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Letter from Board of Trustees Addressing Charges Made by Chattanooga Times

Board of Trustees

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To the Patrons and Friends OF THE UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE.

The following letter is a reply to an unfair and misleading communication sent by the Knoxville correspondent of the Chattanooga Times, and published by that paper in its issue of August 26th. The Times of September 1st does us the justice to publish the letter below over the signature of "Knox." But, as all may not see this answer who saw the communication referred to, we ask you to read the paper herewith.

We assure our friends that the questions and statements made originated with this correspondent. Among the Trustees and friends of the University and the people of Knoxville there is no question about the success and stability of the University. It never, in our opinion had as bright prospects as it has to-day.

In the absence of a regular meeting of the Board of Trustees the following members sign this paper.

J. W. GAUT,
S. B. LUTTRELL,
JAMES PARK,
C. DEADERICK,
JAS. COMFORT,
JNO. M. FLEMING.
JNO. M. BOYD.
E. J. SANFORD,

REPLY.

To the Chattanooga Times:

Your correspondence from Knoxville, of the 26th, contains statements about the University of Tennessee which were a great surprise to your readers here. The statements were so different from what all the people of Knoxville believe to be true that the writer has taken the trouble to investigate some of them, and now begs that you will give him, in justice to the University this opportunity to correct them.

The first statement is that the University has lost five of its teachers since the school closed. This is not true as stated, and totally misleading. The University has not lost a single one of its leading professors, and only one man has resigned since the school closed, and he occupied the position of superintendent of shops, which is not a professorship. The University engages as instructors from year to year, a few young men who are recent graduates. When the preparatory department and the system of military government was abolished, it was found that the services of some of them were not needed. The term of office of three of them closed with the close of the last session. These are the only teachers who have left the University recently. The faculty, with one exception, stands as it has done for two years past, and so far as the writer can learn, they are all perfectly satisfied and very enthusiastic about the prospects of the University.

The statement that the number of students is decreasing steadily is more astonishing still and absolutely without foundation as the facts will show. Here are the figures: Total number of students in attendance on the college department, 1886-87, 125; number in same department, 1887-88, (the first year after the present management was established), 174; number in attendance same department, 1888-89, 230; number in attendance on same department, 1889-90, 251.

This does not include the students attending the medical and dental departments or of the new law department, established last winter. If these are all included, the total number of students in the University last session is 510; but as the criticism was aimed at the collegiate department I have only given the figures for that department. They show a steady increase and healthful growth from year to year, and this in spite of the abolition of the preparatory department, which formerly contained the greatest number of the students in attendance. If this department had been kept up, the University might have enrolled twice as many students.

The next charge made is that "Latin and Greek have been virtually eliminated from the course," and that a thorough education is not given young men here. Your correspondent is not a judge of what a thorough education is and misstates facts. Like all of the great Universities of the land, including Harvard, Yale and Johns Hopkins, the University has made Greek optional in its A. B. course. Comparatively few students take Greek, but this is not peculiar to the University of Tennessee. Every educator knows that this is the tendency all over the country. Still the number of students studying Greek is as large as it was before this change was made. Out of the total number of 251 collegiate students last year, ninety-one studied Latin and eleven Greek, which does not look much like eliminating Latin from the course.

Your correspondent says that as this is not a thorough classical school so it is not a thorough technical school. Let us see what the facts are again. The University opened up during the last two years three new scientific laboratories, for chemistry, botany, and zoology, also drawing room and shops for the mechanical students. It offers courses in civil, mechanical and mining engineering and chemistry, and had seventy-five students in these purely technical courses during the last session. Do these young men actually learn anything that does them any good? They, their parents, and their employers think they do. Every graduate of the college last session had his services engaged before commencement. One engineer in Knoxville employs ten recent students of the University. A count shows that fifty-six technical students at the University last year have employment at rates running from \$50 to \$100 per month on engineering parties, in architects' offices, chemical laboratories, or about furnaces, etc., during the present vacation. If young men are taking these technical courses, and then getting successful and remunerative employment, as soon as they learn something, it would seem to the writer that the work of the University in this direction was a success. The University is now putting up a handsome building to cost \$50,000 when completed, for the express purpose of enlarging its facilities for instruction of this kind. The new building will contain additional laboratories for physics, chemistry, mineralogy, geology, mechanical and civil engineering. The students of the University are equally successful in other directions, being eagerly sought for as teachers, agents, clerks and all sorts of respectable positions. That the University has already established its reputation for thorough work, is shown by the success of its students in getting remunerative employment as soon as they are ready and wish it.

The next charge made is that the President, Dr. Dabney, is extravagant. This is indefinite but if it means anything, it implies that the money matters of the University have not been well managed. Let us see what the facts are again. If an institution of this kind is built up and steadily improved, money must of course be expended. It should not be expended faster than it comes in or unwisely. To any one who lives in Knoxville, in sight of the University, this appears the most unfair charge of all. When the present management came in (three years ago), the University had been without means for building or repairs for a long time, and everything had become very dilapidated. What is the situation to-day? The buildings and grounds are in perfect order, all of the other buildings having been thoroughly repaired and repainted. The mechanical department, costing with its equipment over \$20,000, has been built; a complete system of sewers, water and gas pipes, has been introduced, extending to all the buildings; a system of electric lights illuminates the buildings and grounds; recitation rooms and dormitories are connected with electric bells, and the best sanitary arrangements have been put in. The old Agricultural Hall, put up in 1875, but never finished, has received a large addition, and been fixed up for a department of agriculture and natural history. Here are the elegant

laboratories for agricultural chemistry, botany and zoology, all completely furnished and equipped with the finest scientific instruments. These new buildings are heated with steam apparatus, and ventilated in the most improved style. In addition to these improvements, the University is now erecting a grand building to be known as the Science Hall, and to contain the laboratories of chemistry, physics, etc., mentioned above. It will far surpass anything that has ever been erected on the College Hill up to the present time. This building is going up rapidly, and will be ready by the first of the year. The treasurer's books show that over \$35,000 worth of material improvements have been made to the buildings and grounds since Dr. Dabney became president. The contracts now being carried out will add \$60,000 to this.

The students of the University and their friends of Knoxville have shown their appreciation of the good work being done by raising a fund of nearly \$10,000 with which to put up a Y. M. C. A and gymnasium building, to be the exclusive property of the students. This building is also going up. When it is stated that all these improvements have been paid for, and that the money is on hand to pay for the additional ones under contract, any business man will agree that this is not very bad financing. How was it done? Why, as usual, by getting money and saving it. When Dr. Dabney took charge of the University, three years ago, its total income was only about \$25,000 per annum. Its income last year was a little over \$50,000.

Largely by the efforts of its president, a bill has recently passed the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, making an appropriation of \$15,000 additional for the first year, and increasing that amount by \$1,000 for each succeeding year, until it reaches \$25,000 per annum, at which amount it will continue permanently, to our and all similar agricultural and mechanical colleges. When this is all received, as we have good reason now to believe it will be, the income of the University will be three times what it was three years ago. All of these material improvements, buildings, etc., and this increase in the income, have been accomplished since President Dabney took charge three years ago. These are some of the bottom facts about the finances of the University. Under such circumstances, and with such improvements made and being made, it is not surprising that students are flocking to the University in increased numbers. State appointments which used to go begging, are now eagerly sought for, and every one taken up. Almost every county in the State will be represented next session.

It is thought but fair, Mr. Editor, to make this statement for the benefit of those at a distance. Every one in Knoxville knows that the criticisms of your correspondent are unfair and misleading. As a matter of justice to the University and its present management, I respectfully request that you publish this letter.

Respectfully,

KNOX.