



THE UNIVERSITY OF
TENNESSEE
KNOXVILLE

FACULTY SENATE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

KNOXVILLE (December 6, 2015) –Members of the Executive Council and the Past Presidents of the Faculty Senate at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville have issued a statement to express their support for Chancellor Jimmy Cheek and Vice Chancellor Rickey Hall in the face of calls for their resignation by Tennessee legislators over issues concerning the UT Office of Diversity and Inclusion.

The statement reads, Chancellor Cheek and Vice Chancellor Hall have worked tirelessly to help make UT a more welcoming and inclusive place for all students, faculty and staff, and we support them in these efforts.

Petitions in support of Cheek and Hall were signed by nearly 3,000 faculty, students and staff since Thursday. The Faculty Senate, the Student Government Association (SGA) and the UTK chapter of the American Association of University Professors joined in the effort to rally support for the petitions.

A letter signed by the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences and 20 department heads in the college was sent to Dr. Joe DiPietro on Sunday in strong support of the chancellor and vice chancellor. The letter, referring to criticism of the Best Practices for Inclusive Holiday celebrations in the Workplace, states,

“Such an attack demonstrates the deep need for UT Knoxville’s initiative to respect and increase diversity and inclusion. Inclusion in this case asserts the willingness to welcome all traditions, and not to prioritize one over the other. A policy of inclusion serves the University and the State of Tennessee by welcoming and recognizing the talents and contributions of students, faculty, and staff of all religions and races. The Best Practices noted above are also entirely consistent with the First Amendment of the US Constitution, which refuses the establishment of a state religion. As a government entity, we firmly believe it is the duty of the University of Tennessee to stand for a position that recognizes no single religious observance over any other. We applaud Chancellor Cheek as he stands for diversity and inclusion.”

The Faculty Senate will hold an emergency meeting on Tuesday, Dec. 8 to discuss the issue and draft a resolution to send to President Joe DiPietro in support of the chancellor and vice chancellor who have worked to make the University campus welcoming to all and hostile to none.

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