

Letter Responding to Chancellors' January 10 Response to the Faculty Senate Resolution on Support for Benefit Equality and Chancellor Cheek's responses to questions at the Faculty Senate Meeting on February 4, 2013.

Approved by the Faculty Senate Benefits & Professional Development Committee for Consideration by the Faculty Senate on April 8, 2013

Dear Chancellors Cheek and Arrington:

Thank you for your letter of January 10, 2013, which further clarifies your response to the Faculty Senate's "Resolution on Support for Benefit Equality." Special thanks to Chancellor Cheek for responding to our questions at the Faculty Senate meeting on February 4, 2013.

We recognize that this is a difficult issue with political implications, but we are disappointed that you can not see a way to move forward. We believe that recruiting and retaining quality faculty is key to UTK's journey to the Top 25, and the restriction on domestic partnership benefits places our institution at a disadvantage and contributes to an unwelcoming climate. Moreover, it disenfranchises a group of people who are employed at the University of Tennessee since they are denied equal benefits for equal work as compared to their married counterparts.

Given the overwhelming support the Faculty Senate has shown for benefit equity, we remain committed to seeking an acceptable solution. The journey to the Top 25 demands not only a viable strategy but also progressive leadership and vision. We believe the University of Tennessee should espouse principles of equality, fairness, and justice for all its constituents. As we strive together for excellence, we depend upon a fruitful partnership, marked by open and frequent communication between all stakeholders. We hope you do not see this as the end of the journey and that we can be partners in bettering our institution regardless of political barriers.