

Tennessee University Faculty Senates

c/o John Nolt, President
Department of Philosophy, 801 McClung Tower
University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN 37996-0480

April 20, 2009

Governor Phil Bredesen
Governor's Office
Tennessee State Capitol
Nashville, TN 37243-0001

Dear Governor Bredesen:

We are writing on behalf of the Tennessee University Faculty Senates (TUFS), a recently formed association of all the four-year state university Senates, representing nearly 10,000 higher education faculty in Tennessee. It is an historic cooperative event, involving faculty from the four campuses of the University of Tennessee system and five of the six universities of the Board of Regents system, with the expectation that the sixth will join shortly.

Like you, we know that this is a time of transition for higher education in Tennessee and we share with you a deep concern about educating our citizens. Your Master Plan notes the challenges faced by Tennessee higher education: 1) creating more citizens with college degrees; 2) preparing the next generation for the 21st century knowledge economy, 3) attracting new economic development to our state, and 4) shifting our focus to the global, health-related, technical, and sustainability issues that are important to our country's future.

TUFS supports your efforts to improve the structure of higher education, including the possible creation of an independently-constructed commission with an outside consultant to recommend a more efficient, meaningful, and productive organization of higher education for our state. Such a commission should be guided by notions of what universities truly are as centers of learning and innovation, and how universities serve their communities.

The restructuring initiative should begin by envisioning the best higher educational system that we could offer our citizens, with an emphasis on the needs of our young people, and not on the distracting conflicts of the past that diluted our effectiveness.

We are aware of some duplication of programs throughout the state but also recognize that each region needs access to higher education programs. We are particularly concerned about administrative duplication that we know from personal experience prevents us from being most efficient and effective.

We have extensive experience with how universities can best fill their missions. We want to share our ideas and expertise as stakeholders in the future of higher education and also as individuals familiar with the workings of a university system.

Therefore, we would like to encourage you to appoint two representatives from TUFS (one from the University of Tennessee system and one from the Board of Regents Schools) to serve on any commission you may establish to reorganize higher education.

This action would not just serve to represent the faculty of the state, but more importantly to utilize our combined expertise as Tennessee's great teachers and researchers with firsthand knowledge of how both systems and THEC currently work (and don't work). In addition, TUFS can be a resource for expertise in organizational structure and culture.

We have great regard for our leadership in Jan Simek and Charles Manning, and we pledge to work with them, the community, legislators, and higher education experts to dramatically improve Tennessee's future on behalf of the students it is our privilege to serve.

Finally, we all have as our highest priority the students of Tennessee—and we cannot imagine a greater legacy for your administration than a successful reorganization of higher education.

Please give us this opportunity to serve you and the citizens of the state. We look forward to working with you for the future of higher education in Tennessee.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



Tennessee University Faculty Senates (TUFS) Executive Committee

John Nolt, Ph.D., President (University of Tennessee, Knoxville)

Jeffrey Berman, Ph.D., President-Elect (University of Memphis)

Timothy F. Winters, Ph.D., Past-President (Austin Peay State University)

H. Lyn Miles, Ph.D., Secretary (University of Tennessee, Chattanooga)

cc:

Jan Simek, Interim President, University of Tennessee

Charles Manning, Chancellor, Tennessee Board of Regents