



Creating a Powerful Voice in the State
of Utah for Higher Education Staff

January 30, 2014

Dear Legislator:

As president of the Utah Higher Education Staff Association (UHESA) I would like express my thanks to you for your continued support of higher education. It is clear that you are committed to education since the combined spending on public and higher education represents a significant percentage of the Utah State Budget.

I realize that your challenge each year is to balance the budget, and our state, like others, has faced many fiscal challenges. Over the past five years the State has provided funding to cover part of the rapidly increasing cost of benefits for higher education staff and faculty, and has also authorized institutions to fund small salary increases through increases in tuition. However, the decrease in actual benefits and higher out-of-pocket costs to the employee have effectively neutralized any raises in salary employees may have received through tuition-based increases. Further, no salary increases have approached the 8.45% CPI increase over the past five years.

The State cannot afford to continue to place an increasing share of the financial burden of balancing the its budget on students in higher education, nor can we ignore the fact that non-competitive salaries have potential long-term effects, i.e. the consistent loss of quality employees. The cost to recruit and train replacements is significant. As "real" salaries continue to fall, institutions are not able to hire or retain quality employees – we are forced to hire less-qualified individuals who are willing to work for a lower wage. Despite short-term cost savings, over time, these small savings will lead to much greater costs within the Utah System of Higher Education.

The Board of Regents, the Council of Presidents, and UHESA are united with students this year as we ask the Legislature to examine the effect that no increases have had, not only on the employees, but also on the students at our institutions. With a united voice we request that you **fund a 3% increase for base compensation as well as the increased cost for medical and retirement benefits**, as we support the missions of Utah's institutions of higher education and the state's mission to keep Utah's economy strong. Ensuring more students go to school is the BEST way to ensure long-term economic prosperity for the state. We need to invest, not just wish more students would come.

UHESA thanks you for your support!

Regards,

Bruce Barclay
President, Utah Higher Education Staff Association