

Legislative UPDATE

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Current News About Legislative Issues Affecting The University of Alabama System

COUNTDOWN UNTIL LEGISLATIVE SESSION BEGINS

Please mark these important Legislative dates on your calendar:

- Higher Ed Budget Hearing January 25 (10 a.m.)
- Session Begins February 6
- Higher Ed Day February 27
- Session Ends May 21

Momentum is building as the 2001 Session approaches. Largely due to passage of House Bill 204 in May and cautious revenue projections, now – more than ever before – we must deliver a strong, fact-based message to the Governor and elected officials early and often. **We urgently request:**

- ➤ **one-third of new dollars in the Education Trust Fund**
- ➤ **support for Council of Presidents funding allocation plan**

The Council of Presidents passed a budget resolution that calls for 50% of any increase to be across the board, and 50% to be allocated based on ACHE's regional standard index. This Unified Budget Request (UBR) will be presented to a joint Legislative Committee on January 25 at 10 a.m. Higher Ed supporters are invited to attend this meeting in Montgomery (House Chamber, Alabama State House) to hear the discussion and visit individually with Committee members to seek support for the 2001-2002 budget request.

CONTACT GOVERNOR SIEGELMAN NOW

State Finance Director Dr. Henry Mabry is finalizing the Governor's budget plan now. Analysts predict this year's budget from the Governor's Office will carry more weight than usual with the Legislature. Governor Siegelman has earned several major wins – including passage of Amendment One – so insiders say he may encounter minimal, if any, opposition to his budget package.

Please write to the Governor this week and ask him to give Higher Ed one-third of the new dollars in the Education Trust Fund and to adopt the Council of Presidents allocation plan. Address your personal letters to:

Governor Don Siegelman
Alabama State Capitol
600 Dexter Avenue
Montgomery, Alabama 36130

Reminder: Use personal stationery and postage when communicating with elected officials. Now is a prime time to write to the Governor! Watch future issues of the *Legislative Update* for suggested timing to write, call or visit your House and Senate members.

MAKE THE CASE FOR INVESTING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Your message to the Governor and Legislators will be strengthened with hard facts. Consider these:

- Alabama faculty salaries rank 44th in the U.S.
- Deferred maintenance on Alabama 4-year campuses totals \$1 billion
- From 1994 to 1999, Higher Ed funding in Alabama increased a net

1.3% --compared to **10+% in Florida, 8+% in Mississippi and almost 7% in Georgia.**

UAS FUNDING PRIORITIES

UA System Chancellor Thomas Meredith and the government relations team met last week with Presidents, faculty, student and alumni representatives from UA, UAB and UAH to outline the System's funding priorities for 2001:

1. Faculty and staff compensation
2. Technology
3. Deferred maintenance

In the 2000 budget, Higher Ed's share of the ETF budget was 31% of the new dollars. This year's K-12 budget requests 82% of the growth in the ETF. Our work is cut out for us – but our case is strong:

- ➤ Alabama's universities are good public stewards – eliminating 1000 programs since 1995.
- ➤ Public approval is high – 84% of Alabamians say state universities do a “good” or “excellent” job.
- ➤ Tuition and fees are up more than 100% since 1990 due to inadequate state funding.
- ➤ The 2:1 split of the new dollars will maximize our benefits to the state, while reducing our reliance on tuition dollars to make up the difference.

TRUSTEES ARE DELIVERING OUR MESSAGE

In November Chancellor Meredith coordinated a meeting with representative Trustees from all public four-year schools to make the case for adequate Higher Ed funding. UA Board President Pro Tem Sid McDonald of Arab was spokesman for the entire group of Board members from around Alabama. “Our Trustees are already at work to persuade Legislators and State leadership that the 2:1 split is essential and the Council of Presidents recommendation should be adopted,” Meredith said. “This advocacy from the business community is creating a powerful upswell in support for Higher Ed and, particularly, for our three campuses.”

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions, suggestions or need additional information about Legislative issues or upcoming events, contact your campus government relations representative:

UA: Bill Jones/334-242-2262

UAB: Wayne Echols/205-934-5193

UAH: Gary Smith/256-824-6084

For a copy of this newsletter click this link: http://www.uasystem.ua.edu/SystemAdmin/sys_relations.htm and then click the Legislative Update – December 11, 2000 link.