

"GEORGIA STUDENTS FOR PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION"

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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GEORGIA STUDENTS FIGHT TO PROTECT HIGHER LEARNING

Georgians Organized and United to Maintain Equitable Access to Higher Education

"Georgia Students for Public Higher Education" is a grass-roots coalition of students, alumni, faculty, and friends of the University System of Georgia (USG) formed in fall 2009 in response to recurring fee hikes. Members of GSPHE represent every college and university across the state and are UNITED in purpose: to maintain equitable access to higher education in the state of Georgia.

Education by design stimulates economic growth. In times of economic recession, when additional revenue is needed to stimulate the economy, those who have higher education levels produce more revenue. It is common knowledge that the economic strength of our state comes from the strength of the people in it. Therefore, we must educate the citizens of Georgia more effectively, so that they can climb up the ranks. Bringing people up to speed in a new profession and teaching them how to cope with newer ways of doing things generates a more educated, productive workforce.

Reducing the education budget reduces the state's ability to adapt to changes in the economy. We appreciate the support that Governor Perdue expressed, and we eagerly look forward to seeing him make good on his promise to protect higher education. Unfortunately, the public is painfully aware that, in politics, promises made are far more prevalent than promises fulfilled. We hope that Governor Perdue will write a new chapter in the political textbooks that will inspire a generation of Georgia's college students.

GSPHE finds it unacceptable that the USG, which accounts for approximately 12% of the state's budget, is being asked to bear the burden of over 30% of the most recent proposed budget cuts. We ask that the citizens of Georgia to stand up for the power of education and demand that our state legislature make necessary investments in the future of our state. We are under no illusions: the economy is strained. But, generating additional revenue would eliminate the need for further cuts to the USG. This could be accomplished by supplementing the education budget with modest tax increases: a tax of \$1 per pack of cigarettes, an extra 1 percent to the income tax for those making more than \$400,000 per year, eliminating all special-interest tax exemptions, and modernizing our tax code to reflect today's income and expense levels. If the Georgia General Assembly will not find creative and just solutions to address these issues, we will find alternative citizens to fill their seats.

"Georgia Students for Public Higher Education" asks that all citizens of Georgia who care about education join us on March 15th from 11AM to 1PM at the state Capitol to stand up for our rights to education. Supporters of the USG from across the state have planned a non-violent, peaceful protest of approximately 4,000 supporters. **A press conference will be held at 11:00 AM on Monday, March 15, 2010 on the steps of the Georgia Capitol, 214 State Capitol, Atlanta, Georgia 30303.**

Georgia State Senators Nan Orrock, Vincent Fort, and Representative Doug McKillip have expressed sympathy with the "Georgia Students for Public Higher Education" coalition. Senator Fort and Representative McKillip (and possibly Senator Nan Orrock) have agreed to speak at this press conference.

GSPHE chapters are spreading across the USG.

For more information, please visit:

www.futureofgeorgia.org

Students: <http://usgstudentsunited.wordpress.com>

Faculty: <http://theoverpaidprofessor.wordpress.com/>

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