



American Federation
of Teachers, AFL-CIO

AFT Teachers
AFT PSRP
AFT Higher Education
AFT Public Employees
AFT Healthcare

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July 5, 2006

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Kennedy:

On behalf of the 1.3 million members of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), including 150,000 higher education members, I write to share our views on the draft discussion report recently issued by the Commission on the Future of Higher Education.

The commission's efforts have the potential to significantly affect national higher education policy, including the work that Congress is currently doing on the higher education reauthorization. Accordingly, we believe it is imperative for you to hold hearings before your committee in the near future to allow members the opportunity to review the commission's work and ask any relevant questions.

The AFT supports the goals outlined by the commission, particularly those that focus on access and opportunity. Despite shared goals, however, we have major concerns about its report's stance on key issues, and even greater concerns about its failure to address certain critical topics. I am attaching, for your review, a copy of a letter the AFT has sent to the chairman of the commission, Charles Miller, regarding the report.

In brief, the AFT is concerned with the report's general negative tone in suggesting that colleges and professors are not involved with their students in the serious business of teaching and learning. At the same time, the commission has ignored issues such as decreased state funding for public higher education and the dramatic loss of full-time tenured faculty jobs. Finally, one of the commission's major failures is the absence from the report of any perspective from faculty or staff on college and university campuses. By addressing these concerns in a meaningful way, the commission's work will have a positive long-term impact on higher education.

We remain optimistic about the potential this report holds for raising the quality of higher education. To this end, we believe that the committee, by holding hearings

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on the report, can provide an avenue to address the concerns of the AFT and others in the higher education community.

We would be happy to work with you and your staff in setting up a hearing on the commission's report, and will continue to provide you with our perspective on the commission's work.

Thank you for considering our views on this issue. Please contact me if you have questions at 202/879-4452.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'K. Cowan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Kristor W. Cowan
Director, Legislation Department

KWC:gd opeiu#2 afl-cio