

TESTIMONY  
SENATE APPROPRIATIONS & REVENUE COMMITTEE  
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FRANKFORT, KY.

GOOD AFTERNOON ... MISTER CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, I APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE WITH YOU HOW E-K-U IS MAKING A POSITIVE DIFFERENCE IN INDIVIDUAL LIVES AND ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR COUNTLESS KENTUCKIANS.

I TAKE SERIOUSLY MY RESPONSIBILITY ... AND EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY TAKES VERY SERIOUSLY ITS RESPONSIBILITY AS A STEWARD OF THE PUBLIC TRUST. WE EARN THAT TRUST BY OUR ACCOUNTABILITY TO THIS COMMITTEE ... TO THE GOVERNOR AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY ... AND TO THE PEOPLE OF THIS GREAT COMMONWEALTH.

I AM HERE TODAY NOT TO TALK ABOUT AN EXPENSE LINE IN THE BUDGET... BECAUSE HIGHER EDUCATION IS, INSTEAD, AN INVESTMENT ... AND IN THE NEXT FEW MINUTES I HOPE TO DEMONSTRATE THAT YOUR INVESTMENT IN EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY IS PAYING, AND WILL CONTINUE TO PAY TREMENDOUS DIVIDENDS FOR THE COMMONWEALTH AND FOR ALL KENTUCKIANS. YOU HAVE MANY REASONS TO BE PROUD OF YOUR CONTINUED INVESTMENT IN EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY.

AS YOU KNOW, THIS IS EASTERN'S CENTENNIAL YEAR ... THE YEAR IN WHICH WE CELEBRATE A CENTURY OF INVESTING IN THE DREAMS OF KENTUCKIANS AND IN THE COMMONWEALTH ITSELF. EASTERN HAS BEEN, AND WILL CONTINUE TO BE, A SCHOOL OF OPPORTUNITY FOR STUDENTS

... MANY OF WHOM ARE STILL THE FIRST IN THEIR FAMILIES TO HAVE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR A COLLEGE EDUCATION.

I WISH YOU COULD ALL BE WITH US ON COMMENCEMENT DAY WHEN I ASK FOR A SHOW OF ALL THE FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS WHO ARE ABOUT TO RECEIVE A DIPLOMA. IT'S HEART-WARMING BEYOND WORDS TO SEE HANDS GO UP ALL OVER THE ARENA FLOOR BECAUSE I KNOW BEHIND EVERY LITTLE PIECE OF SHEEPSKIN THERE'S A BIG DREAM.

EVEN IN 2006, MORE THAN HALF OUR GRADUATES ARE THE FIRST IN THEIR FAMILIES TO EARN A COLLEGE DEGREE. THAT, AS MUCH AS ANYTHING, IS WHAT SETS US APART FROM MANY OF OUR PEERS. IT IS NO SECRET THAT OUR PRIMARY SERVICE REGION CONSISTS OF SOME OF THE POOREST COUNTIES IN THE NATION, LET ALONE KENTUCKY. BUT WHILE SOME OF THESE STUDENTS COME TO US WITH NOT MUCH MORE THAN A BACKPACK OF HOPES AND DREAMS, THEY ALL CROSS THAT COMMENCEMENT STAGE WITH KNOWLEDGE AND CONFIDENCE THAT CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS.

SOME OF THESE GRADUATES GO ON TO LEAD LARGE CORPORATIONS ... SUCH AS DUSTAN MCCOY, WHO ROSE FROM HUMBLE ORIGINS IN THE SMALL TOWN OF GRAYSON – POPULATION 4,000 – TO BECOME CHAIRMAN AND C-E-O OF THE BRUNSWICK CORPORATION, A FORTUNE 200 COMPANY. MISTER MCCOY, WHO ALSO HEADS OUR FOUNDATION BOARD AND IS CHAIRING OUR FIRST-EVER COMPREHENSIVE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN, IS JUST ONE EXAMPLE AMONG 115,000 ALUMNI WHOSE LIVES WERE POSITIVELY TRANSFORMED BY THE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THEY RECEIVED AT EASTERN.

ANOTHER REASON YOU CAN BE PROUD OF YOUR INVESTMENT IN EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY TODAY IS BECAUSE OUR INSTITUTION

IS FULLY COMMITTED TO STEWARDSHIP OF PLACE. LET ME PUT THAT IN MORE EVERYDAY LANGUAGE – WE ARE OUT IN OUR SERVICE REGION EVERY DAY OF THE WEEK – IN SCHOOL SYSTEMS, IN BUSINESSES AND INDUSTRIES, AND THROUGH OUR THOUSANDS OF ALUMNI WHO ARE IMPROVING HEALTH CARE AND HELPING TO KEEP YOU, YOUR FAMILIES AND YOUR COMMUNITIES SAFE AND SECURE.

WE KNOW THAT EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY MUST BE A BIG PART OF THE FABRIC OF LIFE IN EASTERN KENTUCKY IF THE REGION IS TO REALIZE ITS FULL POTENTIAL. AS A UNIVERSITY AND AS A COMMONWEALTH, WE SIMPLY CAN'T LEAVE THIS REGION BEHIND ... NOR SHOULD WE!

THAT STEWARDSHIP OF PLACE IS PERHAPS BEST EXEMPLIFIED BY OUR EXTENDED CAMPUSES IN CORBIN, MANCHESTER AND DANVILLE ... WHERE WE ARE REACHING THOUSANDS OF STUDENTS PLACE-BOUND BY FAMILIES OR JOBS WHO WOULD NOT OTHERWISE HAVE ACCESS TO A COLLEGE EDUCATION.

IT'S THAT STEWARDSHIP OF PLACE, OF KENTUCKIANS AND THEIR DREAMS THAT MAKES E-K-U A VERY SPECIAL SCHOOL OF OPPORTUNITY!

ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF THAT STEWARDSHIP OF PLACE IS EASTERN'S NEW ENVIRONMENTAL RESEARCH INSTITUTE ... WHICH WILL EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LAND USE AND WATER QUALITY – A MAJOR CONCERN FOR OUR REGION. THIS INSTITUTE WILL ENCOURAGE FACULTY FROM MANY ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES TO CONDUCT RESEARCH ON ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS IN EASTERN KENTUCKY ... AND, AT THE SAME TIME, BUILD COMMUNITY CAPACITY FOR SOLVING ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS.

IN ADDITION, OUR CENTER FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND TECHNOLOGY, AN OUTREACH SERVICE OF OUR COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY, IS BRINGING "NEW ECONOMY" INITIATIVES AND SERVICES FOR ENTREPRENEURS THROUGHOUT EASTERN KENTUCKY ... 33 COUNTIES OF WHICH HAVE BEEN CLASSIFIED BY THE APPALACHIAN REGIONAL COMMISSION AS ECONOMICALLY DISTRESSED.

ANOTHER REASON YOU CAN BE PROUD OF YOUR INVESTMENT IN EASTERN IS BECAUSE MANY OF OUR ACADEMIC PROGRAMS BOAST NATIONAL – AND, IN SOME CASES, INTERNATIONAL REPUTATIONS FOR EXCELLENCE.

YOU ARE NO DOUBT FAMILIAR WITH OUR PROGRAM OF DISTINCTION – OUR COLLEGE OF JUSTICE AND SAFETY. BUT YOU MIGHT NOT KNOW THAT, BESIDES MEETING MANY OF THE LAW ENFORCEMENT AND CORRECTIONS NEEDS OF THE COMMONWEALTH, THE COLLEGE ALSO HOUSES NATIONALLY, EVEN INTERNATIONALLY, RENOWNED PROGRAMS IN LOSS PREVENTION AND SAFETY ... FIRE AND SAFETY ENGINEERING ... AND ARSON AND EXPLOSIVES INVESTIGATION, AMONG OTHERS. THE COLLEGE IS ALSO A NATIONAL LEADER IN RESEARCH PROJECTS RELATED TO HOMELAND SECURITY, ESPECIALLY FOR RURAL AREAS.

YOU CAN ALSO TAKE PRIDE IN THE FACT THAT E-K-U IS HOME TO THE NATION'S LARGEST FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM IN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SCIENCE AND IS LEADING A NATIONAL EFFORT TO ATTRACT MORE MINORITIES INTO THIS RAPIDLY GROWING, AND VERY IMPORTANT, CAREER FIELD.

AND FOR THOSE C-S-I FANS IN THE ROOM, EASTERN CLAIMS THE NATION'S ONLY ACCREDITED FOUR-YEAR PROGRAM IN FORENSIC SCIENCE.

SPEAKING OF THE SCIENCES, IT IS SOMETIMES OVERLOOKED THAT OUR ALUMNI RANKS INCLUDE COUNTLESS PHYSICIANS AND ATTORNEYS AROUND KENTUCKY WHO RECEIVED THEIR UNDERGRADUATE EDUCATION AT EASTERN BEFORE GOING ON TO MEDICAL OR LAW SCHOOL.

EASTERN'S COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES CONTINUES TO BE A LEADER IN PREPARING QUALITY NURSES, OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS AND PUBLIC HEALTH PROFESSIONALS ... MANY OF WHOM RETURN TO WORK IN A REGION BESET BY SEVERE SHORTAGES IN THOSE AREAS SO CRITICAL TO OUR QUALITY OF LIFE.

THAT'S IN ADDITION TO A COLLEGE OF EDUCATION THAT, TRUE TO OUR HERITAGE, IS STILL A STATE LEADER IN THE PREPARATION OF SCHOOLTEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS ... AND INTERPRETERS AND OTHERS WHO WORK WITH KENTUCKY'S DEAF POPULATION.

IT IS ALSO IMPORTANT FOR THE COMMITTEE TO KNOW THAT WE ARE WORKING HARD TO AUGMENT STATE FUNDING WITH PRIVATE SUPPORT. THIS PAST YEAR, WE LAUNCHED THE FIRST COMPREHENSIVE CAPITAL CAMPAIGN IN OUR INSTITUTION'S HISTORY. THIS CAMPAIGN WILL GO A LONG WAY TOWARD ENSURING THAT WE REMAIN A "SCHOOL OF OPPORTUNITY" FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

NOW, MORE THAN EVER BEFORE, EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY – INDEED, OUR ENTIRE HIGHER EDUCATION COMMUNITY – NEEDS YOUR VISION AND YOUR COURAGE IF WE ARE TO HELP THIS GREAT COMMONWEALTH REACH HER FULL POTENTIAL.

THROUGHOUT HER 100-YEAR HISTORY, THROUGH PROSPEROUS TIMES AND LEAN, EASTERN HAS BEEN A FAITHFUL STEWARD OF PUBLIC DOLLARS AND, MORE IMPORTANTLY, THE PUBLIC TRUST. IN RECENT YEARS, WE HAVE WEATHERED A SERIES OF BUDGET CUTS TRIGGERED BY A SLUGGISH ECONOMY WITHOUT SACRIFICING QUALITY OR ACCESS TO THE EASTERN EXPERIENCE FOR OUR STUDENTS AND WITHOUT SACRIFICING OUR OUTREACH SERVICES.

EVER MINDFUL OF OUR PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY TO BE ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE, WE HAVE TIGHTENED OUR BELTS AND BECOME MORE EFFICIENT IN OUR OPERATIONS ... WE HAVE MADE THE HEART-WRENCHING DECISION TO RAISE TUITION IN ORDER TO MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE QUALITY AND ADDRESS AN AGING INFRASTRUCTURE ... AND WE HAVE AT THE SAME TIME SHOWN COMPASSION BY DESIGNATING MORE OF OUR 2005-06 BUDGET TO NEED-BASED STUDENT AID THAN ALL THE OTHER PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN KENTUCKY COMBINED.

THE PUBLIC AGENDA CALLS, RIGHTFULLY SO, FOR MORE KENTUCKIANS TO BE PURSUING POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION. AFTER FOUR STRAIGHT YEARS OF ENROLLMENT INCREASES AT E-K-U, A 25-PERCENT INCREASE IN EARLY APPLICATIONS FOR FALL 2006 SUGGESTS ANOTHER SIZABLE ENROLLMENT JUMP. AS KENTUCKIANS IN NEAR-RECORD NUMBERS LOOK TO EASTERN FOR QUALITY, AFFORDABLE AND ACCESSIBLE HIGHER EDUCATION, WE NOW FACE THE BURDEN OF PROVIDING THE FACULTY, FACILITIES AND INFRASTRUCTURE TO RESPOND TO THE NEEDS OF OUR GROWING ENROLLMENT.

IN ORDER TO DO THAT, WE'VE CUT BACK WHERE WE COULD ... WE'VE RAISED TUITION TO MORE APPROPRIATE LEVELS ... WE'RE BUSY RAISING PRIVATE MONEY AND FINDING OTHER SOURCES OF EXTERNAL FUNDING. WE COME TO YOU NOW BECAUSE WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LET OUR

STUDENTS AND PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS DOWN. WE CANNOT AFFORD TO RETREAT FROM YEARS OF PROGRESS. AND WE CERTAINLY CANNOT AFFORD TO TURN OUR BACKS ON KENTUCKY'S FUTURE.

WE ARE INDEED A LEANER, MORE EFFICIENT INSTITUTION TODAY THAN WE WERE FIVE YEARS AGO. BUT WE CANNOT CONTINUE TO CUT OUR WAY TO EXCELLENCE ... NOT IF WE ARE TO REACH THE GOALS SET BEFORE US IN HOUSE BILL ONE AND NOT IF WE ARE TO MEET THE RAPIDLY CHANGING NEEDS OF OUR COMMONWEALTH.

I DEEPLY REGRET THAT THE FUNDING PROPOSED BY THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET WILL NOT COME CLOSE TO COVERING OUR INCREASED FIXED COSTS. IT THREATENS OUR ABILITY TO REMAIN ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE TO EVERY KENTUCKIAN WHO DREAMS OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION.

IT HINDERS OUR ABILITY TO MAINTAIN QUALITY ... RECRUIT AND RETAIN TOP-NOTCH FACULTY ... PROVIDE OUTREACH PROGRAMS TO THE REGION ... PROVIDE STATE-OF-THE-ART TECHNOLOGY THAT PREPARES OUR STUDENTS FOR THE WORKPLACE ... AND OFFER THE STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES SO CRITICAL TO RETENTION AND GRADUATION.

ADDITIONALLY, THE BUDGET DOES NOT INCLUDE APPROPRIATE LEVELS OF FUNDING FOR REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP, WHICH HAS A DIRECT IMPACT ON THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN OUR SERVICE REGION. THE BUDGET ALSO DOES NOT INCLUDE FUNDING FOR SPECIAL INITIATIVES FOR AFFORDABILITY. NOR DOES IT INCLUDE FUNDING FOR THE ONE CAPITAL PROJECT WE PRIORITIZED – A DESPERATELY NEEDED NEW SCIENCE BUILDING, WHICH IS CRITICAL IN OUR EFFORTS TO PREPARE HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS AND P-12 SCIENCE TEACHERS TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF OUR REGION AND COMMONWEALTH.

THE EXECUTIVE BUDGET IS FURTHER COMPLICATED BY THE NEW C-P-E TUITION POLICY THAT LIMITS THE AMOUNT OF TUITION A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY CAN ASSESS, BEGINNING WITH THE UPCOMING YEAR. THE COMBINATION OF A LACK OF FUNDING COUPLED WITH THE C-P-E'S RESTRICTION ON OUR ABILITY TO SET APPROPRIATE TUITION RATES TO MEET THE NEEDS OF OUR INSTITUTION IS A "DOUBLE WHAMMY" WITH POTENTIALLY DIRE CONSEQUENCES.

ALL OF US IN THIS ROOM TODAY HAVE BEEN ENORMOUSLY BLESSED WITH OPPORTUNITIES FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR OURSELVES AND OUR FAMILIES. WE'VE BEEN SUCCESSFUL, IN PART, BECAUSE OTHERS HAVE INVESTED IN US ALL ALONG THE WAY. IT IS TIME NOW TO INVEST IN THE LEADERS OF TOMORROW.

IN OUR REGION, COAL ELEVATORS ARE A COMMON SIGHT...A SYMBOL OF A TIME WHEN BLACK GOLD DOMINATED THE STATE'S ECONOMY. AS IMPORTANT AS COAL CONTINUES TO BE, EDUCATION WILL BE THE FUEL FOR KENTUCKY'S 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY ECONOMY. WITH THAT IN MIND, IT IS TIME TO "SEND THE ELEVATOR BACK DOWN."

IT'S TIME TO SEND THE ELEVATOR BACK DOWN AND LIFT UP THOSE KENTUCKIANS WHO DESERVE A QUALITY EDUCATION ... BUT MAY HAVE DIFFICULTY AFFORDING COLLEGE OR WHO NEED ADDITIONAL SUPPORT.

IT'S TIME TO SEND THE ELEVATOR BACK DOWN AND LIFT UP THOSE COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT OUR STATE WHO LOOK TO UNIVERSITIES FOR MINDPOWER AND OTHER RESOURCES TO HELP THEM SOLVE THEIR PROBLEMS.

AND, FINALLY, IT'S TIME TO SEND THE ELEVATOR BACK DOWN AND LIFT UP AN ENTIRE COMMONWEALTH THAT IS LOOKING TO ALL-OF US FOR LEADERSHIP AND HOPE FOR A BRIGHTER TOMORROW.

THE DECISIONS YOU MAKE IN THE WEEKS AHEAD WILL HAVE A RIPPLE EFFECT NOT JUST FOR A BIENNIUM OR FOR A DECADE ... BUT FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

YOUR DECISIONS WILL HAVE AN IMMEDIATE IMPACT ON STUDENTS LIKE REGINA HEDGEPTH, A NON-TRADITIONAL STUDENT AND SINGLE MOTHER FROM MOUNT VERNON WHO ENROLLED WITH US IN THE FALL OF 2004 ... JUST WEEKS AFTER HEARING ME SPEAK AT HER NEW OPPORTUNITY SCHOOL FOR WOMEN COMMENCEMENT IN BEREA AND AMIDST GREAT ADVERSITY IN HER PERSONAL LIFE.

SHE DROPPED MY OFFICE A NOTE ON AUGUST 27TH, 2004, AND THIS IS WHAT IT SAID ... "I KNOW I HAVE ONLY BEEN TO COLLEGE FOR TWO DAYS, BUT I FEEL AS IF I'M TRULY LIVING AGAIN. I'VE HAD EVERYTHING TAKEN FROM ME THAT I WORKED FOR AND AM STARTING ALL OVER AGAIN."

AN ASPIRING WRITER, REGINA Poured HER HEART AND SOUL INTO A POEM THAT SHE HOPED WOULD CONVEY HOW SHE FELT ABOUT BEING ABLE, IN HER WORDS, "TO LOOK FORWARD AGAIN INSTEAD OF BACKWARD." IT'S CALLED "RECLAIMING JOY" AND I WANT TO SHARE WITH YOU THE LAST STANZA, WHICH I THINK CAPTURES VERY WELL THE IMPACT THAT JUST THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A COLLEGE EDUCATION CAN HAVE ON SOMEONE'S LIFE ...

"SOMEWHERE, THE HOPELESS LIVE IN SHADOWS.  
OTHERS SLUDGE THROUGH DARK DESPAIR,

BUT I HAVE REACHED AND GRASPED MY JOYS LIKE  
BUTTERFLIES SNATCHED FROM THE AIR.”

WHAT WAS TRUE 35 YEARS AGO WHEN DUSTAN MCCOY WAS A STUDENT  
IS STILL TRUE TODAY FOR REGINA HEDGEPTH. EASTERN KENTUCKY  
UNIVERSITY IS STILL PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES ... STILL ENRICHING  
LIVES ... AND STILL MAKING DREAMS COME TRUE. MY HOPE, AND MY  
PRAYER, IS THAT FOR GENERATIONS TO COME E-K-U STUDENTS WILL BE  
GRASPING THEIR OWN JOYS “LIKE BUTTERFLIES SNATCHED FROM THE  
AIR.”

THIS, MISTER CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, IS WHAT  
HIGHER EDUCATION IN KENTUCKY IS ALL ABOUT. THIS IS WHAT EASTERN  
KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY IS ALL ABOUT. AND THIS IS WHY WE NEED, AND  
DESERVE, THE COMMONWEALTH’S FINANCIAL SUPPORT.

THE TIME IS RIGHT ... THE TIME IS NOW TO MAKE A SOUND INVESTMENT  
IN OUR QUALITY OF LIFE AS A PEOPLE ... AND IN THE LIVES OF  
COUNTLESS STUDENTS PRESENT AND FUTURE WHO DESERVE AN  
OPPORTUNITY FOR GREATNESS.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR DEDICATED SERVICE TO KENTUCKY ... FOR YOUR  
INVESTMENT IN AND SUPPORT OF HIGHER EDUCATION ... AND FOR YOUR  
THOUGHTFUL CONSIDERATION OF THIS ALL-IMPORTANT BUDGET.

GOD BLESS YOU ... AND GOD BLESS THE COMMONWEALTH OF  
KENTUCKY!