

March 14, 2016

Dear TSU Family,

Our institution stands at a crossroads as State lawmakers continue to review the proposed FOCUS Act that restructures the governance model in higher education in Tennessee. Currently, the bill has advanced to the finance committees in both chambers. Once the legislation passes both committees, the bill will be scheduled for floor votes in the House and Senate chambers.

I believe it is important to communicate and clarify TSU's position on the FOCUS Act, and dispel any misconceptions regarding our position. I do not oppose the FOCUS Act. However, we have raised some legitimate concerns regarding certain provisions in the Act and the unintended effects on TSU, including faculty, students, and community members. This is part of my responsibility as President of TSU.

Our primary concern, as conveyed to the Governor's office and to the legislature, centers on the power and structure of the four universities in the UT system, which will remain intact under FOCUS, while universities in the TBR system will be removed from TBR governance, and individual boards will be created. The unintended consequence will be further strengthening of the UT system of four comprehensive institutions and the weakening of the six universities as a systemic unit. Allowing the UT universities to remain intact with no disassembling, and diminishing the strength of the six combined universities, invariably adds to the controlling strength of the UT system.

Also, I've been questioned several times on why the other TBR institutions have not been as vocal with concerns. It would be wrong and misguided for me to speak to that. What I can speak to is TSU's history with UT that none of the others have experienced, a history well documented in *Geier*, the State's higher education desegregation case.

Those familiar with the history between the UT system and TSU will understand the TSU family's sensitivity and trepidation to structural changes that appear to strengthen the UT system. For over twenty years, UT and TSU were embroiled in litigation following UT's creation of a campus in Nashville in the late 1960s. That litigation led to the court ordered merger of the UT-Nashville campus with TSU in 1977 (now known as TSU's Avon Williams campus).

Then, in 2015, we learned about UT's potential plan to operate a Professional MBA program in the Nashville area, thus, opening old wounds. UT is well aware of TSU's Executive MBA program, which starts next year, thereby constitutes a duplication of academic programs. This remains very unsettling to the TSU community.

With the enactment of FOCUS, some fear that TSU will be left in a more vulnerable position related to funding and its ability to defend against what many in the TSU community view as UT's latest effort to assert its power. Under FOCUS, a new committee will be assembled to develop the funding formula that will include the UT President, TBR Chancellor, THEC Executive Director, and only one of the six presidents of the independent TBR universities- rather than all six. This is also troublesome.

In our meetings with the Governor's office, I believe that we have made progress on possible amendments to FOCUS to strengthen the intent of the law, and ensure equity and fundamental fairness for TSU. I commend the Governor's office for its cooperation and willingness to hear our concerns.

Finally, we continue to focus on the future, while also taking reasonable measures to strengthen the FOCUS Act for the benefit of the University, its faculty, staff, students, and community stakeholders. The TSUNAA held a conference call and heard from Rep. Harold Love, Jr. and our University Counsel Laurence Pendleton. Alumni submitted a list of questions for discussion. I felt it was important that we expand on our responses to your questions on such an important issue. Please click on <http://www.tnstate.edu/president/documents/focusQAndA.pdf> for our detailed responses.

Sincerely,  
President Glenda Glover