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State Budget Approved, Positively Impacts UT

Last week, the state legislature approved one of the strongest budgets we've seen in years for higher education. It includes funding for pay increases for the third consecutive year, and it funds several projects that will increase our capacity to educate students, make groundbreaking discoveries and connect with Tennesseans.

We are grateful to the governor and the legislature for this investment in UT and the plans we have as a statewide system to continue fulfilling our mission for the good of all Tennesseans.

Highlights from the budget include:

Employee Compensation

The state's budget calls for a 1.5 percent pay increase for state and higher education employees and continued funding for longevity pay and a University-employee match of \$50 toward 401(k) plans. The possibility of additional University-funded increases is being discussed now, and details will be shared as soon as possible.

Appropriations and Tuition

The General Assembly approved the governor's proposal to provide full funding to the state's public universities awarded to them through the formula outlined by the Complete College Tennessee Act. Previously, the state had appropriated only a portion of the funding to be awarded to schools. In exchange, UT and the Tennessee Board of Regents agreed to keep any tuition increases this year to 6 percent or below. The budget also includes recurring funding increases for the UT Institute of Agriculture, UT Institute for Public Service and the UT Health Science Center.

Facility Improvements

There is capital funding for renovations of older buildings on the UT Health Science Center campus in Memphis that will create more research and educational space in addition to funding to convert UT Knoxville's steam plant from coal to natural gas and funding for expanding the nursing building at UT Martin's Parsons Center.

Educational Programs

Funding was approved for a pilot program proposed by UT Knoxville's College of Engineering to increase enrollment and help meet the state's growing workforce demand for engineers.

Research

Money was included to help the University compete for a grant to build a new supercomputer that will again rival the best in the world. Support also is included for UT Peds, a new joint pediatric research effort among the UT Health Science Center in Memphis, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital and LeBonheur Children's Medical Center.

Additional legislative action affecting the University and efforts by our employees, alumni and friends to advocate for legislation that best supports our institutional goals are explained in a brief from the UT Office of Government Relations and Advocacy and is available at <http://advocacy.tennessee.edu>.

I also encourage you to monitor progress toward these and other strategic plan goals at <http://president.tennessee.edu/strategicplan/dashboard>.

The work we do every day affects thousands of lives across our state and beyond. Thank you for all you do for the University.

All the best,
Joe

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