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State Legislative Update

Fellow Faculty and Staff:

Last night the Kentucky State Senate passed its version of the 2016-18 biennial budget. The Senate version closely follows the budget proposed by Governor Bevin in January.

Here is a basic summary and some comparisons of the three versions:

- * The Senate budget includes the Governor's proposed 9% cuts to universities. The current year 4.5% reductions would stand in the Senate bill as well. The House budget eliminates all cuts to education.
- * The Senate budget includes a complex performance-based funding model that would capture 25% of university base funding in 2017-18 and outlines a process by which each institution could earn back a portion. We are still working to understand the details of this plan. The Governor's proposal was less prescriptive but would capture 33% of base funding in 2017-18 with an intent to capture 100% by 2020. The Senate does not propose going beyond 25% for performance funding. The House version does not include performance funding but instead establishes a work group to recommend a performance funding model before the next biennium.
- * The Senate funds only a portion of the equity funding that CPE requested for WKU and NKU and only funds that in the second year. The Governor fully funded the equity request in both years. The House budget does not include equity funding.
- * No capital projects are funded and no agency bond projects are authorized in any of the three budget proposals. We had requested state funding for the Gordon Ford College of Business building and agency bond authorization for a parking garage. We are in the process of trying to secure language which will allow the parking garage project to move forward.

This is the third step in the budget approval process. Later this afternoon I expect the conference committee negotiations between the House and Senate leaders to begin. Clearly, they have significant differences to overcome, among the most significant being those pertaining to higher education. Once they reach agreement on a compromise, the full House and Senate will vote on that version, and then it goes to the Governor for approval, veto, or line-item veto. The House and Senate could choose to override any vetoes or not. The final legislative day is scheduled for April 12, which includes a ten-day veto period.

I have spent significant time each week of this legislative session in Frankfort meeting with legislative leaders to make our case. I have continued to have discussions with Governor Bevin and his key staff as well. All of the university presidents have worked together to advocate for Kentucky's higher education priorities, primarily protecting university base funding. Many of you and our alumni have made calls to legislators as well. Technically, legislators have five more days they can work this session to hammer out a compromise, and I will continue to give this my full attention until their work is complete.

Thanks for your help.

Gary A. Ransdell



Dr. Gary A. Ransdell | President

