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CHAIRMAN STACY, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO APPEAR BEFORE THIS COMMITTEE TODAY. MY NAME IS GARY RANSDELL, AND I AM PRESIDENT OF WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY.

WE ALL RECOGNIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION. IN 1990, THIS BODY ENACTED LANDMARK LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE P THROUGH 12 EDUCATION IN THE COMMONWEALTH, AND AGAIN IN 1997 THIS BODY CAME TOGETHER TO SUPPORT REFORM OF KENTUCKY'S INSTITUTION'S OF HIGHER EDUCATION. IN DOING SO, YOU DEMONSTRATED YOUR SUPPORT FOR A BETTER KENTUCKY AND FOR A BETTER LIFE FOR KENTUCKIANS. REFORM CHALLENGED US TO EDUCATE MORE STUDENTS AND TO RETAIN THEM FROM ADMISSION TO GRADUATION, AND WE ARE DOING THAT.

I CAME TO WESTERN KENTUCKY UNIVERSITY IN 1997, JUST AS YOU WERE PASSING THE HIGHER EDUCATION REFORM ACT. SINCE THEN, WESTERN'S ENROLLMENT HAS INCREASED BY 3,300 STUDENTS, A GROWTH RATE OF NEARLY 25 PERCENT.

IN FISCAL YEAR 1996/97, JUST PRIOR TO REFORM AND BEFORE WE BEGAN AN AGGRESSIVE RECRUITING EFFORT, WESTERN RECEIVED $4,707 FROM THE STATE FOR EACH FULL-TIME EQUIVALENT STUDENT. TODAY, FIVE YEARS AFTER REFORM, WE RECEIVE $4,592 PER STUDENT. IN SIX YEARS TIME, WHEN WE HAVE PLEDGED OUR OWN RESOURCES TO MEETING THE
STATE'S GOAL OF EDUCATING MORE STUDENTS, WE ARE RECEIVING $115 LESS FROM THE STATE TO FUND THE EDUCATION OF A STUDENT THAN WE RECEIVED BEFORE REFORM WAS IMPLEMENTED. AND IN OUR QUEST TO EDUCATE MORE STUDENTS AND TO REMAIN AS ACCESSIBLE AS POSSIBLE, WE HAVE HELD OUR TUITION RATES AT A LEVEL THAT IS BELOW THE NATIONAL AVERAGE OF PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES LIKE US.

AT THE HEART OF OUR COMMITMENT TO EDUCATING MORE STUDENTS IS THE COMMITMENT TO ENSURE A QUALITY EDUCATION. QUALITY IS A FUNCTION OF OUR FACULTY, AND BUDGETS IMPACT OUR ABILITY TO BE COMPETITIVE AND TO RECRUIT QUALITY FACULTY. IN MANY CASES, WE ARE UNABLE TO FILL NEEDED FACULTY POSITIONS BECAUSE OF THE STATE'S INABILITY TO FUND ENROLLMENT GROWTH.

AND, AS YOU WOULD EXPECT, AS OUR ENROLLMENT INCREASES, OUR NEED FOR MORE FACULTY INCREASES AS WELL. WE HAVE CURRENTLY LEFT SOME 75 FACULTY POSITIONS UNFILLED BECAUSE OF THE UNFUNDED ENROLLMENT GROWTH.

WITH THE CHALLENGE TO GROW CAME A PROMISE THAT THE GROWTH WOULD BE FUNDED, AND I HAVE CHALLENGED OUR FACULTY AND OUR ADMINISTRATION TO PERSEVERE WITH THE PROMISE THAT FUNDING WOULD COME. IF, INDEED, HIGHER EDUCATION IS CUT AT THE NINE-PERCENT LEVEL, AS HAS BEEN SUGGESTED, THE CONSEQUENCES FOR US WILL BE SEVERE. MOST OF OUR BUDGET IS DEVOTED TO FACULTY AND
STAFF; THEREFORE, MOST OF OUR CUT WOULD FURTHER REDUCE EXPENDITURES ON FACULTY AND STAFF.

IN OUR COLLEGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES, FOR EXAMPLE, THERE ARE CURRENTLY FACULTY SEARCHES UNDER WAY FOR 27 VACANT POSITIONS—POSITIONS WE SIMPLY MUST FIND A WAY TO FILL BECAUSE THEY REPRESENT OUR CORE CURRICULUM—COURSES WHICH ALL STUDENTS MUST TAKE. A NINE-PERCENT CUT WOULD MEAN THAT 24 OF THOSE SEARCHES WOULD BE CLOSED, ADDING THOSE POSITIONS TO OUR GROWING LIST OF VACANCIES. THIS WOULD AFFECT 100 COURSE SECTIONS AND WOULD CRIPPLE OUR ABILITY TO RESPOND TO BASIC STUDENT DEMANDS FOR GENERAL EDUCATION COURSES AND UPPER-LEVEL COURSEWORK. THE END RESULT IS THAT STUDENTS WILL BE UNABLE TO TAKE THE COURSES THEY NEED TO GRADUATE, AND INSTEAD OF GETTING STUDENTS THROUGH COLLEGE IN FOUR YEARS, IT WILL FORCE THEM OUT OR AT LEAST TAKE THEM FIVE OR SIX YEARS TO COMPLETE A FOUR-YEAR BACHELOR’S DEGREE.

THIS IS TYPICAL OF ALL OF OUR COLLEGES. IN OUR COLLEGE OF EDUCATION WE WILL BE FORCED TO HALT MANY OF OUR EFFORTS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF K-12 EDUCATORS’ CONTINUING EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS. IN OUR HEALTH SCIENCES WE WILL BE FORCED TO LIMIT OUR COURSE OFFERINGS, AND THAT WILL RESULT IN FEWER NURSES AT A TIME WHEN WE ARE WORKING CLOSELY WITH LOCAL HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS TO EDUCATE MORE NURSES TO
ADDRESS A SEVERE SHORTAGE IN THE INDUSTRY. IN OUR COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING WE ARE ALREADY USING FEDERAL AND PRIVATE RESOURCES TO UPGRADE INSTRUCTIONAL EQUIPMENT AND PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH APPLIED RESEARCH OPPORTUNITIES, WHICH BUILDS BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY AND CREATES JOBS. FURTHER CUTS IN STATE FUNDING WILL REDUCE FACULTY AND STUDENT ACTIVITY IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIPS. WE ARE UNDER ENORMOUS PRESSURE TO EXPAND OUR OFFERINGS AT OUR EXTENDED CAMPUSES IN GLASGOW, ELIZABETHTOWN, AND OWENSBORO, AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL FUNDS, WE SIMPLY CANNOT MEET THE NEED. PERHAPS THE GREATEST PAIN WOULD BE FELT BY THOSE WHO DEPEND ON OUR LIBRARY SERVICES. IN THE ABSENCE OF STATE FUNDING, IT IS NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO KEEP PACE WITH INFLATIONARY COSTS OF JOURNALS AND NECESSARY LIBRARY RESOURCES. A CUT OF THIS MAGNITUDE WOULD FORCE THE DISCONTINUATION OF NEEDED LIBRARY SECTIONS OR FUNCTIONS OR BOTH. I COULD GO ON AND ON, BUT MY TIME TODAY IS SHORT.

WHERE WE CAN REALLOCATE WE HAVE DONE SO, AND WHERE WE CAN TRIM, WE HAVE TRIMMED. A NINE-PERCENT CUT WILL BE A DEVASTATING BLOW TO OUR FACULTY AND TO OUR ABILITY TO MEET THE DEMANDS OF OUR STUDENTS AND OF BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY WHO NEED OUR GRADUATES. ULTIMATELY, THE ECONOMY OF KENTUCKY WILL SUFFER EVEN MORE. IF YOU ARE FORCED TO MAKE THESE DRASIC CUTS
TO POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, WE WILL BE FORCED TO TURN PEOPLE AWAY WHO DESPERATELY NEED AND WANT AN EDUCATION.

WE KNOW YOU HAVE DIFFICULT DECISIONS TO MAKE, BUT MY MESSAGE TO YOU TODAY IS TO CONSIDER THE LONG-TERM CONSEQUENCES OF THE CUTS YOU DECIDE TO MAKE IN KENTUCKY’S BUDGET. AN EDUCATED WORKFORCE IS THE KEY TO THE STATE’S COMPETITIVENESS AND TO OUR ABILITY TO ATTRACT BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY, AND POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IS THE DRIVER. WE ARE MEETING THE CHALLENGE TO EDUCATE MORE OF KENTUCKY’S CITIZENS, BUT AS OUR BUDGETS ARE CUT EVEN FURTHER, SO TOO IS OUR ABILITY TO PRODUCE GRADUATES AND TO GROW OUR STATE’S ECONOMY WITH AN EDUCATED POPULATION.

LET ME LEAVE YOU WITH THIS THOUGHT. THE LAST STATE BUDGET PASSED IN 2000. THE HIGHER EDUCATION PORTION OF THAT BUDGET WAS BASED ON 1998 ENROLLMENT DATA. AS I SAID EARLIER, WESTERN HAS GROWN BY 3,300 STUDENTS SINCE THEN. STUDENTS WHO ENTERED IN THE FALL OF 1999 WILL GRADUATE THIS SPRING. STUDENTS WHO MAKE UP THAT 25 PERCENT GROWTH MARGIN WILL NEVER HAVE EXPERIENCED A STATE BUDGET TO HELP FUND THEIR EDUCATION. ALL OF OUR STUDENTS WHO ENTERED SINCE THE FALL OF 1999 WILL HAVE BEEN EDUCATED WITH FEWER CAMPUS DOLLARS THAN WHEN THEY ENTERED BECAUSE EXISTING CAMPUS BUDGETS HAVE HAD TO PAY FOR THE GROWTH WHICH HAS OCCURRED SINCE THEY ENTERED. THEY HAVE FOUND IN THEIR FOUR
YEARS, FROM FALL '99 TO SPRING '03, FEWER FACULTY THAN WHEN THEY BEGAN, LARGER CLASSES, FEWER CLASS SECTIONS, AND COMPROMISED CAMPUS SERVICES—ALL OF WHICH SHOULD HAVE BEEN GROWING AT A PACE CONSISTENT WITH THE ENROLLMENT BULGE.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING MODEL IS BASED ON GROWTH INCENTIVES. WE HAVE RESPONDED. CUTS OF THIS MAGNITUDE WILL HURT MOST ON THOSE CAMPUSES THAT HAVE GROWN THE MOST. WE’RE BEING HIT BOTH WAYS—USING MONEY WE GENERATE FROM TUITION TO COVER STATE CUTS AND THEN HAVING TO PAY FOR OUR GROWTH WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF THOSE SAME TUITION DOLLARS. PROMISED TRUST FUND INCENTIVES HAVE DRIVEN US TO THIS POINT. WE CAN STILL PERFORM FOR ANOTHER YEAR OR SO WITHOUT THOSE INCENTIVE FUNDS IF OUR CUTS THIS YEAR ARE MODEST. BUT 2004 HAS BECOME A HUGE LEGISLATIVE YEAR FOR ALL OF HIGHER EDUCATION. WE’RE NOW CUTTING EXPENSES, AND WE’RE LIKELY TO GROW NEXT FALL. BUT WE NEED YOUR HELP THIS YEAR BY MINIMIZING OUR CUTS, AND WE’LL NEED YOUR HELP NEXT YEAR BY PROVIDING SOME RELIEF TO OUR GROWTH PRESSURES.

THANK YOU.