



REMARKS TO BOARD OF GOVERNORS JANUARY 19, 2012

APSCUF President Steve Hicks: There are a multitude of issues currently confronting our system, and I wish I could talk to you about them all today. But given the recent news, I feel compelled to return to the letter I sent you last week concerning the governor's mid-year budget adjustment.

None of us needs to be reminded that these are difficult economic times. The Commonwealth, our students and their families, our universities, and the state system all face challenges.

However, regardless of whether we are struggling or thriving economically, our primary mission remains to educate students. The primary purpose of the state system, and, by extension, your primary responsibility as the governing board of the system, is to provide a quality education at an affordable price. Every decision you make must be guided by that purpose.

Last spring, we took an 18 percent cut in state appropriations. That means we are at the same funding level we were at in 2005. You chose not to fill that entire gap with tuition increases. While this served our students, it has led to demonstrably larger classes and increasing concerns that academic and athletic programs will disappear.

The governor's proposal for a 5 percent mid-year cut will only mean more of the same, particularly since a large portion of the 2011-12 budget has already been distributed.

You don't need me, or Jim Dillon to tell you that giving back \$20 million will induce struggle.

You don't need to tell me that there are potential political consequences if you say "no." The governor could propose to take that 5 percent, that \$20 million, from our 2012-13 budget in his Feb. 7 address.

Still, our current and future students need leaders who will stand up for the system and maintain its mission. At times, the governor does not seem aware of the commitment that being "state-owned" implies. Five percent back now will definitely mean more tuition in the summer — if you aren't considering a mid-year tuition adjustment, which is not unprecedented. Or else it means the repeated growth of class size and the closing of more programs.

It's also your responsibility as the governing body of the system to consider the quality of education the universities can provide. Year after year the presidents, here, are asked to do more with less, and sometimes they are asked how that will work. Repeatedly they say they'll struggle. Please slow that struggle.

Our system has benefited, in the past, from having board members who were willing to stand up for the students and say “no” to a governor, despite the political pressure. They understood the system’s primary purpose. Please have the resolve to follow in their footsteps.