

TICUA Policy Update

January 23, 2009

Harry Brooks to Lead House Education

Representative Harry Brooks of Knoxville has been chosen to Chair the House Education Committee. Brooks is a graduate of Carson Newman College with a degree in Speech and Communication. Brooks replaces Representative Les Wunningham who has been appointed as Chair of the K-12 House Education Subcommittee. The Higher Education Subcommittee will be Chaired by Representative David Hawk who attended Tusculum College and graduated from East Tennessee State University. Both Brooks and Hawk have been helpful to TICUA in past higher education policy issues.

TICUA Pushes for More Need-based Student Aid

Public higher education is anticipating draconian budget cuts in the upcoming budget debates. As a result, tuition levels will most likely reach an all-time high among our public partners. During these difficult economic times, it is critical to provide support to college qualified low income students to ensure that they do not become disenfranchised from higher education opportunities.

TICUA is urging the General Assembly to increase funding for the Tennessee Student Assistance Award to make college more affordable for all eligible students. This past year over 55,000 eligible students went without the grant due to funding shortfalls. This year TICUA is asking for an additional \$43.5 million in aid to this program.

Contract Education is Key to Increasing the State's Capacity

The State of Tennessee currently provides a subsidy of just under \$120,000 for each medical student attending East Tennessee State University. In contrast, through the State's Contract Education program, the State provides \$13,100 to educate optometrists at Southern College of Optometry and just under \$25,000 to educate medical students at Meharry Medical College.

The State of Tennessee could save hundreds of thousands of dollars and significantly increase its capacity in the health sciences by fully funding the Contract Education Program. For \$9.1 million, the State would take a significant step toward fully utilizing the capacity at existing contract education partner institutions. As well, the State could expand contract education programs to include high-need career fields such as nurse anesthesia, pharmacy, law, education, and osteopathic medicine and undergraduate programs.

TICUA Seeks Participation in State Purchasing Contracts

In an effort to press down costs for both public and private colleges and universities, TICUA is recommending that its members have access to State procurements contracts. This would increase the volume purchased under the State's contracts thus enabling more competitive negotiations on prices. At this time TICUA is working with the Tennessee Board of Regents to explore a partnership between our procurement program and their consortium of buyers. TICUA is also working to determine what legislative changes might be necessary to expand the purchasing options directly into all State purchasing options.

TICUA Introduces a New Math/Science Teacher Service Scholarship

With the State's adoption of the Tennessee Diploma Project which requires all high school students to take more higher level math and science courses, there will be an increasing demand for more teachers in these areas. Consequently, TICUA has proposed a scholarship plan to attract the highest qualified math and science students to choose a teaching career. The program would target students with a 27 ACT composite and a 25 sub score in either math or science. Eligible students would receive a \$5,000 a year scholarship for up to five years and it can be retroactive. The student is then obligated to teach math or science in a Tennessee public high school for each year the scholarship was applied. Failure to keep the teaching commitment results in the remaining obligated portion becoming a loan.

The program will be funded initially from private grants totally \$3 million with the proposal of the State maintaining the funding over time. Senate Speaker Pro Tempore Jamie Woodson has agreed to sponsor the legislation in the Senate.