

October 23, 2006

Dear Governor Bredesen:

In public reflections in a variety of settings, you have mentioned an important achievement of Tennessee's political leadership in bringing salaries for Tennessee teachers to the level of other SREB states. This is not a small achievement, and we salute your leadership and the priority accorded the welfare of our state's K-12 teachers.

Over the ten year period from 1994 to 2004, however, Tennessee experienced a notable decline in college and university faculty salaries in comparison to SREB states. The *2005 SREB Fact Book on Higher Education* (pp. 159-160) revealed that over that ten year span, Tennessee slipped to 15th position among 16 SREB states, with only Arkansas coming in lower on average faculty salaries for both universities and community colleges. Many hourly staff at our colleges and universities have also been working at seriously eroded wage scales and we further urge attention to the pay levels of our excellent support staff in higher education.

We are pleased that the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship program has made it possible for more Tennesseans to attend college. We are troubled, however, that many citizens of Tennessee believe that money from the lottery has enhanced operational and salary funds for institutions, just as in public schools, when in fact that support has flowed directly and exclusively to student scholarship support. Furthermore, President Petersen has divided the mandated state employee raises for UT faculty to fund a merit program limited to a few, so many hard working UTC faculty received only 1.5 and one per cent raises the past two years, far below the inflation rate. Losing hope that our average pay levels will rise to competitive levels, our most promising and mobile colleagues are actively pursuing academic careers elsewhere.

We are proud to serve the University of Tennessee and the State of Tennessee. We believe that for the University of Tennessee to strengthen its position to become one of the top rated institutions in America, an important step, given the state of Tennessee's available financial resources, would be for our state to adopt as a major goal and priority increasing faculty salaries to the SREB average.

Sincerely,