

Via electronic mail; hard copy to follow

March 3, 2009

Mr. James Cox Kennedy
Chairman
Cox Enterprises Inc.
6205 Peachtree Dunwoody Road
Atlanta, Georgia 30328

Dear Jim:

I will confess writing this before seeing the actual report that Channel 2 is promoting for Thursday evening (“College Profs Spending Millions,”), but I must tell you that I find the promos to be egregious. In a state that sometimes tends to have a bit of an anti-intellectual stance, it frankly causes me to question to which element Channel 2 is pandering.

I generally agree with the historic progressive nature of Channel 2 and the Constitution. As such, it is hard to argue that it is strange for a professor who is a specialist in French media to travel periodically to France, or for a world-class trumpet player like Fred Mills to be in demand all over the world. Moreover, using 2006 data to question university priorities in the budget climate of 2009 calls into question the premise of Channel 2’s report.

As you will see from the statement (copy attached) I released to Channel 2, we take the use of state funds (about one-third of the University’s budget) and the stewardship of private funds very seriously. While I cannot justify every single decision of 2,800 people with faculty rank, I strongly believe that they and our administration are committed not only to the advancement of knowledge and the well-being of our students, but also to the needs of the state. As your reporters and producers are aware, Dr. Garnett Stokes, Dean of the Franklin College of Arts and Sciences, has frozen all state-funded travel for faculty members in the 2009 fiscal year.

Most travel and even research in the current climate must be done with private dollars, but even given that, I am concerned about the appeal to people’s most base instincts at a time when I believe our state’s economy will be built through this century on the quality of our human capital.

The derogatory nature of reports like the one being promoted serves all of our worst interests in the long term. I have never asked a news organization to pull a report, and I won’t now because of my strong and well-known First Amendment views, but I must say that if the promos are any indication, the reports slated to begin Thursday on Channel 2 portend an ill wind for all of us. Frankly, I would be surprised if you disagree.

I am proud of Cox, proud of you, and proud of The University of Georgia. I am honored to be a Georgian, and I think that these two great state institutions—Cox and UGA—should be spending their time extolling the virtues of the arts and sciences to human betterment.

All my best,
Michael F. Adams
President

Attachment

MFA/dws

cc: Bill Hoffman, General Manager, WSB-TV

Statement for WSB-TV regarding faculty travel

The University of Georgia in this climate has met without complaint every request for cuts in state funds, which now total more than \$45 million. We are sensitive to the expenditure of state funds, which comprise about one-third of the university's total budget, and of private funds. UGA supports our faculty in the arts as well as in the sciences, as this is the kind of work in which we are expected to engage as a state flagship. It is not unusual that an expert in French media would periodically be required to travel to France, nor is it unusual that a world-class trumpeter would be invited to perform in overseas venues. UGA has hundreds of world-class faculty whose knowledge and expertise are valued throughout the state and indeed the world. In these cases and in all regards, this university has been and will continue to be sensitive to the expenditures of both public and private funds.

James C. Kennedy
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