



# TENNESSEE WESLEYAN COLLEGE

October 10, 2011

Belle S. Wheelan, Ph.D. President  
Southern Association of Colleges and Schools  
Commission on College  
1866 Southern Lane, Decatur, GA 30033

Dr. Wheelan,

I am saddened that I could not be there today to add my voice to that of Dr. ManiHull in promoting broad implementation of service-learning. At Tennessee Wesleyan College, Service-Learning is the crux of our mission to prepare students to “Learn, Serve, Lead...and *Believe*.” We seek to prepare students to be contributing members to their fields while also understanding and believing that they can make a greater impact in our global society through service to others. We cannot achieve success without the support and funding through federal and state entities.

Our 2009 QEP focuses on developing Servant Leaders through Service-Learning. Since implementing this plan in fall 2010, we have designated 15 courses as Service-Learning, giving students in those classes the opportunity to make a *practical* difference in it students participants’ lives, in additional to a *theoretical* one. These students are making **tangible impacts** in the community in which they live and the college seeks to serve. Our administration believes that we cannot rely solely upon statistical data from standardized tests and grade point averages to demonstrate overall institutional effectiveness. We want our students to extend learning beyond the classroom and engage in service that helps them grow as Servant Leaders. Service and reflection is the key to this learning process.

In our first year of formally tracking the service experiences of our students, they almost unanimously returned from the experience expressing that serving helped them grow as leaders and helped them retain the information they learned in the classroom. Over 90% of students reported that they believed they made a difference to someone as a result of serving. Our College serves a county that has been devastated by a failing economy and desperately needs the support of a community that believes that supporting and lifting up their neighbor. Service-Learning helps our students realize that their efforts are sincerely needed and appreciated. They recognize that by combining their academic curriculum with action beyond the classroom, they are making our community stronger.

We are excited about the future possibilities of implementing Service-Learning at Tennessee Wesleyan, but we realize that we still have a long way to go. Data tracked this year already shows that participation in Service-Learning designated courses are hugely positive experiences for our students and faculty members. While we are still young in our efforts and do not have long term data to prove our theory, we believe that being a service-focused institution will increase our retention rates and help our students feel better prepared to enter the workforce.

Blessings,

Mandie Thacker Beeler  
Director of the Center for Servant Leadership