

DRAFT

April--, 2009

The Honorable Ted Little
Post Office Box 2366
Auburn , Alabama 36831-2366

Dear Senator Little:

Recent news stories have reported that the Alabama Legislature is considering legislation that, if passed, will have serious consequences for Auburn University far into the future. This legislation, prohibiting tuition increases unless approved by the legislature, is in response to the financial difficulties of the Prepaid Affordable College Tuition (PACT) Program.

The Auburn University faculty is sympathetic towards the families of all our students and the impact of the current economic downturn. We are also very concerned about the proposed legislation. The University has experienced a \$79 million decrease in state appropriation since FY 08. Such cuts have required a great deal of effort to avoid a negative impact on the education of our students. Further reductions in state appropriations are likely, and tuition increases are the only way the University has to ensure that we can adequately fulfill our responsibilities to our students.

Auburn University has a strong record of responsible financial management. In fact, if you look at our record, you will see that we have raised tuition an average of \$250 per year over a 20-year period. This translates into a cost increase of just 7.6% over that time. Our tuition increases, proposed to and passed by our Board of Trustees, have been enacted in a judicious manner, recognizing the burden such increases place on our students and their families. We recognize that tuition increases alone will not answer all of the financial challenges we face and our goal is to manage our resources in such a way that as few people as possible are negatively affected by cost increases.

We take our responsibility to provide excellent educational opportunities to our students very seriously and we are concerned that the proposed legislation restricting the Auburn University Board of Trustees from establishing appropriate tuition levels will have a significant negative impact on our ability to fulfill that responsibility. Families that invested in the PACT Program did so because they strongly believe that a college degree would provide their children with the skills and experiences they need to succeed in life. If we, as a State, use the proposed legislation to "fix" the PACT Program, the negative impacts to Auburn, both short

and long-term, will not allow the University to live up to the expectations of these families and critical programs may have to be reduced or cut entirely.

For these reasons, we are asking you to oppose the legislation that would limit Auburn University's ability to ensure a quality education for its students. We believe in Auburn and we know that our efforts in education, research and outreach are directly related to the advancement of Alabama's economy.

On behalf of the Auburn University Senate,

Kathryn Flynn
Chair, University Senate