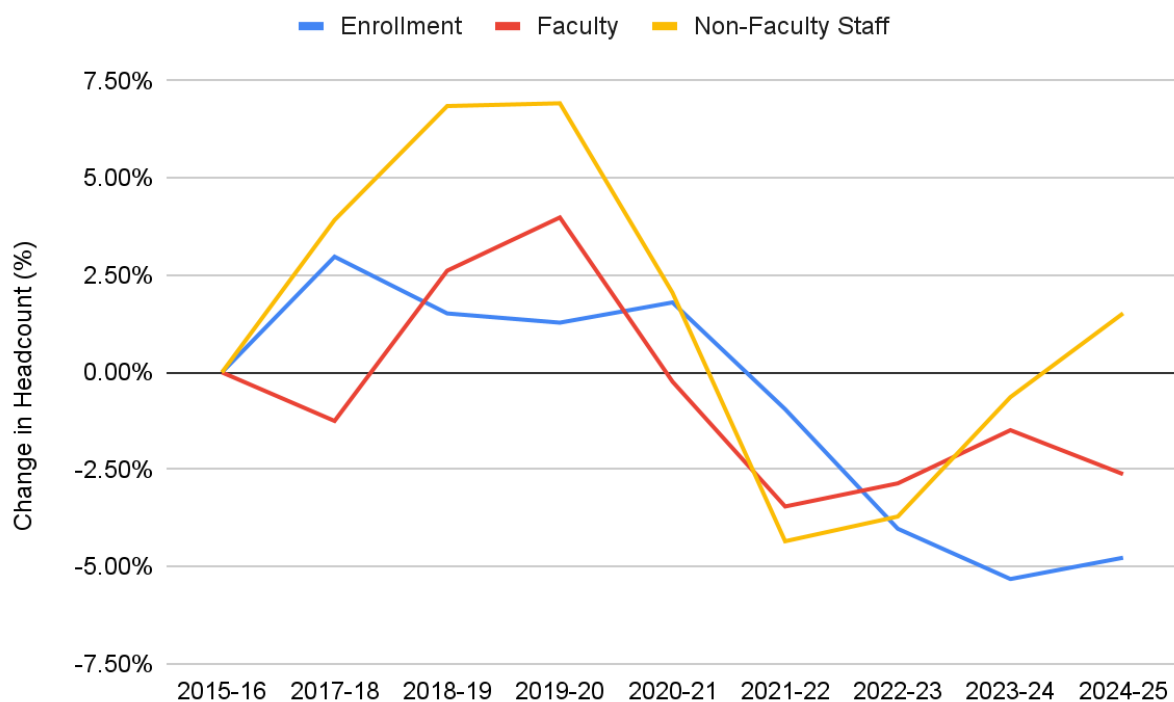
- Salary expenditures rose from \$150.2 million to \$243.2 million, an increase of 61.92 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$56,917 to \$74,568, an increase of 31.01 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

East Carolina University

Over the past 10 years, East Carolina University has lost students and faculty but added a small number of non-faculty employees. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, ECU enrollment declined by 4.8 percent. Faculty headcount declined by 2.6 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff grew by 1.5 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 1.68 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 1.76 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty decreased. In 2015-16, there were 16.83 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 16.46 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



At ECU, changes in headcount varied widely by job category. The headcount for research, fiscal affairs, and academic & student affairs all increased more than 30 percent. The number of executive administrators, academic administrators, and office/clerical staff decreased by at least 10 percent.

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

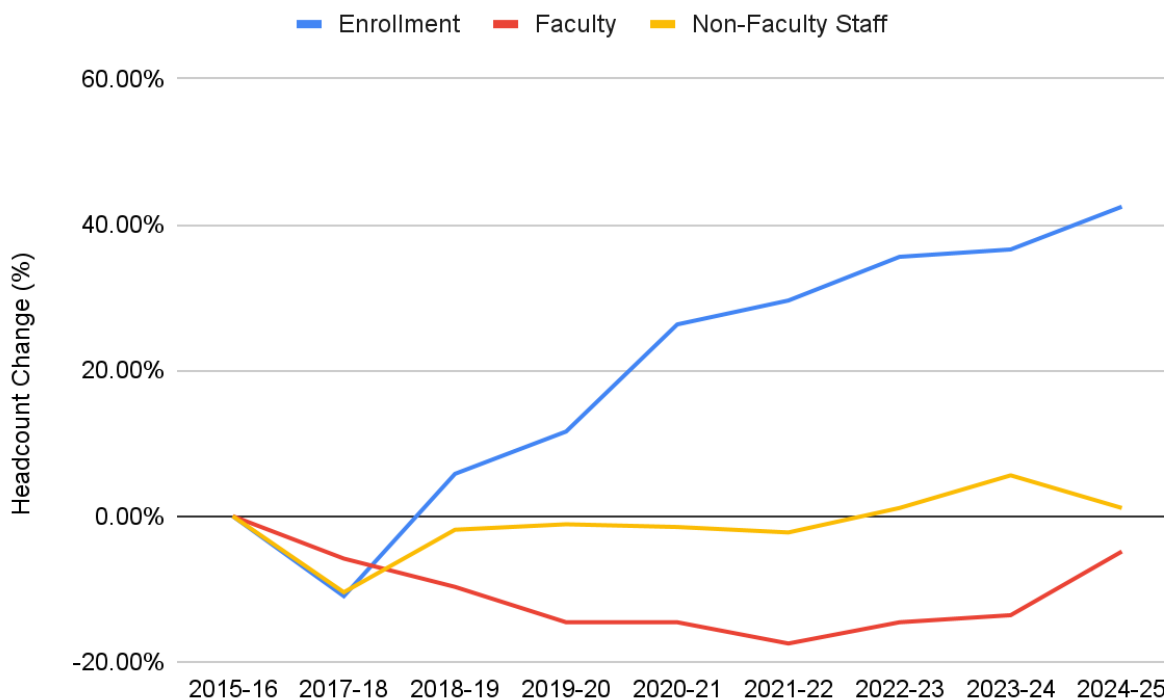
- Salary expenditures rose from \$329.0 million to \$436.3 million, an increase of 32.61 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$72,844 to \$96,717, an increase of 32.77 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

Elizabeth City State University

Over the past 10 years, Elizabeth City State University has gained students. However, its faculty headcount has declined and its non-faculty staff headcount has remained steady. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, enrollment increased by 42.46 percent. Faculty headcount decreased by 4.85 percent. Non-faculty staff headcount increased from 268 to 271 (1.12 percent).

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 2.60 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.77 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty increased considerably. In 2015-16, there were 15.39 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 23.04 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The largest changes in headcount were in Academic & Student Affairs (32.5-percent increase), Fiscal Affairs (111.11-percent increase), and Office/Clerical (28.57-percent decrease).

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

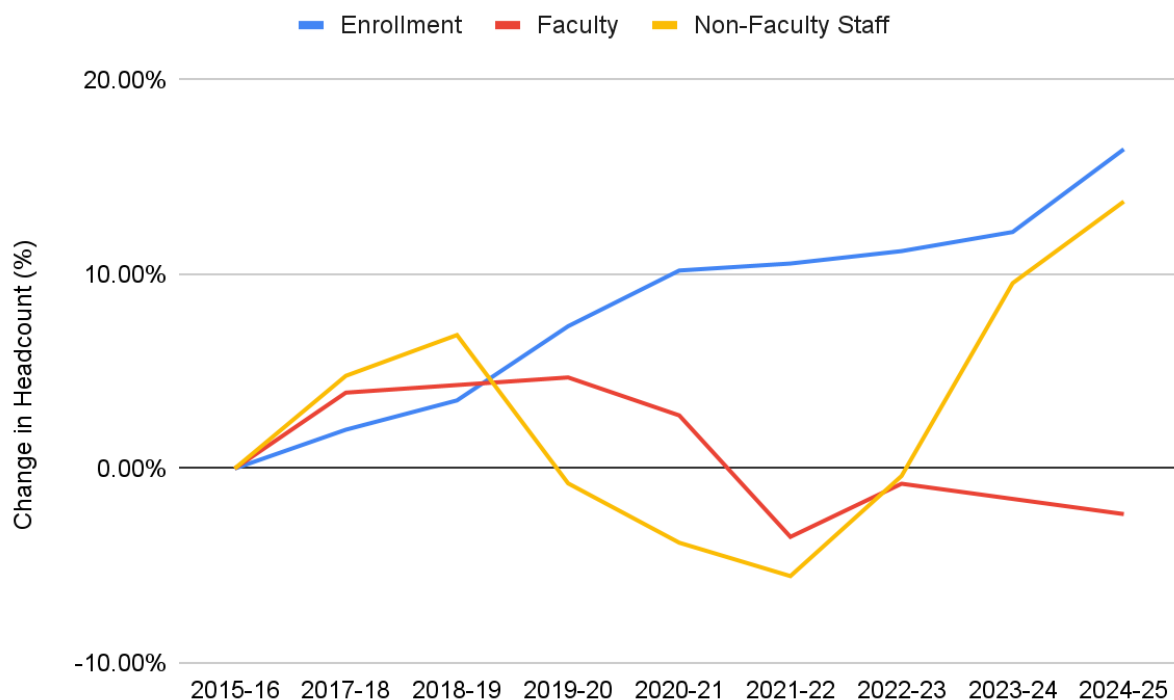
- Salary expenditures rose from \$20.2 million to \$26.2 million, an increase of 29.7 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$54,317 to \$70,971, an increase of 30.66 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

Fayetteville State University

Over the past 10 years, Fayetteville State University has gained students and non-faculty staff. Faculty headcount rose then declined. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, enrollment increased by 16.4 percent. Faculty headcount decreased by 2.3 percent. Non-faculty staff headcount increased by 13.4 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 2.05 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.38 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 23.84 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 28.43 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The most significant changes in headcount at FSU were in Academic & Student Affairs (16.2-percent growth), IT (66.7-percent growth), and Office/Clerical (12.8-percent decrease).

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

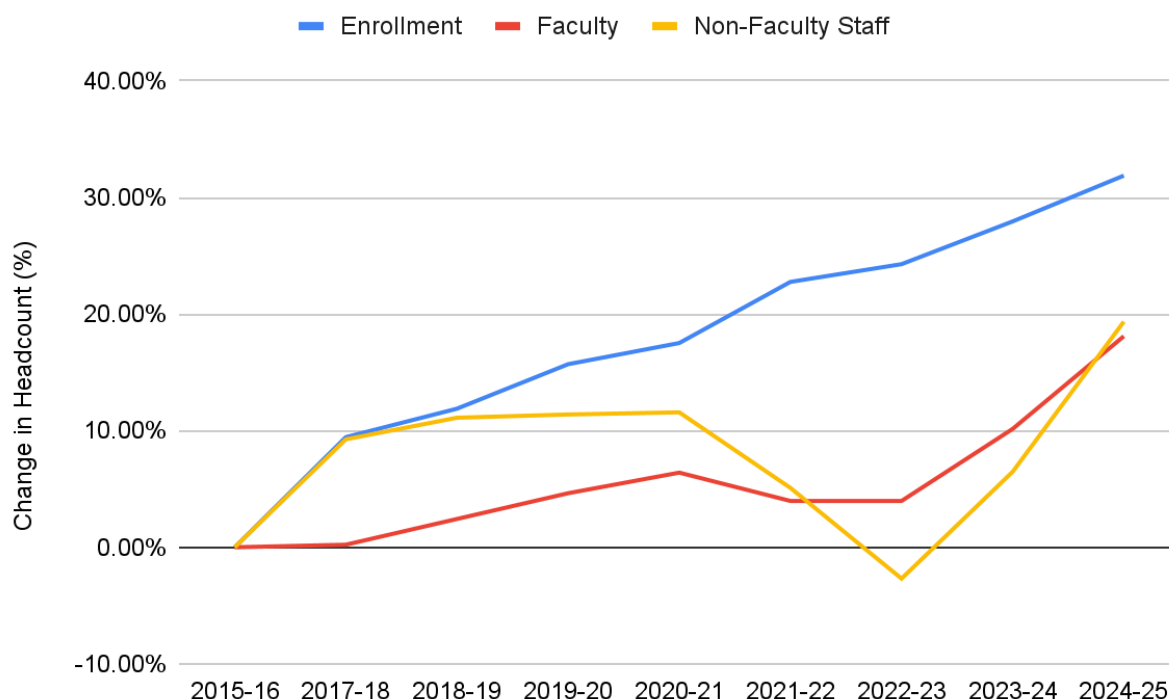
- Salary expenditures rose from \$43.4 million to \$63.8 million, an increase of 47.0 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$55,674 to \$75,398, an increase of 35.43 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

North Carolina Agricultural & Technical State University

Over the past 10 years, NC A&T has gained students, faculty, and non-faculty staff, but the growth has been uneven. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, enrollment increased by 31.9 percent. Faculty headcount increased by 18.1 percent. Non-faculty staff headcount increased by 19.4 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased slightly. In 2015-16, there were 2.38 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.41 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 23.69 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 26.75 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The most significant headcount changes at NC A&T were in Communications & Fundraising (227.3-percent growth), Fiscal Affairs (90.5-percent growth), and Academic & Student Affairs (83.8-percent growth). Jobs in Academic Administration, Technical, Office/Clerical, and Other all decreased.

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

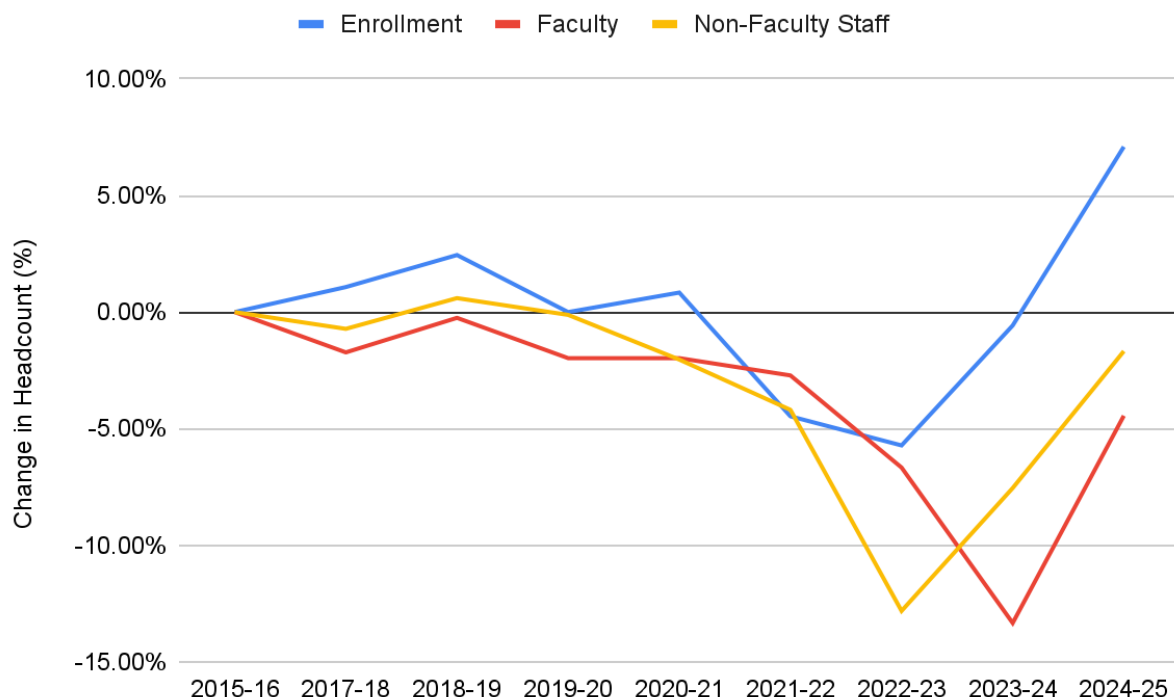
- Salary expenditures rose from \$92.4 million to \$147.2 million, an increase of 59.31 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$60,280 to \$80,716, an increase of 33.90 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

North Carolina Central University

In the past 10 years, NC Central first lost students, faculty, and staff, then rebounded. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, NC Central enrollment increased by 7.1 percent. Faculty headcount decreased by 4.4 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff decreased by 1.7 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 2.06 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.12 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 19.78 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 22.17 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



IT was the only job category with significant growth. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, IT jobs grew by 110.7 percent. The most significant decline in employees came from Office/Clerical (17-percent decrease).

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

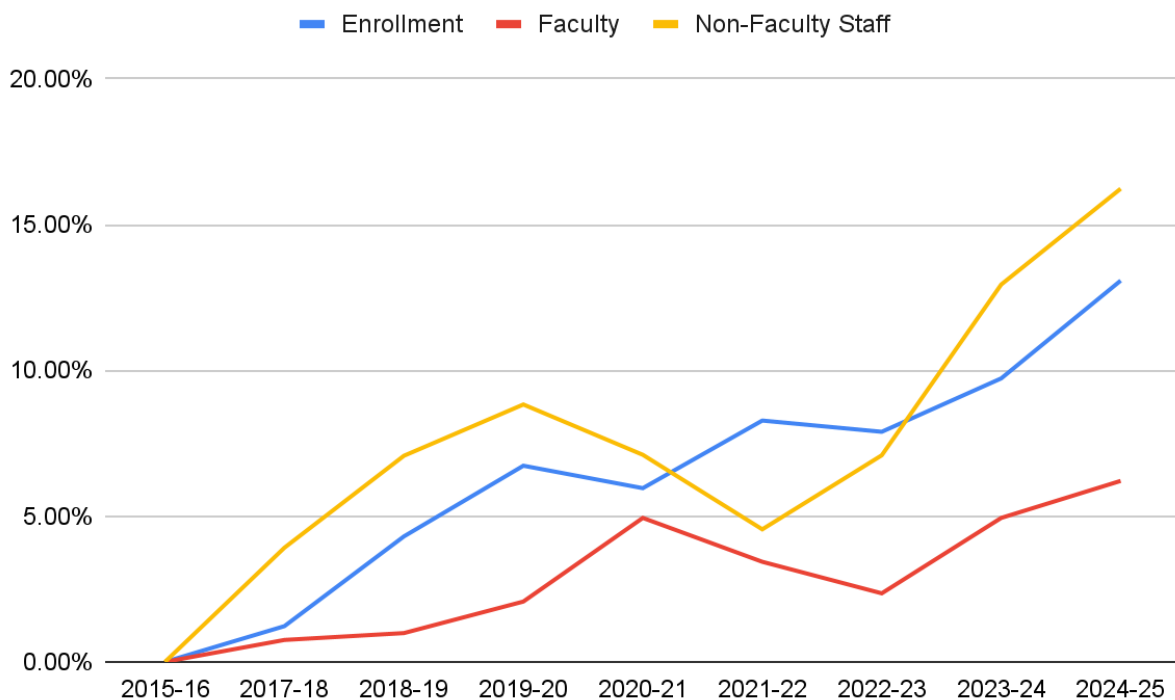
- Salary expenditures increased from \$73.0 million to \$90.0 million, an increase of 23.29 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$58,835 to \$74,463, an increase of 26.56 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

North Carolina State University

In the past 10 years, NC State increased its student enrollment and employee headcount. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, NC State enrollment increased by 13.08 percent. Faculty headcount increased by 6.21 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff increased by 16.23 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 2.83 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 3.10 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. NC State has the highest staff-faculty ratio in the UNC System. The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 16.00 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 17.03 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



All job categories except Executive Administration and Office/Clerical grew during this 10-year window. The largest increases were in Fiscal Affairs (69.68 percent) and Other Functional Professionals (46.48 percent).

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

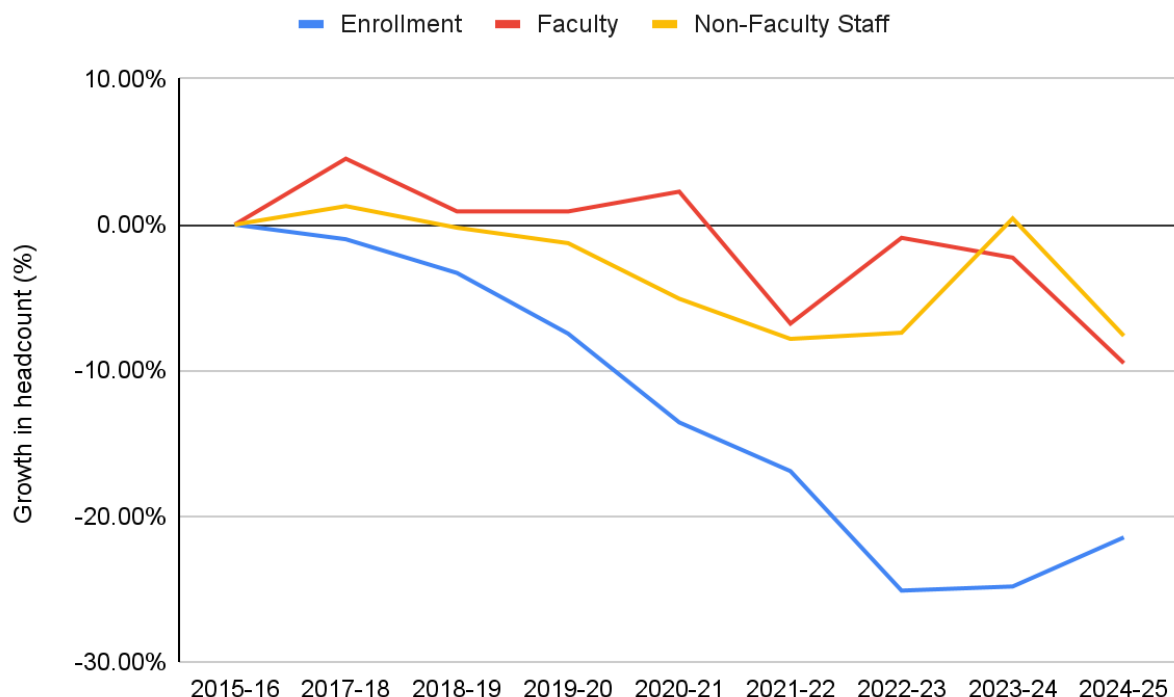
- Salary expenditures increased from \$548.9 million to \$825.4 million, an increase of 50.37 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$67,338 to \$89,126, an increase of 32.36 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

UNC Asheville

Over the past 10 years, UNC Asheville has lost students, faculty, and staff. However, the decline has been uneven. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, UNCA enrollment declined by 21.4 percent. Faculty headcount declined by 9.5 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff decreased by 7.6 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 2.14 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.18 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty decreased. In 2015-16, there were 17.61 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 15.28 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The largest staff increases during this time were in Research (75 percent) and IT (16.7 percent). Office/Clerical positions comprised the largest decrease, at 44.9 percent.

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

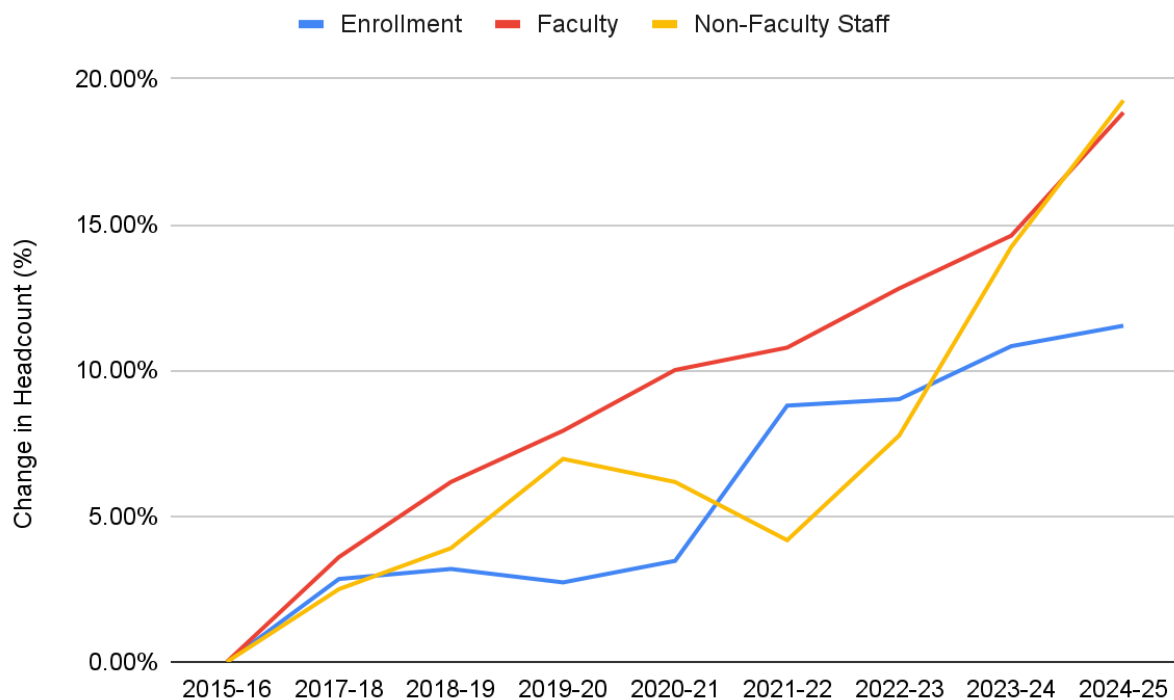
- Salary expenditures increased from \$37.4 million to \$45.8 million, an increase of 22.46 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$53,976 to \$72,019, an increase of 33.43 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

UNC-Chapel Hill

Over the past 10 years, UNC-Chapel Hill has increased its student enrollment, faculty headcount, and staff headcount. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, UNC-CH enrollment increased by 11.5 percent. Faculty headcount increased by 18.8 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff increased by 19.3 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty stayed flat. In 2015-16, there were 2.32 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.33 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty decreased. In 2015-16, there were 7.98 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 7.49 students for every faculty member. UNC-Chapel Hill has the lowest student-faculty ratio in the UNC System.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The largest staffing increases were in Fiscal Affairs (72.6 percent) and Academic Administration (49.1 percent).

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

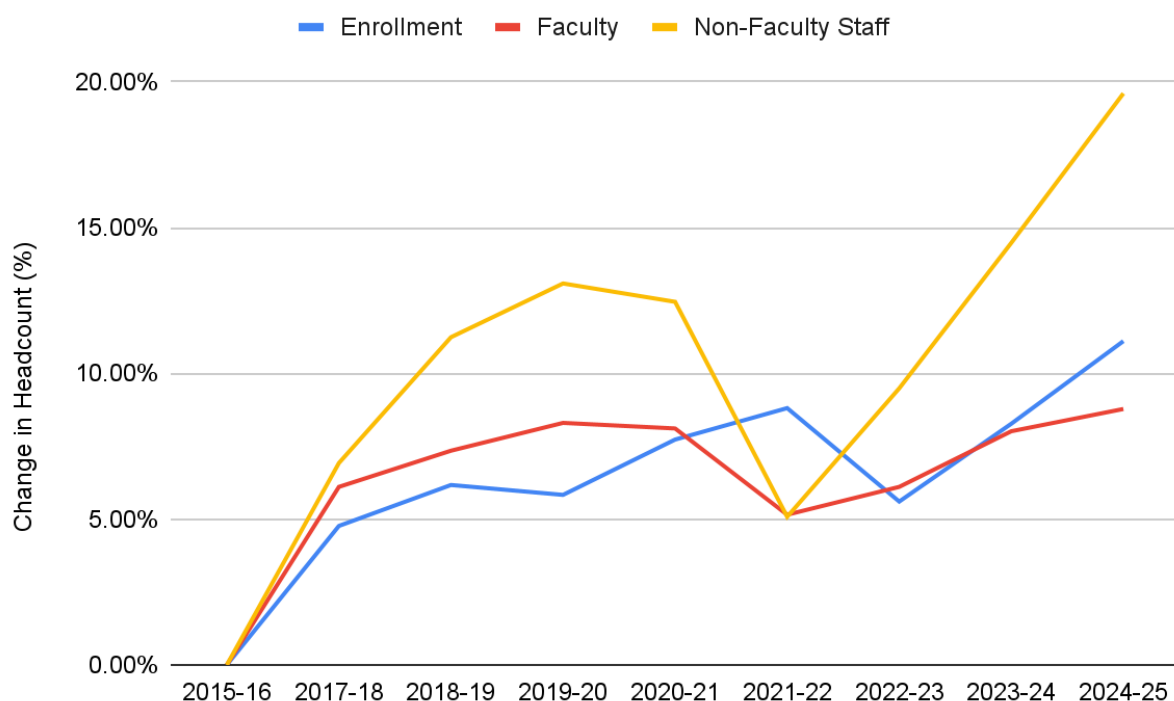
- Salary expenditures increased from \$1,012.7 million to \$1,631.3 million, an increase of 61.08 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$84,801 to \$113,135, an increase of 33.41 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

UNC Charlotte

Over the past 10 years, UNC Charlotte has increased its student enrollment, faculty headcount, and staff headcount. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, UNCC enrollment increased by 11.1 percent. Faculty headcount increased by 8.8 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff increased by 19.6 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 2.12 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.33 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 26.70 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 27.27 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The largest staff increases were in Communications & Fundraising (105%) and Research (78.1%).

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

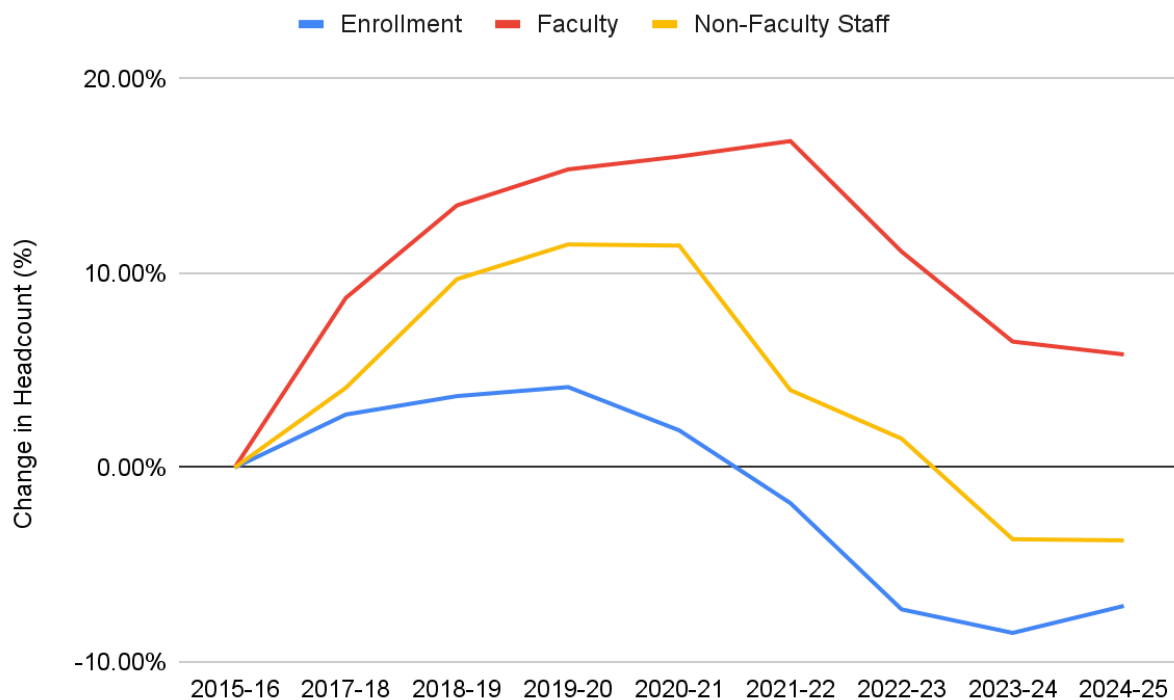
- Salary expenditures increased from \$206.2 million to \$322.8 million, an increase of 56.55 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$63,013 to \$84,950, an increase of 34.81 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

UNC Greensboro

In the first half of the last decade, UNC Greensboro increased its student enrollment, faculty headcount, and staff headcount, but the second half of the decade saw steep declines. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, UNCG enrollment decreased by 7.1 percent. Faculty headcount increased by 5.8 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff decreased by 3.7 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty decreased. In 2015-16, there were 2.22 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.02 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty decreased. In 2015-16, there were 26.65 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 22.52 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



Staffing changes at UNCG varied widely by job category. Academic Administration and Executive Administration grew significantly, at 21.1 percent and 16.7 percent, respectively. There were large decreases in headcount in Fiscal Affairs (-8.7 percent), Technical (-11 percent), and Office/Clerical (-28.5 percent).

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

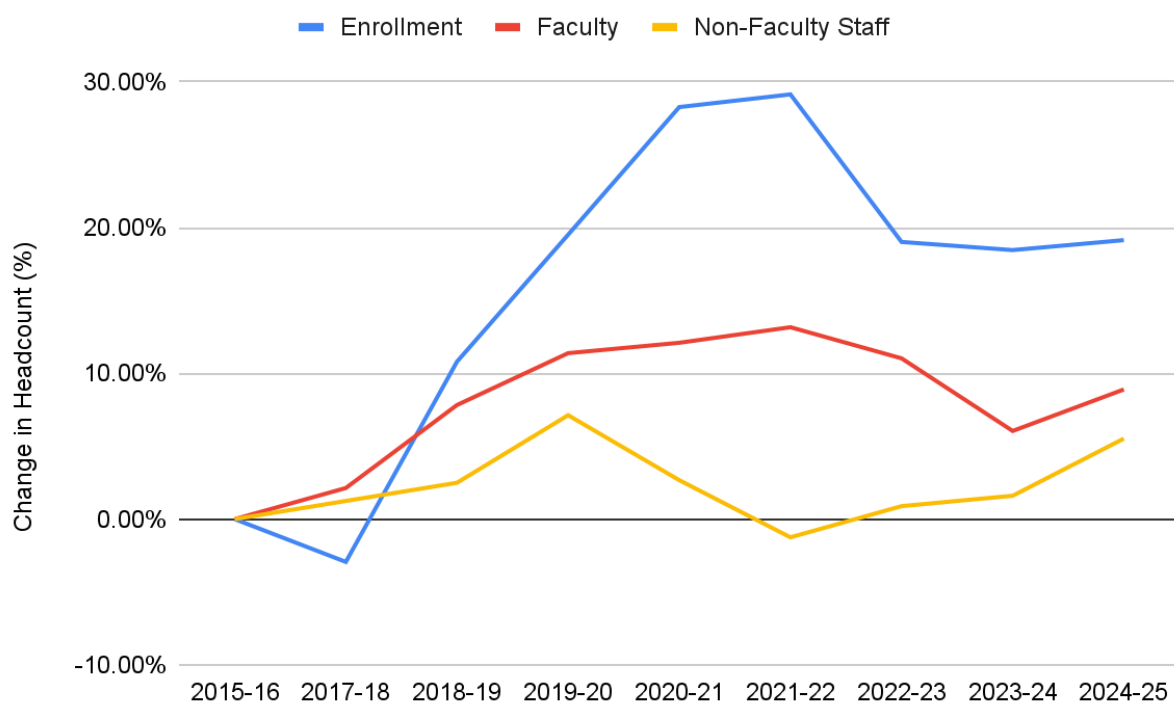
- Salary expenditures increased from \$145.5 million to \$185.7 million, an increase of 27.63 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$59,705 to \$76,816, an increase of 28.66 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

UNC Pembroke

Over the past 10 years, UNC Pembroke has increased its student enrollment, faculty headcount, and staff headcount. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, UNCP enrollment increased by 19.1 percent. Faculty headcount increased by 8.9 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff increased by 5.5 percent.

During the 10 years, the ratio of staff to faculty decreased. In 2015-16, there were 2.00 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 1.93 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 22.92 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 25.08 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



During this time period, most job categories grew in headcount. The largest category of growth was Academic Administration (83.3 percent). During the same period, Office/Clerical headcount decreased by 19.3 percent.

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

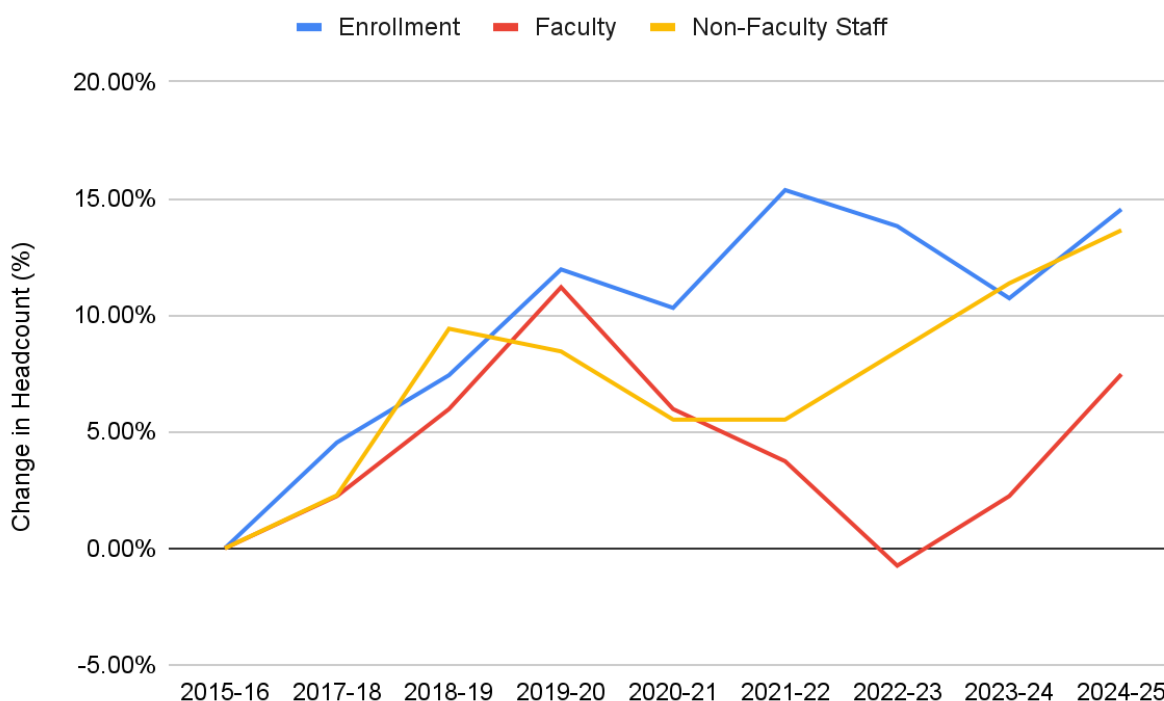
- Salary expenditures increased from \$43.7 million to \$63.2 million, an increase of 44.62 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$51,874 to \$70,363, an increase of 35.64 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

UNC School of the Arts

Over the past 10 years, UNC School of the Arts has increased its student enrollment, faculty headcount, and staff headcount. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, UNCSA enrollment increased by 14.5 percent. Faculty headcount increased by 7.5 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff increased by 13.6 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 2.3 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.43 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 7.24 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 7.72 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The largest increase in headcount was in Fiscal Affairs, which added 18 positions, a 360-percent increase. Office/Clerical headcount decreased by 17 positions, or 25.4 percent.

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

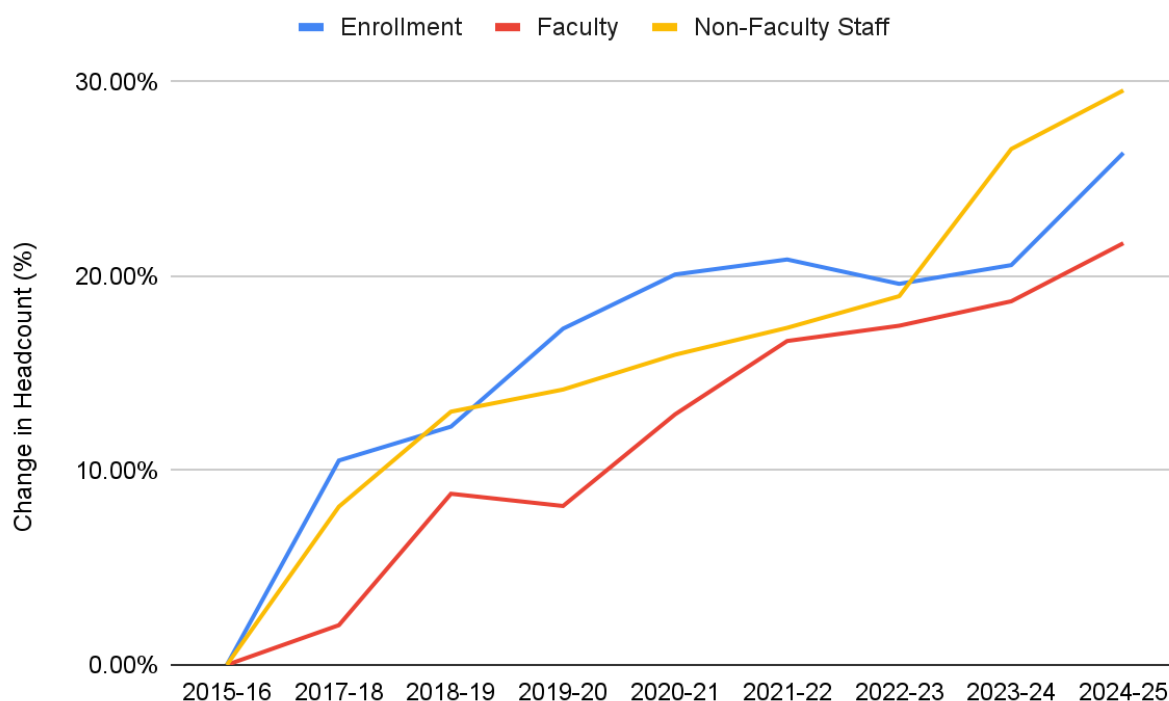
- Salary expenditures increased from \$24.3 million to \$35.4 million, an increase of 45.68 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$55,068 to \$71,576, an increase of 29.98 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

UNC Wilmington

Over the past 10 years, UNC Wilmington saw significant growth in student enrollment, faculty headcount, and staff headcount. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, UNCW enrollment increased by 26.3 percent. Faculty headcount increased by 21.7 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff increased by 29.6 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty decreased. In 2015-16, there were 1.93 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.06 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 23.46 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 24.35 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The largest area of growth was non-faculty Research (253.3 percent). There were also large increases in Communications & Fundraising (115.2 percent) and Academic Administration (96.6 percent).

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

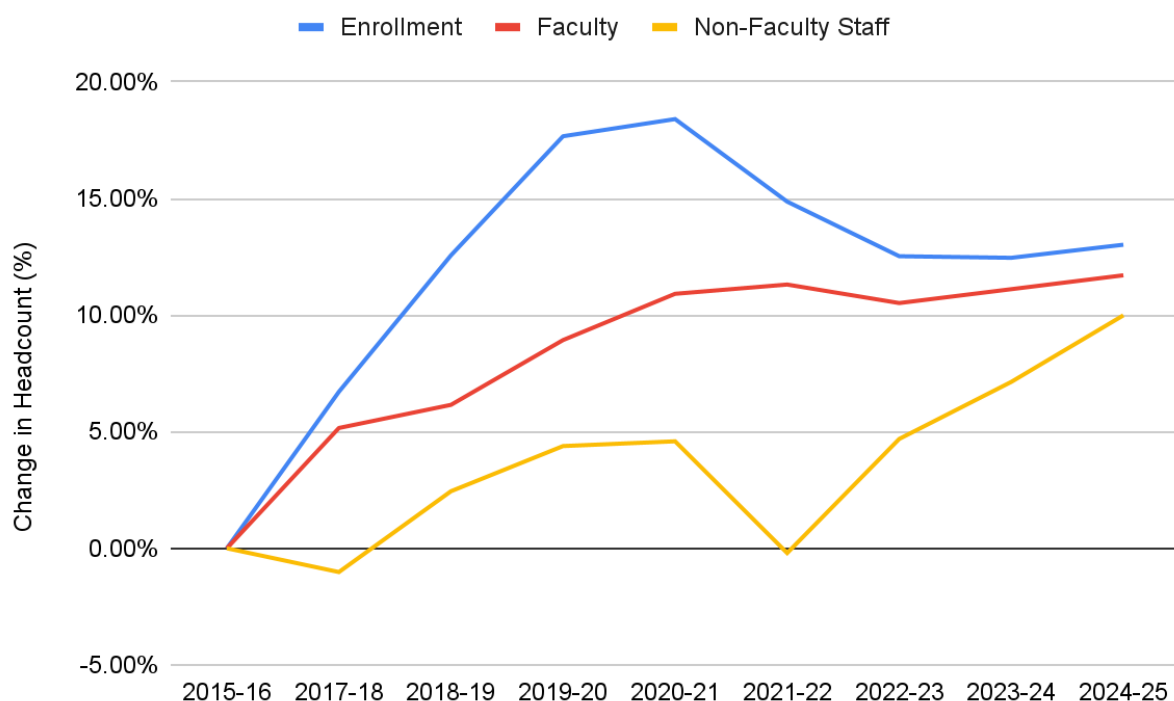
- Salary expenditures increased from \$107.7 million to \$179.2 million, an increase of 66.39 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$57,798 to \$75,764, an increase of 31.08 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

Western Carolina University

Over the past 10 years, Western Carolina saw growth in student enrollment, faculty headcount, and staff headcount. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, WCU enrollment increased by 13.0 percent. Faculty headcount increased by 11.7 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff increased by 10 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty decreased. In 2015-16, there were 1.95 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 1.92 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 20.52 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 20.76 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



The largest area of headcount growth at WCU was Academic Administration, at 89.5 percent. There was also significant growth in IT (70.6 percent) and Academic & Student Affairs (35.5 percent).

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

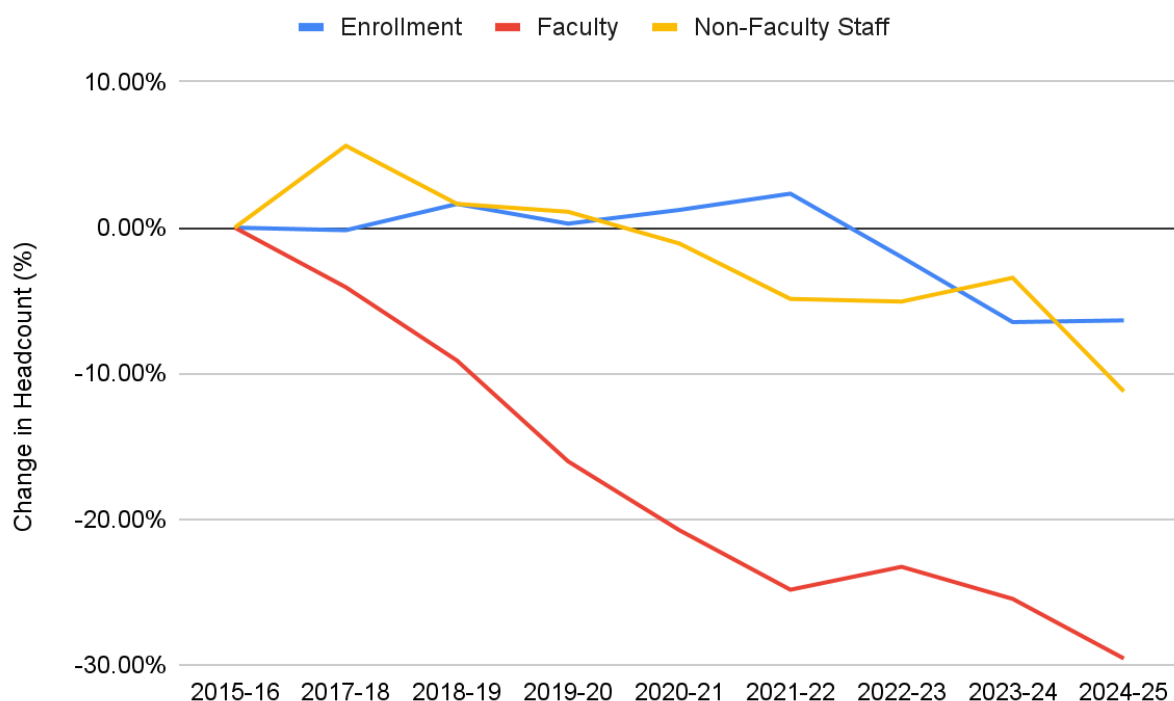
- Salary expenditures increased from \$81.8 million to \$116.9 million, an increase of 42.9 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$55,054 to \$71,193, an increase of 29.31 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

Winston-Salem State University

Over the past 10 years, Winston-Salem State experienced a decline in student enrollment, faculty headcount, and staff headcount. From 2015-16 to 2024-25, WSSU enrollment decreased by 6.4 percent. Faculty headcount decreased by 29.6 percent. The headcount of non-faculty staff increased by 11.2 percent.

During the 10-year period, the ratio of staff to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 1.74 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 2.19 non-faculty employees for every faculty member. The ratio of students to faculty increased. In 2015-16, there were 16.06 students for every faculty member. In 2024-25, there were 21.35 students for every faculty member.

Enrollment, Faculty, and Non-Faculty Staff



Headcount decreased in most job categories during the 10-year period. However, there was growth in a few areas. Fiscal Affairs (20 percent), Executive Administration (18.2 percent), and Academic & Student Affairs (15.3 percent) saw the most growth.

Expenditures:

From October 2015 to October 2024:

- Salary expenditures increased from \$52.9 million to \$53.3 million, an increase of 0.75 percent.
- Average salary rose from \$ 60,766 to \$74,621, an increase of 22.80 percent.
- The CPI increased by 32.72 percent.

Discussion

The data on enrollment, staffing, and expenditures across the UNC System from 2015 to 2025 reveal a complex evolution of university operations. Most notably, while student enrollment grew modestly by 10.2 percent over the decade, the number of non-faculty staff rose by 14.6 percent—outpacing both enrollment and faculty growth (9.5 percent). As a result, the systemwide ratio of non-faculty staff to faculty rose from 2.18 to 2.28. This trend suggests a growing administrative and support infrastructure not directly tied to instructional expansion.

The most significant increases in staffing occurred in fiscal affairs (53.8 percent), followed by academic and student affairs and IT. These increases indicate a shift in institutional priorities toward financial management, student services, and technological support. Simultaneously, certain categories, such as Office/Clerical staff and Executive Administration, experienced relatively modest changes or even declines, indicating possible reorganization or automation of some functions.

Expenditure data reinforce these trends. Faculty salary expenditures rose 44.78 percent, while non-faculty salary expenditures climbed 55.53 percent—both outpacing inflation (32.72 percent). The steepest increases in expenditure were found in Research, Communications & Fundraising, and Fiscal Affairs, which reflects both expanded hiring and rising average compensation in these areas. This suggests that universities are investing heavily in areas that support external engagement and revenue generation, perhaps as a response to financial pressures or strategic growth objectives.

Institution-level data underscore the lack of uniformity in headcount and expenditure changes. Institutions such as East Carolina and UNC Asheville saw enrollment declines yet maintained or increased non-faculty staffing. Others, like NC State and UNC-Chapel Hill, grew across all dimensions but still saw faster non-faculty staff growth relative to faculty growth. Meanwhile, some institutions with significant enrollment growth, such as Elizabeth City State and Fayetteville State, saw faculty decreases or stagnation, making those institutions models of instructional efficiency.

Overall, the trends captured in this report show that much of the UNC Systems's growth has occurred outside of the core instructional mission. Policymakers and trustees should closely examine whether expanding administrative functions are delivering value commensurate with their costs.

For More Information

Want to learn more? The Martin Center is happy to provide supplemental data or additional research on this topic. You can reach us at 919-828-1400 or info@jamesgmartin.center.

About the Martin Center

The James G. Martin Center for Academic Renewal is a private nonprofit institute dedicated to higher education policy reform. Our mission is to renew and fulfill the promise of higher education in North Carolina and across the country. We advocate responsible governance, viewpoint diversity, academic quality, cost-effective education solutions, and innovative market-based reform. We do that by studying and reporting on critical issues in higher education and recommending policies that can create change—especially at the state and local level.