

February 19, 2016

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The Faculty of Somerset Community College  
808 Monticello Street  
Somerset, Kentucky 42501

Governor Matt Bevin  
700 Capitol Avenue, Suite 100  
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601

Dear Governor Bevin,

**Somerset Campus**  
808 Monticello Street  
Somerset, KY 42501  
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**Laurel Campus**  
100 University Drive  
London, KY 40741  
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**Casey Center**  
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**Clinton Center**  
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Telephone: (606) 387-3236

**McCreary Center**  
141 College Street  
Whitley City, KY 42653  
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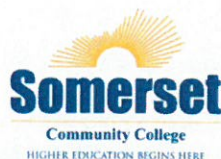
**Russell Center**  
848 W Steve Wariner Drive  
Russell Springs, KY 42642  
Telephone: (270) 858-6502

On Tuesday, January 26, you introduced your first budget as governor, scheduled to take effect July 1. In the days following the delivery of the proposed budget, the details have been and continue to be dissected, critiqued, applauded, and criticized. This is not a surprise as all of us, as Kentuckians, have much at stake; thousands of people will be affected by every cut and every increase in funding. Many of us will be touched by various aspects of the budget, but what I, on behalf of the Faculty of Somerset Community College, am most concerned with and what we as Faculty will be most affected by are the proposed cuts to higher education (4.5% for this fiscal year and 9% for the following two years).

The consequences of those cuts on not only our college but all of the colleges in the Kentucky Community and Technical College System and on the thousands of students – current and future – across the Commonwealth will be devastating immediately and have long-term ripple effects for years to come in ways that set our state backward rather than push us to the forefront as a leader in education, manufacturing, health care, and both the public and private sectors. It is for these reasons that we implore you and your office to reevaluate the budget to protect our higher education system and ensure that it can and will meet the needs of Kentuckians across the state for years to come.

As you outlined your plan for reshaping how higher education is funded, you stated, “There will be more incentives to electrical engineers than French literature majors. . .” This was part of your plan to ensure that higher education is working to “educate young people to make things,” specifically “the things people want.” We are certainly in total agreement that we want to educate and train young people so that they can enter the workforce with the knowledge and skills to make our economy strong, keep our people healthy, develop new technologies, and respond to the challenges of a 21<sup>st</sup> century global society.

While there is a perception that only some fields – such as electrical engineering – are necessary to produce these knowledgeable and skilled Kentuckians, we want to emphasize the necessity of a diverse and rigorous curriculum. This is not to suggest that we should produce more French literature majors than electrical engineering majors; it is to emphasize that education is a broad and complex network of ideas and disciplines. That future electrical engineer will most certainly need courses specific to his or her field, including courses in Mathematics, but he or she will also need to be able to communicate with coworkers and clients, both verbally (Communications) and in written form (English/Writing). He or she will need to be able to understand the communities and individuals he or she serves (Sociology, Psychology,



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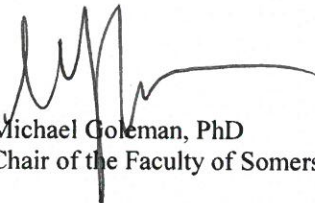
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Appalachian Studies). He or she will be working with technology (Computer Science, 3D Printing) and industry (Business) and with government officials (Political Science, History). He or she will be working on projects that impact the health care industry (Nursing, Respiratory Therapy, Physical Therapy Assistant, Biology), the auto industry (Auto Repair), and countless others.

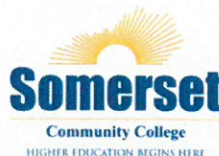
The cuts to higher education proposed in the budget will mean, in the very immediate future, massive layoffs, including at our own institution. Faculty in each of the fields listed above are at risk. As with any complex system, if one piece is removed, the entire system suffers. The loss of an English or Accounting or Welding instructor may not seem to have any impact on the education our future electrical engineer receives, but as the scenario above illustrates, it will. If the future cuts are also implemented, this means additional lay-offs every year. The consequence is that five years from now, a student in Somerset, Barbourville, Albany, or Whitley City will not have the opportunity to become that electrical engineer – or pursue any other degree. Students in the region and counties we serve (Adair, Casey, Clay, Clinton, Cumberland, Jackson, Knox, Laurel, Lincoln, McCreary, Pulaski, Rockcastle, Russell, Wayne, and Whitley) have ambition; they have drive; they have talent and ingenuity and skills that are simply waiting to be tapped and allowed to flourish. What they lack, however, are the resources – financial, social, emotional – and access – due to geography, family commitments, travel limitations – to go to universities like the University of Kentucky or the University of Louisville. We meet a vital need, as do all of the colleges in our System. We serve a population full of potential that simply needs opportunity and support. We, as a college, provide that opportunity, and we, as Faculty, provide that support. We cannot and should not deny students that opportunity or fail to provide them with that support.

You stated in your address, “We are going to be a state that makes things. We are better positioned than anybody to do that: we’ve got the logistics, we’ve got the location, we’ve got the meteorological advantages....” Again, we are in total agreement about the resources and potential of our great state. We, too, want students to make things. As community college Faculty, our primary focus is on teaching. Most of us went into our fields and pursued careers at the community college level because of our passion for teaching. We want to educate students, as you said, to “make things” whether they are making things with their hands, with 3D printers, with words, or with their minds. We, as the Faculty of Somerset Community College, unanimously voted to endorse this letter at our Faculty Meeting on February 19. In such unity, we invite you to visit our campuses to meet with our Faculty, Staff, and students, and we urge you to reevaluate the state budget to ensure that we have the resources – in Faculty, in Staff, in facilities – to continue our work to make the Commonwealth of Kentucky – its people, its industry, its innovation – the strong, vital leader we know it can be.

Sincerely,



Michael Coleman, PhD  
Chair of the Faculty of Somerset Community College



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