

REMARKS  
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COUNCIL ON POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION  
MONDAY, NOV. 7, 2005

I APPRECIATE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ADDRESS THE COUNCIL CONCERNING A MOST SERIOUS MATTER ... A MATTER THAT IS IMPORTANT TO ALL OF KENTUCKY HIGHER EDUCATION IN ACCOMPLISHING THE GOALS OF HOUSE BILL ONE.

I KNOW YOUR TIME IS VALUABLE. SO I WILL GET RIGHT TO THE POINT. I'M NOT HERE TO DIMINISH IN ANY WAY EITHER THE ROLE OR THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF OUR SISTER INSTITUTIONS. I AM HERE TO RAISE SOME SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT A PUBLIC POLICY ISSUE OF STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE.

THE PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL, TO BE CONSIDERED BY THE COUNCIL, IS NOT IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF OUR COMMONWEALTH BECAUSE IT DEVALUES THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN KENTUCKY ... A REGION OF OUR STATE THAT HAS CONTRIBUTED VALUABLE NATURAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES TO THE ENTIRE COMMONWEALTH AND OUR NATION.

THIS IS A REGION THAT MUST MOVE FORWARD IF THE COMMONWEALTH IS TO CONTINUE TO MOVE FORWARD ... AND A REGION THAT CAN NOT BEGIN TO REACH ITS FULL POTENTIAL WITHOUT THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT THAT CAN ONLY COME FROM AN EDUCATED CITIZENRY.

I DON'T NEED TO TELL YOU THAT EASTERN'S SERVICE REGION IS COMPRISED OF SOME OF THE POOREST COUNTIES IN THE COUNTRY. BUT THESE ARE INTELLIGENT PEOPLE RICH IN SPIRIT AND STRONG IN DETERMINATION, WHO JUST NEED AFFORDABLE EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO RAISE THEIR STANDARD OF LIVING AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

FOR 100 YEARS, EASTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY HAS BEEN A BEACON OF HOPE FOR GENERATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE EAGER TO CARVE OUT A BETTER LIFE FOR THEMSELVES AND THEIR FAMILIES. THE UNIVERSITY ALSO SERVES AS AN INVALUABLE RESOURCE FOR COMMUNITIES THROUGHOUT THE REGION.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN, THOUGH, WHEN THIS INEQUITABLE FUNDING MODEL WEAKENS OUR ABILITY TO SERVE THE EDUCATIONAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN KENTUCKY? AND IT WILL.

E-K-U'S SERIOUS CONCERNS ABOUT THIS PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL ARE NOT NEW. WE HAVE SHARED THEM ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS THROUGHOUT THIS PROCESS ... BUT LET ME TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO EXPLAIN SPECIFICALLY TO YOU WHY I BELIEVE THIS FUNDING MODEL IS INEFFECTIVE PUBLIC POLICY.

A MAJOR COMPONENT OF THE MODEL, AS YOU KNOW, IS BASED ON A COMPARISON TO BENCHMARK INSTITUTIONS. I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT THE UNIQUENESS OF THE REGION E-K-U SERVES RELATIVE TO MOST ANY OF OUR BENCHMARK INSTITUTIONS RENDERS ANY SUCH COMPARISONS LESS THAN ACCURATE.

THE BENCHMARKING PROCESS, AS IT CURRENTLY STANDS, NEGATES THE VITAL IMPORTANCE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING AND THE EVALUATION OF INSTITUTIONAL EFFECTIVENESS. THE BENCHMARKING PROCESS IS VOID OF ANY EMPHASIS ON STRIVING TO IMPROVE OUR INSTITUTIONS.

FROM A POLICY PERSPECTIVE, THE FUNDING MODEL SHOULD, AND MUST, FORCE US TO ASK WHAT STEPS WE NEED TO BE TAKING NOW TO PREPARE KENTUCKIANS FOR CAREERS IN THE 21ST CENTURY WORKPLACE. THE BENCHMARKING PROCESS SHOULD, AND MUST, CHALLENGE US TO ASK WHAT OUR STUDENTS NEED TO SUCCEED IN A GLOBAL, KNOWLEDGE-BASED ECONOMY.

UNFORTUNATELY, THIS BENCHMARKING PROCESS ONLY ASKS, "WHO DO YOU LOOK LIKE TODAY?" IN OTHER WORDS, IT'S ONLY A SNAPSHOT IN TIME. IT DOES NOT VALUE OUR ASPIRATIONS. I CAN'T STRESS ENOUGH THAT MAINTAINING THE STATUS QUO IS TANTAMOUNT TO GOING BACKWARD.

SECONDLY, IT APPEARS TO ME THAT THOSE INSTITUTIONS THAT HAVE HISTORICALLY MADE AFFORDABLE TUITION A PRIORITY ARE NOW BEING PENALIZED BY THE PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL. AS AN EXAMPLE, IN RECENT YEARS EASTERN'S TUITION INCREASES WERE MEAGER BECAUSE WE WERE VERY CONCERNED ABOUT PRICING AN EDUCATION BEYOND THE MEANS OF WORKING-CLASS FAMILIES IN OUR SERVICE REGION.

THE FUNDING MODEL, AS PROPOSED, INCLUDES A TUITION DEDUCTION COMPONENT THAT IS BASED ON BENCHMARK TUITION AVERAGES. THE TRUER PICTURE, AND THE MORE APPROPRIATE COMPARISON, IS THAT OF ACTUAL TUITION.

ANY FUNDING MODEL APPROVED BY THIS COUNCIL SHOULD, IN MY OPINION, TAKE INTO CONSIDERATION THAT ADDITIONAL STATE FUNDING IS NECESSARY TO BOLSTER THOSE INSTITUTIONS THAT HAVE HISTORICALLY KEPT THEIR ACTUAL TUITION LOW IN ORDER TO SERVE THE STUDENTS AND CITIZENS OF OUR REPSECTIVE REGIONS.

INSTITUTIONS THAT HAVE MADE IT A PRIORITY TO KEEP TUITION LOW TO ENSURE AFFORDABILITY AND ACCESS TO EDUCATION SHOULD NOT BE PREVENTED FROM RECEIVING APPROPRIATE STATE FUNDING SIMPLY BECAUSE THEIR TUITION IS RELATIVELY CLOSE TO THAT OF THEIR NON-ASPIRATIONAL BENCHMARKS.

IT IS EQUALLY IMPORTANT TO NOTE THAT BECAUSE E-K-U SERVES FOUR OF THE TOP SIX KENTUCKY COUNTIES IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS QUALIFYING FOR FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID GRANTS, WE HAVE MADE NEED-BASED FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE A BUDGETARY PRIORITY.

IN FACT, I AM PROUD TO REPORT THAT E-K-U HAS DESIGNATED IN ITS BASE BUDGET \$3 MILLION A YEAR FOR NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID. THE ADDITIONAL COMMITMENT MADE BY EASTERN FOR THE CURRENT FISCAL YEAR WAS EQUAL TO SIMILAR COMMITMENTS MADE BY ALL OUR SISTER INSTITUTIONS COMBINED.

THE PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL DOES NOT CONSIDER AN INSTITUTION'S FINANCIAL COMMITMENT TO NEED-BASED STUDENT AID. AS A POLICY POSITION, THE FAILURE TO CONSIDER, IN ANY WAY, INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO FINANCIAL AID IS SIMPLY WRONG.

BOTTOM LINE ... THIS PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT THE UNIQUENESS OF EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN KENTUCKY AND THE FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS NEEDED TO SERVE THE COMMONWEALTH'S MOST NEEDY STUDENTS.

LASTLY, I AM GREATLY CONCERNED THAT PART OF THE FUNDING FORMULA IS DRIVEN BY F-T-E AND BASED ON ENROLLMENT GROWTH. IT DOES NOT TAKE INTO ACCOUNT AN INSTITUTION'S COMMITMENT TO SERVE KENTUCKY STUDENTS.

A MODEL THAT DIRECTS HOW WE USE STATE FUNDS SHOULD BE BASED ON HOW WE EDUCATE STUDENTS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH AND PREDICATED ON HOW WE'RE IMPROVING THE LIVES OF THOSE STUDENTS FROM THE COMMONWEALTH.

AS AN EXAMPLE, E-K-U CONTINUES TO EDUCATE A SIGNIFICANT PERCENTAGE OF THE COMMONWEALTH'S TEACHERS AND HEALTH CARE AND LAW ENFORCEMENT PROFESSIONALS, MANY OF WHOM REMAIN IN THE SERVICE REGION TO ENHANCE THE QUALITY OF LIFE IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

I MIGHT REMIND YOU, TOO, THAT THE MAJORITY OF EASTERN'S STUDENT BODY - ABOUT 60 PERCENT - IS STILL COMPRISED OF FIRST-GENERATION COLLEGE STUDENTS. ALSO, ACCORDING TO THE STUDY COMMISSIONED BY THIS COUNCIL EARLIER THIS YEAR, ENTITLED "COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY IN KENTUCKY," THE SERVICE REGION SERVED BY E-K-U HAS THE LOWEST MEDIAN FAMILY INCOME OF ANY SERVICE REGION IN THE COMMONWEALTH.

RECOGNIZING THIS, ECU IS COMMITTED TO NEED BASED AID TO ADDRESS AFFORABILITY OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION FOR STUDENTS FROM OUR SERVICE REGION.

SOCIO-ECONOMIC OBSTACLES - LOW EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT LEVELS AMONG ADULTS, FOR EXAMPLE - MUST BE ADDRESSED IN OUR REGION. WE MUST NOT TURN OUR BACKS ON A PEOPLE AND A REGION ... INSTEAD WE MUST REACH OUT TO THIS REGION AND BRING IT FORWARD AS WE ALL CONTINUE TO WORK TIRELESSLY TO MOVE THE COMMONWEALTH FORWARD.

I CAN ONLY SPEAK FOR MY OWN INSTITUTION, BUT E-K-U IS DOING ITS PART TO POSITIVELY ADDRESS THE QUESTIONS THAT ARE CENTRAL TO THE PUBLIC AGENDA. WE ARE COMMITTED TO OFFERING THE COMMONWEALTH'S CITIZENS AN AFFORDABLE EDUCATION AND REMAIN STRONGLY COMMITTED TO REGIONAL STEWARDSHIP OF PLACE THROUGH VARIOUS OUTREACH INITIATIVES.

I SUBMIT TO YOU THAT UNLESS ALL REGIONS OF THE STATE ARE MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER ... UNLESS ALL OUR PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES ARE MOVING FORWARD TOGETHER, WE'RE REALLY NOT MOVING FORWARD AT ALL.

YOU'RE FAMILIAR WITH THE "NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND" PROGRAM. IN THE SAME VEIN, WE CAN LEAVE NO REGION BEHIND AS WE WORK TOGETHER TO RAISE THE STANDARD OF LIVING AND THE QUALITY OF LIFE FOR ALL KENTUCKIANS ... FROM PIKEVILLE TO PADUCAH ... AND FROM MAYSVILLE TO MONTICELLO.

THIS PROPOSED FUNDING FORMULA LEAVES EASTERN AND SOUTHEASTERN KENTUCKY BEHIND BECAUSE IT FAILS TO EMPHASIZE EDUCATING STUDENTS OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

IT ALSO MISSES THE MARK BECAUSE IT DOES NOT GIVE ADEQUATE CONSIDERATION TO ACTUAL TUITION LEVELS AS A PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL PUBLIC FUNDS ... AND BECAUSE IT FAILS TO RECOGNIZE INSTITUTIONAL COMMITMENT TO NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID.

I RESPECTFULLY SUBMIT TO YOU THAT THIS PROPOSED FUNDING FORMULA IS NOT IN ALIGNMENT WITH C-P-E'S OWN KEY PROGRESS INDICATORS, WHICH FORM A VERY SOUND BLUEPRINT FOR MOVING THE COMMONWEALTH FORWARD.

I WOULD LIKE TO POINT, IN PARTICULAR, TO THREE OF THOSE FIVE INDICATORS.

INDICATOR NUMBER TWO ... IS KENTUCKY POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION AFFORDABLE FOR ITS CITIZENS?

INDICATOR NUMBER THREE ... DO MORE KENTUCKIANS HAVE CERTIFICATES AND DEGREES?

AND INDICATOR NUMBER FIVE ... ARE KENTUCKY'S PEOPLE, COMMUNITIES AND ECONOMY BENEFITING?

THIS PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL DOES NOT DO ALL IT COULD, OR SHOULD, TO HELP US GIVE A POSITIVE ANSWER TO THESE IMPORTANT QUESTIONS.

I BELIEVE THAT THERE MUST BE BASE FUNDING CONSIDERATION FOR INSTITUTIONAL MISSION AS WELL AS FOR REGIONAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC FACTORS. I REALIZE, AT THIS LATE HOUR, THAT THIS FUNDING MODEL CAN'T BE DISCARDED ... BUT, NONETHELESS, I DO HAVE A RECOMMENDATION.

AS WE WORK TOGETHER TOWARD A BETTER, MORE EQUITABLE SOLUTION, I STRONGLY SUGGEST THAT THE COUNCIL CONSIDER PUTTING TOGETHER A TASK FORCE TO FURTHER EVALUATE THE PROPOSED MODEL AND COME BACK WITH RECOMMENDATIONS IN JUNE.

MISTER CHARIMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COUNCIL, I ASK THAT YOU MAKE IT YOUR HIGHEST PRIORITY TO DEVELOP A FORMULA THAT BETTER INCORPORATES IMPORTANT FACTORS SUCH AS MISSION ... REGIONAL CHARACTERISTICS ... AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC NEEDS INTO THE PROPOSED FUNDING MODEL.

SUCH A FORMULA WOULD BETTER SERVE NOT ONLY OUR REGIONAL UNIVERSITIES BUT, MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE CITIZENS OF THIS GREAT STATE WHO HAVE ENTRUSTED YOU WITH PRESERVING THE AFFORDABILITY OF AND ACCESS TO EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES THROUGHOUT OUR COMMONWEALTH.

THANK YOU.