



**House Appropriations Committee
February 25, 2014 – 2:00 p.m.**

**Statement by Robert R. Jennings, Ed.D.
President, The Lincoln University**

Good morning, Chairman Adolph and members of the House Appropriations Committee. Let me thank you for affording me the opportunity of presenting our Operating Budget request for the 2014-15 fiscal year.

As you know, The Lincoln University is the oldest degree granting institution in the nation for persons of African descent. However, we are proud of the fact that we have a highly diverse student body. Today our students come from 30 states, with the majority coming from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, representing some 22 counties. We also have students from 17 foreign countries. This is worth noting because quality institutions of higher learning are charged with producing students who can operate in a global society, which is part of our mission.

Let me thank you for the appropriation that you gave to us last year. However, I must point out that our allocation is still less than ten percent of the three state-supported institutions in our category. I believe it is without question that we produce the largest number of African American graduates among schools in our category, if not the largest number in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, having graduated some 400 students last year.

While we have what we believe is a well-crafted, aggressive but realistic strategic plan, having updated it this past fiscal year, the past two years has been some of the most difficult in recent history. The one overarching concern that continues to persist is that we just do not have enough funds to provide the level and quality of education expected of our institution.

I understand the fiscal challenges that the Commonwealth is facing but I am asking you to understand ours as well. We are one of the major producers of individuals who are fueling the workforce of several industries here in the Commonwealth. Fifty-four percent of our students seek employment here in the state following graduation, adding to the tax rolls and the economy.

As I mentioned last year, every time we raise our tuition, we lose between two to four percent of our students. This past year, tuition increased by two percent and we lost more than 200 students who could not return due to a lack of funds. I should also point out that the changes in the Parent Plus Loan Program which the federal government instituted in February of last year impacted 70 percent of our students. Of 1159 students whose parents applied for the loan, 849 were denied due to a negative mark on their credit report within the past 18 months.

We have basically cut expenses in every way possible, including having laid off 12 persons which we desperately needed. Also, we cut all administrative salaries by 2 percent and cut back on support personnel hours from 37.5 hours per week to 30 hours per week as a means of trying to maintain as many positions as possible, not adding to the unemployment rolls of our state.

I believe we are unique in that 64 percent of our students are the first in their families to attend college and 62 percent come from single parent, mostly female-headed households. Thus, we are helping the Commonwealth to ensure that all persons have access to a higher education, if they desire one.

Next year we will be faced with the same challenge, we do not want to raise tuition but the changes in health insurance, deferred maintenance, union contract salary increases as well as other factors beyond our control, gives us no recourse but to do so. To this end, we are asking you to consider our request for an increase of \$8 million over our 2013-14 allocation.

While our report indicates that we need some \$28 million, we are well aware that this is not likely in this economy, so we are asking that you at least get us back to our 2004 appropriation level. This will allow us to achieve the goals that we have established which includes doing our part to educate a sector of the Commonwealth that might not otherwise receive a higher education.

Research clearly shows that if students do not have a higher education and cannot obtain meaningful employment in an age when most jobs require a college degree, they are likely to be added to the rolls of unemployment, incarceration and/or welfare which will cost, not generate, tax dollars. Obviously, it makes more sense to replace guns with funds to support higher education and to spare young people a lifetime of desolation.

Thank you.