

TICUA Policy Update

February 25, 2016

TICUA Meeting a Success

The 60th Anniversary Meeting of TICUA was a tremendous success! Guest Speakers from the Tennessee General Assembly included Senators Dolores Gresham and Randy McNally, Representatives Harry Brooks and Charles Sargent and Governor Bill Haslam. Some of the many issues discussed were the proposed \$13.2 million improvement to the State's need-based student aid program, firearms legislation, Tennessee Promise, and the prospect of restoring the Freshman/Sophomore Hope Scholarships to their previous \$4,000 level. Generally, there was optimism that the student aid program would receive the increase which would result in serving an additional 7,700 students. Concerning firearms legislation, legislators felt as if TICUA members should retain the authority to set their own policies regarding campus safety.

The meeting agenda also included a conversation with US Senator Lamar Alexander who spent over an hour with TICUA presidents. The core issues discussed included the pending reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, simplification of the FAFSA, elimination of the in-school subsidy on student loans, the elimination of key campus based aid programs, deregulation, and the recent change to the US Department of Labor overtime rules in the Fair Labor Standards Act. The Senator remains hopeful that his FAFSA simplification package and deregulation legislation could pass sometime this calendar year. He also assured TICUA members that he will raise our concerns about the proposed changes to the overtime rules.

The anniversary event provided the venue for TICUA to announce its Executive Leadership Institute. Each of TICUA's 34 campuses will have a capable campus leader serve as a Fellow to the Institute beginning in the fall of 2016. The fellows will meet monthly at a different TICUA campus across the state to receive professional development on key issues facing independent higher education institutions. The primary goal of the Institute is to strengthen the administrative teams on campus as well as identify those who might be interested in a college or university presidency.

The evening ended with a legislative reception which capped the 60th anniversary celebration. Many thanks to those who attended making the meeting such a success!

TICUA State Authorization Bill Passes House Subcommittee

TICUA has drafted a bill that will clarify THEC's ability to maintain a list of authorized non-profit post-secondary institutions in the state. The need for the bill stems from the US Department of Education (USDOE) staff reinterpreting the State's role of authorizing domiciled institutions. In 2015 the USDOE held up the Title IV recertification of a number of TICUA members based on the new interpretation. Consequently, TICUA, in cooperation with THEC, has sought a legislative solution to the issue.

The bill, (HB1680/SB1734) unanimously passed the House Subcommittee of the Education Administration and Planning Committee. The bill will be reviewed by the full committee this next week. The Senate version will be considered in a couple of weeks. TICUA has met with nearly all the Senate Education Committee members and has found no concerns with passage.

Veteran Friendly Bill Passes House Subcommittee

Senate Majority Leader Mark Norris and House Speaker Pro Tempore Curtis Johnson are sponsoring a bill (SB2598/HB1836) which will expand THEC's authority to recognize TICUA members as Veteran Friendly campuses. Current law restricts the recognition to public colleges and universities. The House bill passed the House Subcommittee for Education Administration and Planning. The bill will now move onto the full committee. The Senate version is tentatively scheduled to be heard during next week's Senate Education Committee.

Fifteen of TICUA's member colleges and universities currently have a "military friendly" designation by Victory Media and all undergraduate programs participate in the Post 9-11 GI Yellow Ribbon program. If this bill is passed, it will provide yet another way TICUA members can highlight their service to our veterans.

Lottery Corporation Report Record Earnings

The Lottery Corporation testified before the Senate Education Committee this week as a part of the budget hearing process. During the hearing, officials reported that they anticipate a record level of earnings due to the large Power Ball games in recent months. It is anticipated that the Lottery Scholarship Programs may net an additional \$18 million due to increased sales. To date, earnings that go into scholarship programs is running 21.7% above this time last year. These funds will go to fund the post-secondary scholarship programs including the Hope Scholarship and the Tennessee Promise.

John Morgan Testifies Against the Governor's FOCUS Act

In a surprising move, former TBR Chancellor John Morgan was asked to testify before the House Education Administration and Planning Committee concerning his opposition to Governor Haslam's proposal to decentralize the governance of the Board of Regents universities. Invited by House Democratic Leader Craig Fitzhugh, Morgan outlined why he believes moving toward independently governed public universities will disrupt the balance of educational influence and possibly cripple the Governor's Drive to 55 initiative. Mike Krause, Executive Director of the Drive to 55, testified that the Governor's proposal is in anticipation of higher education needs in Tennessee as well as makes the campuses more responsive to local community needs. Ultimately, the Committee passed the bill and sent it to House Government Operations Committee.