

Presentation, League of Women Voters Forum
by Katheryn Greenberg, Senate President
January 15, 2002

I truly appreciate the opportunity to talk about the impact of the Tennessee financial crisis on The University of Tennessee. I believe the lack of adequate funding of education in Tennessee is a **moral** issue. In fact, education is the biggest moral issue for state government and legislators. Why? Because education secures our future—for ourselves and posterity. Lack of adequate funding systematically deprives our children, especially those from families without above average resources. It deprives our children of the opportunity to reach their full potentials.

To quote a major leader in education, John Goodlad, "Schools are major players in developing educated persons who acquire an understanding of truth, beauty, and justice against which to judge their own and society's virtues and imperfections..." (in Fullan, p. 8). Goodlad goes on to say, "The school is the only institution in our society specifically charged with providing to the young a disciplined encounter with all the subject matters of the human conversation: the world as a physical and biological system; evaluative and believe systems; communication systems; the social political and economic systems that make up the global village; and the human species itself..." (in Fullan, 1993, pp. 8 - 9).

While the funding of education is a moral issue for every state, I believe the problem of inadequate funding is **more** of a moral issue in Tennessee than in other state. Why?

Tennessee is above the national average in population growth: increasing about 17% over the past decade. According to 10 year projections of the Southern Regional Education Board, Tennessee will most likely have the region's highest growth rate in the number of students entering higher education.

I don't know if this increase would improve the percentage of high school graduates in TN, which is about 80% percent compared to the national average of 84%. (Talking Points UT website)

Nor do I know if these projections would raise our number of college graduates to a level that compares favorably with the nation.

Between 1990 and 1999, the average percentage of Tennesseans with a college degree floated between 16% and 17.8%--which is 25% below the national average. (TimesNews Opinions)

TN needs to do better if our citizens are going to be able to function well in today's and tomorrow's world. The SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD projects that 30% of new jobs created in the south during this time period will require at least a bachelor's degree. The U.S. Labor Department estimates that most of the top ten jobs of the next decade will be in information technology and health care. But, most Tennesseans won't qualify if our trends continue.

Without adequate funding, Tennesseans will have more limited opportunities to further their education. And, our best and brightest students will continue to leave the state.

Currently only 18% of Tennessee's best and brightest seek admittance to TN colleges and universities. In NC and VA, more than 43% of these students seek admission to state schools.

Indeed, our legislators and voters opposed to adequate funding of education at all levels-- as well as Tennessee **non** voters-- will have thwarted the moral purpose of education.

Perhaps it will be helpful if I personalize the moral issue by looking at what is happening at The University of Tennessee.

I must begin by saying that in my role as President of the Faculty Senate, I have had first hand opportunity to work closely with faculty, administrators, support staff, and students across the University. Because of these experiences, my pride in the high quality of our university has grown.

We have internationally known scholars in many of our programs. We attract excellent young faculty.

We have students that are as good as any at Harvard and Stanford.

We have an impressive research record.

We have an impressive level of external funding due to grants and contracts won by UT faculty and our research centers.

We have university leaders who are highly respected at the national level.

The problem, however, is that this infrastructure of quality is being eroded. Our reputation is suffering and rightly so.

The graphs of data from the SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD that you received as a handout this evening, send a powerful message to those questioning our current status.

We are not just one of many states with financial woes. As our President Eli Fly puts it, "We are not just last, we are **DEAD** last.

Not since 1988-89 has the higher education formula been fully funded at UT. And this has impacted everything we do. We are cutting stuff, not fluff.

And the problem is especially grim for UT Knoxville because it is our land grant and flagship/research institution. We must compete at a national and international level for top scholars.

We offer services not available from any other state funded higher education institution. And UT has had to cut some of these services.

For example, the Institute of Agriculture this year eliminated 76 specialist and extension agent positions statewide and transferred 35 extension agents who provide basic services to all counties. If you or your children are interested in 4-H and/or local education programs, they are less accessible than in the past.

Almost all land grant universities also provide services to industry and government agencies at no charge. These services can help small businesses reach their goals to the benefit of our state economy.

If you request these services for your business in Tennessee, you now have to pay for these services.

And if your local government requests services, you will have to wait longer as cuts are being made in UT employees who work at the Institute.

If your pet or farm animal develops a particularly rare or serious health problem, you will be paying more for services at the UT Veterinary Teaching Hospital.

If you or your child wants to pursue a medical degree in Tennessee, she now has less chance of being accepted, as the UT Health Institute in Memphis has made the difficult choice to admit fewer students.

Let's look at some specific examples of impact on students and on faculty.

You can read almost weekly in the paper that faculty are leaving UT in higher numbers than ever. And, we replace an ever-growing number of them with part-time, usually non-research term instructors and adjuncts who don't make decisions about programs, don't advise students, and don't direct student research. These hardworking instructors don't get paid to conduct research and receive minimal, if any, opportunities for professional development. But they are teaching more and more of our courses.

In a study just completed by a UT Faculty Senate Task Force on Contingent Faculty, data from 1990 and 2000 were compared. They found that instruction by those who are not regular faculty, graduate assistants, or administrators **doubled** in frequency in the last 10 years.

UT is also relying more on graduate assistant teaching. For Fall semester 2000, only 60% of course sections were taught by regular faculty. Only 22% of Freshman courses were taught by regular faculty. And only 34% of Sophomore courses were taught by regular faculty only 34%.

Increasingly, when full time, research oriented faculty are hired, they often are fresh out of graduate school, just beginning their careers and yet replacing senior faculty with 20 – 30 years of experience. They cannot possibly have the expertise necessary to maintain the high quality of our programs.

There are fewer senior faculty members to mentor new faculty, and fewer faculty members to provide the level of research and program advising students need. Even when we do hire senior faculty, it still means building a new team with new goals and revised missions—a lot like rebuilding a sports team.

Why are faculty members leaving? Low pay is definitely a factor:

As one of the graphs you received so well points out, faculty pay overall is noncompetitive and getting worse.

Tennessee is the **only** state of focus by the SOUTHERN REGIONAL EDUCATION BOARD where faculty salaries, after adjustment for inflation, actually declined. (They declined by 3.3%)

Increasingly, UT is less competitive than our peer universities in faculty salaries. For example, UT's College of Veterinary Medicine pay faculty an average salary of \$12,000 per person **below** comparable programs. They recently lost a valuable faculty member to Mississippi State because they offered him \$30,000 a year **more** than his UT pay.

For the past 10 years, most faculty have received meager pay raises that, after inflation, produce an average pay of \$10,000 LESS than in 1990.

My husband and I are both faculty members. Our children have finished college. We should have extra money to invest, give to causes we care about, or enjoy. Instead, we cut our budget every year.

But it is too simple and very unfair to view the faculty members who leave us as greedy and disloyal.

Faculty members work hard to contribute to the citizens of Tennessee. But they also want and need to contribute to the world at large.

Because we are a flagship university, UT faculty members are expected to be well connected in their fields--nationally and internationally.

Without adequate resources for travel, for research and computer equipment and other needs, it is difficult to meet this larger goal.

And, without the funds to attract top graduate students, faculty members in many fields cannot engage in high level research where a research team is imperative.

The lack of day-to-day intellectually stimulating collaboration has serious impact on a faculty member's research agenda.

All of these factors influence the ability of faculty to compete for externally funded grants and contracts, and the ability to develop products that can lead to new businesses and a better economy in Tennessee.

Of course, the major mission of UT is teaching. As responsibility for program planning and student advising increases for a decreasing number of full-time, experienced faculty members, these people become frustrated with their lack of ability to provide students with the services they need. As class size increases, faculty provide less attention to individual students.

What is the impact on students?

Since 1995/96, tuition and fees at UT Knoxville have risen 43%, compared to an increase of 14.7% for comparable institutions in the Southeast.

(Profiles and Trends in Higher Education
<http://www.state.tn.us/thec/INVESTWEB/faculty.html>)

This is in part due to the decline of higher education's share of the State budget over the past 10 years, from 15% to 12%.

From 1996/97 to 2000/01, the State funding for each Knoxville student dropped by about \$450.00, from \$7,493 to \$7,051. (Talking Points website)

Tennessee is spending 20% less per student in inflation-adjusted dollars than it did five years ago.

(Noland, as quoted by TimesNews.net online news service for northeast TN and southwest VA)

Of the eight states that border TN, only two, VA and Arkansas, have tuitions higher than UT's.

But both of these states provide far more financial assistance to make college affordable to needy students. (www.metropulse.com, Insights article, 11/22/01)

UT student Betsy Kirk conducted a survey of UT students for THEC this fall. Her results reveal an alarming story:

1. Almost 43% of students responding said "yes" when asked if they were enrolled in a class without enough desks for all students.
2. Almost 35% said they would graduate later because some required courses had reached maximum enrollment before they could register, and more than 66% said this problem caused them to take courses out of sequence in their programs.
3. More than 66% felt there was a problem of faculty leaving UT. One faculty member reported that a student came to thank him for NOT leaving UT.
4. While the 15% tuition increase this academic year did not hurt most middle class parents paying the bills for their children, a sizeable number of UT students pay their own way—and numerous students reported having to choose between food and books this fall in order to manage the extra costs of tuition.

Even with recent increases in graduate assistant pay at UT, some programs that once attracted the best can do no longer due so.

I personally know two truly excellent graduate students who will leave UT with Master's degrees, rather than continuing on to do their doctoral study here as they originally planned to do.

While they could have gone to Harvard or Stanford or Berkeley, they came here to work with faculty they admired, who for them represented the best programs in the country. One is waiting now to hear if he has been accepted at Stanford—and has said how glad he is that he won't have to seek a faculty position in a few years with a Ph.D. from UT. He just doesn't think our reputation will be good enough by then.

These stories break my heart. We cannot keep our excellent reputation with these growing perceptions. And the facts speak for themselves.

Clearly, Tennessee must face up to the moral issue of how to provide adequate funding for education.

A recent editorial in the TimesNews.net online news service about the lack of adequate funding for education, describes beautifully what lies at the heart of this moral issue:

"There is no excuse for this kind of chronic neglect. Education is not merely a personal goal. It is the passport to new economic opportunities and living standards for the state as a whole. A higher level of education leads, inevitably, to more individual choice and freedom, greater dignity and autonomy for everyone, stronger communities and a wider, wiser citizen participation in public life."
(TimesNews.net Opinions, January 10, 2002, 7:23 pm)

We must act to adequately fund education in Tennessee. And we must act now—or we, as citizens of Tennessee are contributing ourselves to this immoral behavior. Thank you.