

MAY 28 2009



STATE OF INDIANA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPRESENTATIVE JEFF ESPICH
RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER
HOUSE WAYS AND MEANS COMMITTEE
STATE HOUSE, ROOM 401-1
INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204

1250 W HANCOCK STREET, BOX 158
UNIONDALE, INDIANA 46791

May 27, 2009

Dr. France Cordova
President, Purdue University
Hovde Hall, Room 200
610 Purdue Mall
West Lafayette, IN 47907

Dear President Cordova:

The purpose of this letter is to voice my opposition to any increase in tuition rates at our public universities for the upcoming academic year.

Recently, I have read public statements by some university personnel who have said that the magnitude of future tuition *increases* for Hoosier students will not be known until the General Assembly passes a final biennial budget. I must say that I am terribly bothered by the idea that *any* tuition increase is even under consideration, period. I would argue that instead of waiting for the General Assembly to set university budgets, our universities should be seeking creative ways to ensure that tuition rates will not increase and that a college education will remain affordable for Hoosier students.

It has become clear in my mind that Indiana is now in "crisis budget mode". Our monthly revenues are consistently below prior year collections, and the revenue forecast delivered today contained even more bad news. Today's revenue forecast has all but assured that the state will not be able to increase funding for the vast majority of state programs or even maintain most of these programs at current funding levels. Therefore, we can safely assume that public universities will receive little, if any, new state money. Certainly, the reality of our economic situation will create challenges for our universities just as it will for all other state-funded public entities.

On the other hand, it is abundantly clear to all of us that Hoosier families and Hoosier businesses are also facing extremely dire circumstances. These hardworking families and business owners do not deserve—nor can they afford—higher taxes to make up for state budget shortfalls. So what do these families and businesses do when times are tough and their incomes are down? They find ways to reduce their spending because that is the only choice they have. I challenge all public universities to do the same because we all recognize that during these times, Hoosiers cannot afford to pay more for a college education.

I am often reminded that universities must continue to spend more to attract quality professors and quality students, and I fully understand the role that competition plays in building better universities. I want Indiana universities to be the best in the nation, and I very much want to see you succeed

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and prosper. Yet we have to accomplish this goal within the limits of what is reasonable, fair, and affordable. I think we have arrived at those limits today, and any increase in tuition on your part would be unwarranted. Like Hoosier families, Hoosier businesses, and most of the public entities that receive state support, you need to find ways to live within your current means. Most Hoosiers would be pleased to have incomes that are the same as the previous year instead of the cuts many are facing today. I know it will be a tough and, at times, an unpleasant task to achieve continued success with the same or less money, but I think you are up to the task.

Times will improve and, with prudent fiscal management, Indiana will once again have the opportunity to invest more state funds into higher education. We can also hope that times will soon improve for Hoosier families and Hoosier businesses and that they might have more income to invest in higher education as well. But those times are not yet upon us. Out of necessity, all Hoosiers must do more with less, and I know that you can do the same. I hope you will choose not to increase tuition rates on Hoosier students, and perhaps you will even consider reducing your tuition by an amount that reflects the reduction in Hoosier family incomes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jeff Espich".

Jeff Espich
Ranking Republican Member
Ways and Means Committee

JE/kh

cc: Mr. Victor L. Lechtenberg

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