

Office of the Director
Corporation for National & Community Service
State of Tennessee



JERRY R. HERMAN, Ed.D.
State Director

PATRICK CORVINGTON
CEO

MEMORANDUM

TO: Dr. Jimmy G. Cheek, Chancellor, UT System
John Morgan, Chancellor, TBR
Dr. Claude Presnell, President, TICUA
Dr. Richard G. Rhoda, Executive Director, THEC
Dr. Tim K. Webb, Commissioner, TN State Department of Education

FROM: Jerry R. Herman, Director
CNCS Tennessee State Office

DATE: October 7, 2010

SUBJECT: Institutional and Student Community Engagement

With the Race to the Top and other major awards to our state and the First to the Top initiative, we have an unprecedented opportunity to impact not only the education of students but the entire fabric of our communities. Although it is also an unprecedented challenge with many competing forces, it is a challenge many of us have waited a lifetime to face. With good reason, from Main Street to the White House, we place education among our highest national priorities. The state of education in Tennessee weighs in the balance and we all hope for the most from your leadership.

Throughout the RTTT, SIG and other application narratives are references to the impact of education on the community and the role of community in education. Terms such as community-oriented services and community & family engagement are recognized as more than just hollow words to bulk-up an application...they are a potentially critical component of the comprehensive approach necessary to address some of the most pressing needs of our schools today, particularly in our persistently low-achieving schools. From the RTTT application: 'Historically, Tennessee has not been bold enough'. The purpose of this communication is to urge you toward a bold approach to civic and community engagement.

Joining CNCS CEO Patrick Corvington at the recent national service conference in New York, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Arne Duncan made clear the meaning of bold: "We are challenging the country to stop looking for incremental change, stop tinkering around the edges,

stop saying this is okay and poverty is destiny and these children can't learn. We're here because we believe the fight of education is so much more than education. It's a fight for social justice. This is the civil rights issue of our generation.”

Congress, through the Edward Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009 (KSAA), identifies education as first of six national focus areas and the new 2011-2015 Strategic Plan of the Corporation for National and Community Service carries the education priority forward as a key objective. The CNCS Tennessee State Office, Volunteer Tennessee (the Governor’s Service Commission) and other national service partners are prepared to assist in Tennessee initiatives across the board. Parents and communities seek the opportunity to get involved and colleges and universities are already expanding student and institutional community engagement through organizations such as Tennessee Campus Compact (TNCC). Many are eager to join you as part of a lasting solution to the educational challenges facing Tennessee.

For the benefit of both students and communities, the Achievement School District and other persistently low-achieving schools in particular, success will require a comprehensive educational strategy that recognizes the community context in which schools exist and that includes curriculum-related student/community engagement. As the RTTT planning year ensues and ‘learning maps’ and other community research are completed, it is my hope that your leadership will create opportunities for students to be involved in solving community problems and opportunities for entire communities to invest in the success of their schools.

Finally, Campus Compact and the Presidents of its 29 current Tennessee member institutions eagerly seek the opportunity to contribute and CNCS resources, in the form of AmeriCorps*VISTA volunteers, are already in place with the Compact and many institutions across the state. As higher education exercises its leadership in RTTT and related responsibilities, TNCC is ready to assist by expanding the use of service-learning instructional methodology and creating or expanding institutional infrastructure for engaging students in their community...the potential impact of orienting curriculum and tens of thousands of Tennessee college students toward solving our most pressing community problems is limited only by our imagination. To explore a closer partnership with Tennessee Campus Compact, please contact TNCC Executive Director Mani Hull at 615-966-5294 or mani.hull@lipscomb.edu. If you have any questions about national service or national service resources, please visit our website (www.nationalservice.gov) or feel free to contact me at your convenience.

cc: Dr. L. Randolph Lowry III, President, Lipscomb University
Mani Hull, Executive Director, Tennessee Campus Compact
TNCC Member Presidents

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