Perception is a strange and wonderful thing. People hold onto their perceptions long after they have seen or heard the truth because the perception better fits the world in which they wish to be. So it is with some of the perceptions about the lottery.

For example, how many people still believe that the proceeds of the lottery go to fund education? How many believe higher education is getting substantial increases in funding due to the lottery? How many believe K-12 education is also being additionally funded by the lottery?

Regardless of your original feelings about establishing the lottery, it is here. In spite of all the discussion that preceded its coming, it is amazing how little many people in the state of Tennessee really understand it.

The articles in this issue provide substantial insight into the lottery, its past, present, and future. Maybe, based on the information contained herein, some mistaken perceptions will have been changed. That is certainly our hope.

In addition to the funding concerns, there are other issues that surround the lottery that are also interesting and challenging. For example, how will the requirements to receive a lottery scholarship affect grading in high schools? Will there be significant pressure on teachers to inflate grades to see that students have the necessary grade point average? Will the demand for classes at the high school level change as parents push kids who might have chosen the vocational route toward college prep simply because money is available?

Is there parity across schools? Is it fair for a student in one school to need a 95 average for an “A” when students in another school get an “A” with only a 93 or 90 average? Is there a way to put “norms” on grades to make them equivalent across the state? Or, should the only criterion be an established standard such as the ACT? Are grades across schools evenly distributed?

At the college level, will the same pressures exist on grades so that students can keep their scholarships? Will there be an increase in grade appeals that have to be dealt with because of this pressure? Will there be increased levels of searching out courses and/or professors “known” for easy grading? Will majors be chosen more for the ability to retain the grades and the scholarship than for interest or job opportunity?

What will happen to the “retention to graduation” percentages? Will students who might not have started college except for receiving a lottery scholarship be less likely to stay in school if they lose that scholarship? How will colleges be judged if this situation occurs?

Will the increased demand for college placement due to the availability of the scholarships change the choice pattern among schools? Will students who want to go to certain schools be forced to attend others because of the overall increased demand for placement and the lack of space at the schools in higher demand? Will class sizes in the critical first-year courses balloon?

How will the state maintain facilities for the increased numbers attending the various institutions of higher education? Will the state match the increased demand, fueled by lottery scholarships, with increased funding for classrooms and faculty?

The questions seem almost endless and the answers few. You may have found even more interesting questions posed in the articles of this issue. And, it is hoped, you found the answers to some of these and other questions of importance to you. In some cases, we may all just have to wait and see how things work out.

In any case, the lottery is here, and more students will enjoy the financial ability to attend institutions of higher education because of it. As an educator, I believe more people with more and better education is a good thing. Based on the application numbers seen so far in Tennessee, we certainly expect more students. To give them more and better education remains a significant challenge.

What are the odds that everything will work out as well as we hope? The odds of winning the Powerball are, I believe, one in 120,000,000. Which odds do you think are better?

Sincerely,

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