Chairperson Ware and members of the Senate, I am sorry that my travel schedule for alumni/development work prevents my being with you in person today. My travels continue next week with a visit to Florida International University as a member of that institution’s SACS/COC reaffirmation site visit, followed by more alumni/development work in Florida. We hope to have another year in which private support of Eastern is up both in terms of donors and level of giving.

Joanne and I missed the first stop of the current agenda when I decided I needed to stay in Kentucky Friday to attend two meetings in Frankfort. The first was an opportunity that we were given to meet with representatives of the Kentucky Medical Association to allay concerns they have about the proposed change to the statutes to enable the offering of the Doctor of Nursing Practice. Their issues were primarily around the matter of “scope of practice” and Dr. Deborah Whitehouse, our associate dean in health sciences, did a very fine job of addressing their questions.

The second meeting involved CPE President Bob King, five of my colleague presidents and me with House Speaker Greg Stumbo and the rest of the House leadership. It was a cordial and direct meeting. We were clear about the needs and financial challenges facing our campuses and the House leadership was also quite clear about the performance and accountability expectations of our public policy makers. I came away more convinced than ever that our focus on student success is exactly what we should be about. We will increasingly be judged – and funded – on the retention and graduation rates of our students. We will also be expected to continue to develop our regional stewardship efforts – especially those related to our collaboration with elementary and secondary schools in our service region.

If you saw the news over the weekend, our meeting was fruitful. Despite the state’s fiscal condition, Speaker Stumbo indicated that the House would make every effort to protect higher education’s spending base. He pointed to several of the issues that we discussed with him and the rest of House leadership as the reason for his thinking. He also mentioned his commitment to increased accountability. But, even if our base funding does not get cut, we will still have to contend with significant increases in what we must pay into the two state retirement systems, bring two buildings on line with our maintenance and operations funding, and meet our other fixed and unavoidable cost increases.

We are also far from a final resolution on the state budget. After the House is finished, the document will go to the Senate where leadership continues to talk about shared pain throughout
all state agencies as being required. After the Senate approves a budget, the leadership of the
two chambers will go into a conference committee where the final details of the 2010-2012
budget will be hammered out. There also remains discussion about the possibility of a special
session late this year to deal with aspects of the second year of the biennium.

We will remain fully engaged in this process and I will keep you advised as it moves forward.