



The Council on Public
Higher Education

February 11, 2015

Dear Members of the General Assembly:

On behalf of each member of our respective organizations and the Coordinating Board for Higher Education, we are writing to express our appreciation for your ongoing commitment to our state's public colleges and universities and to ask for your continued support.

When we visit with members of the House and the Senate, we hear time and again that you understand how important it is for Missouri to have a high-quality, affordable higher education system. You know that education significantly increases individuals' lifelong earnings, that an educated workforce is crucial to recruiting and retaining businesses in every sector of the economy, and that economic opportunity is essential to maintaining vital small towns and urban areas. Based on that knowledge, you have invested in our institutions in recent years, and we are truly grateful for that support.

Unfortunately, even with your investments, we continue to lag behind other states. You may have read in the newspaper recently that Missouri is 44th in higher education funding on a per-student basisⁱ. We are also last compared to our eight neighboring states. On average, we get around *half* as much per student as Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky, Mississippi, Arkansas, and Oklahoma. These statistics are more than just numbers on a page. Low public funding makes it more and more difficult for our colleges and universities to honor our shared commitments to the people of our state – access, affordability, and excellence.

We often hear that our funding levels are due to the fact that Missouri is a low-tax state – but in fact, we are less well-funded than institutions in the ten lowest tax statesⁱⁱ. So it's not tax policy. We also hear that maybe conservative legislators don't support public higher education – but our conversations with you indicate that's not the case and data indicate that we are significantly less well-funded than our peers in the most conservative statesⁱⁱⁱ. So it's not politics.

If it's not tax policy and it's not politics, perhaps the explanation is a matter of priorities. As appropriators, you have the unenviable task of weighing the pleas of countless extremely important and worthy people and organizations, but we respectfully point out that our state's constitution provides that education should be the top funding priority after debt service. We are asking that you honor that directive as you develop this year's budget.

The best way for you to do this is by funding the two top priorities we share for the FY 2016 budget. These are a 5 percent increase in core performance and equity funding, consistent with the request of the Coordinating Board for Higher Education, and the approval of the remaining \$162 million in bonding proceeds for badly needed maintenance and repair projects.

Thank you again for your commitment to public higher education and service to the people of the state of Missouri.


Sincerely,



Mr. Cliff Davis, MCCA Chair and
President, Ozarks Technical Community
College – Table Rock



Dr. John Jasinski, COPHE Chair, and
President, Northwest Missouri State
University



Sen. Betty Sims, Chair, Coordinating Board
for Higher Education

Dr. Dwaun Warmack, President
Harris-Stowe State University

Dr. Joanna Anderson, President
State Fair Community College

Dr. Kevin Rome, President
Lincoln University

Dr. Jon Bauer, President
East Central College

Dr. Alan Marble, President
Missouri Southern State University

Dr. Ron Chesbrough, President
St. Charles Community College

Mr. Clif Smart, President
Missouri State University

Dr. Ray Cummiskey, President
Jefferson College

Dr. Bob Vartabedian, President
Missouri Western State University

Dr. Hal Higdon, Chancellor and President
Ozarks Technical Community College

Dr. Ken Dobbins, President
Southeast Missouri State University

Mr. Mark James, Chancellor
Metropolitan Community College

Dr. Troy Paino, President
Truman State University

Dr. Jennifer Methvin, President
Crowder College

Dr. Chuck Ambrose, President
University of Central Missouri

Mr. Tim Wolfe, President
University of Missouri System

Dr. Dennis Michaelis, Interim Chancellor
St. Louis Community College

Dr. Jeff Lashley, President
Moberly Area Community College

Dr. Steve Kurtz, President
Mineral Area College

Dr. Neil Nuttall, President
North Central Missouri College

Dr. Wesley Payne, President
Three Rivers Community College

Dr. Cheryl B. Schrader, Chancellor
Missouri University of Science and
Technology

Dr. R. Bowen Loftin, Chancellor
University of Missouri – Columbia

Mr. Leo Morton, Chancellor
University of Missouri – Kansas City

Dr. Tom George, Chancellor
University of Missouri – St. Louis

ⁱ Illinois State University, Grapevine Reports
ⁱ WalletHub.com, and Illinois State University, Grapevine
Reports.

ⁱⁱ Gallup's "State of the States" series and Illinois State
University, Grapevine Reports