



THE ADVOCATE



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FOLLOW THE MONEY



Deep Throat's famous line from All the President's Men proves difficult advice for the last few years at NHMCCD, perhaps the result of poor communication from administration to cost center managers, faculty and staff regarding budget. For a three-year period from 1996 to 1999, I heard many complaints from associate deans and other cost center managers regarding tight budgets. NHC Associate Dean Jennie Harrison says that NHC associate deans were told to come in with a level budget for the three years with the hope of a small last minute increase. At the end of 1998-99, NHC associate deans say they were charged to cut \$324,000 before August 31. In 98-99, Harrison had only one top priority, software for the Spanish program, but a portion of it had to be trimmed. She says, "CH was not cut as much as other divisions because we are not equipment bound. Other divisions that have high equipment and materials costs were hit harder."

Associate Dean Debbie Ellington agrees that for the three years in question associate deans at NHC were told they faced a flat budget with an anticipated small increase at the last minute. She notes, "We were told if there was an increase in general operating, we had to find the money within our division budget. At the same time, I'm adding new programs, new faculty, and our enrollments are increasing. There has been no additional money for increased printing, office supplies, and so forth. A flat budget leaves no room for growth." Ellington lists among items that were cut or had to be moved to a second tier of priority in those three years: hiring a faculty secretary, replacing old, worn out band instruments and pianos, an increase for accompanists at recitals, a new

projection system. This last year she was able to get an extra \$1,000 for student travel. The budget allowed the purchase of one new projection system to be shared by all of her division. She was finally able to hire a faculty secretary Fall of 1999 after having the position cut the previous year in spite of a real need. Within Ellington's division, Music Program Coordinator Gary Liebst reports struggling for the three years. He points out that some of the "area high school band programs are second to none. They provide some of the more costly instruments like tubas, and the expectation is that we will do the same." Many of the band's instruments are wearing out. Moreover, Liebst notes that a number of our students come from economically disadvantaged areas and cannot afford even the smaller instruments, such as flutes, and, as a result, they do not join the band. Some of the more expensive instruments cost \$4,000 to \$6,000, but if they are well maintained, they will last more than twenty years, benefiting a number of students. Liebst says that instrument purchases were frozen for the three years due to tight budget. He was able to purchase two instruments in 00-01 when it was learned that he had been loaning out his personal saxophones to students. The music department's upright pianos are over twenty years old. Five years ago, they were appraised, and the appraiser said they were not worth repairing, recommending instead that the college invest its money in new equipment. No piano purchases have been made. Sixteen electronic keyboards are nine years old and will not accept some of the new software available. It is remarkable that the music program has done so well under these conditions. In the same division, Roy Hanscom reports frustration with a

flat supply budget in the face of increasing enrollments and increasing costs of supplies during the time in question. Ellington says, "No one ever told me money was left over. We cut some major needs, not just out of my budget, but across the college. Had we known of the surpluses, we could have gone back and reallocated some of it to priority items that had been cut or some second tier items. I could have gotten bids on some items in twenty four hours, and we could have purchased items that would help us to do our jobs."

NHC Natural Sciences postponed faculty hiring, cut faculty stipends, and had to forgo purchasing the desired number of Proxima projectors for Power Point presentations to students. In 1996-97, Associate Dean Gary Clark reports that he had to cut the purchase of a microscope projection system for \$9,000. In fact, the division did not get the system until Fall 2000. The Biology Department did not have enough money to buy a mannequin to demonstrate human muscle. They had to transfer money from other accounts to purchase at least a leg and an arm in 96/97. In 98/99, they bought a whole mannequin (\$2,000) out of their operating budget. Other biology models are being patched up to keep them functional. Similar stories abound from other disciplines and colleges.

It is appropriate that it was in NHC's Natural Science Division that a bomb went off in the Spring of 2000. Dr. Pickelman was making his rounds visiting with the divisions across the district. Hearing concerns from faculty members in Natural Sciences about tight budgets affecting their ability to best serve students, he responded that he was unsure of what they meant because NHC's budget was healthy.

In fact, the college had returned a surplus to the District Office. Everyone else in the meeting, including the associate dean, was stunned to hear this news, and a whirlwind of discussion spread throughout the campus. On the one hand, faculty and staff had had the impression that the budget was tight, and now they heard that there was a surplus.

To help shed light on the subject, the union submitted an Open Records request for "the dollar amount budgeted to each of our four colleges ... amount each college returned to the district ...[and] how this returned money was spent" for 1996/97, 1997/98, 1998/99. The following chart was part of the District Office's response. The 100 Fund is the general operating fund, and 107 is the Continuing Education fund.

**North Harris Montgomery Community College District
Comparison of Budget to Actual**

	Actual Expenses			Total	Budget		Revenue		Total	Budget over/(undr)
	100 fund	107 fund			100 fund	107 fund				
1998/1999										
North Harris College	24,158,404	2,085,026		26,243,430	24,426,459	2,008,236		26,434,695		(191,265)
Kingwood College	10,018,360	1,385,376		11,403,736	10,010,788	1,129,242		11,140,030		263,706
Tomball College	9,842,524	551,636		10,394,160	9,956,979	454,231		10,411,210		(17,050)
Montgomery College	9,880,253	949,339		10,829,592	9,981,528	919,045		10,880,573		(50,981)
	53,899,541	4,971,377		58,870,918	54,355,754	4,510,754		58,866,508		
1997/1998										
North Harris College	22,104,524	1,989,965		24,094,489	23,024,290	1,565,464		24,589,754		(495,265)
Kingwood College	8,729,282	1,123,172		9,852,454	8,708,997	1,156,590		9,865,587		(13,133)
Tomball College	8,520,100	651,738		9,171,838	8,857,957	649,237		9,507,194		(335,356)
Montgomery College	8,259,547	691,631		8,951,178	8,423,992	690,607		9,114,599		(163,421)
	47,613,453	4,456,506		52,069,959	49,015,236	4,061,898		53,077,134		
1996/1997										
North Harris College	23,172,231	282,233		23,454,464	23,940,616	270,344		24,210,960		(756,496)
Kingwood College	8,736,939	132,584		8,869,523	8,684,708	108,898		8,793,606		75,917
Tomball College	8,308,486	154,649		8,463,135	8,453,123	177,231		8,630,354		(167,219)
Montgomery College	8,332,901	516,093		8,848,994	8,152,690	280,528		8,433,218		415,776
	48,550,557	1,085,559		49,636,116	49,231,137	837,001		50,068,138		

Many of the numbers are worthy of note. In the far right column, a number in parentheses indicates a surplus, and a number not in parentheses indicates an expenditure over budget. Over the three-year period, NHC experienced a surplus totaling \$1,443,022, almost \$1.5 million! During this time, our buildings have been deteriorating, we have not replaced some full-time faculty and staff, and, if cost center managers are correct, we have done without equipment, software, etc. that would help us better serve students, our primary mission. In this same three years, Kingwood and Montgomery experienced a surplus two years, and Tomball experienced one all three years. Over the three years, Montgomery had a \$228,374 deficit, Kingwood had a \$326,470 deficit, while Tomball had a \$519,625 surplus, over half a million dollars, which almost balanced the Montgomery and Kingwood deficits. That leaves the almost \$1.5 million surplus at NHC, a surplus which existed after covering deficits in CE.

The union's request to know where the surpluses went was answered, "unexpended funds will be added to the fund balance of the fund from which they were earned. They are not moved between funds." What this means is the surpluses went back to District's general operating fund balance. There is no indication of how those funds ultimately were re-allocated.

I recently met with Dr. Bob Williams, who was currently NHC Vice President for Administrative Services at NHC, to review the information I had received from District Office. He said he could not confirm the numbers in the chart because there is no standard management report for information like this. Williams says all fund balances from the colleges roll into the District fund balance, which is a reserve required by the Board to meet unexpected needs across the District. He did confirm the downward trend in NHC's fund balance over the three years. I asked Dr. Williams how the NHC surplus occurred in the face of complaints from cost center managers that budgets over the three years have been tight. He explained that there are over two thousand budget codes at NHC. Generally speaking, many codes end the year partially unspent. This includes supplies, equipment, salaries, etc. Whatever is unspent

goes to the college fund balance. In other words, by adding amounts from these unspent codes NHC accumulated these surplus totals in the three years in question. He added that these accumulations were not known until it was too late to expend them because many purchases require a bidding process that could not be completed by the end of the budget year to expend the funds. He indicated that he had received no major complaints about not purchasing or spending what had been budgeted, we did not harm any programs, and "no budgets were ever cut. As a matter of fact, we have had an increasingly well-funded budget," a comment in concert with Dr. Pickelman's bombshell at the Natural Sciences meeting. Why such a contrast in perceptions between the administration and faculty and staff? The money is hard to follow.

The ultimate question, of course, is, "How could NHC be returning almost \$1.5 million in surplus funds to District Office over three years when so many campus needs were going unmet?" The same question could be asked of Tomball, especially for 1997/98—a \$335,356 surplus.

Fortunately, a new budget process was instituted for 2000/2001. In this new process, each college will keep its own fund balance rather than returning it to District Office. Each college will have a Strategic Initiative Committee to allocate fund balances when they occur at that college. This system will make it more likely that any surpluses that exist will be used to build programs, buy equipment, in other words, actually serve our students.

One might wonder why the union would highlight such a problem when it has already been fixed. In fact, one administrator told me that people can embrace the new approach and "need to get over what happened three years ago." Interesting advice. The reason to highlight such an issue now is to emphasize the importance of truth and communication between the administration and faculty and staff. It also bears witness to the fact that the new budgeting process bears watching to ensure that everyone knows the facts.

Alan Hall

RECLASSIFICATION REVISITED

The issue of reclassification has become a hot topic in the last couple of months as many employees received notice of this year's reclassifications. The union has since received several requests by those who feel that they have been treated unfairly in the reclassification process to look at the issue.

The groups most affected by the recent reclassifications are the Division Assistants and the Secretaries, two groups for which Human Resources conducted a review for group reclassifications. The end result: most division assistants were raised two classification levels, from a B8 to a B10, and were given a new title, Division Coordinator; many secretaries were raised one classification level, and some were given new titles (i.e. Faculty Secretaries moved from a B7 to a B8 and became Staff Assistants). Unfortunately, a few individuals feel they were treated unfairly. One such example involves a union member and former Division Assistant. In her case while other Division Assistants advanced two levels and became Division Coordinators, she was only advanced one level and received the title of Department Assistant. So far, despite her attempts to find an answer as to why she is now classified lower than those she has been parallel with for three years, and whose job duties match her job duties, she has received no valid answer. Instead, she has been told that the new human resources director on her campus will be looking into it.

While researching the group reclassification issue, we discovered a few other concerns regarding individual reclassifications. One particular case involves an academic coordinator from an area who submitted a request and was granted reclassification. However, this reclassification affected several other members within the same area, including another academic coordinator whose position was actually modeled after the reclassified coordinator; however, no changes were made to any of the other positions to prevent inequities from being created. Which leads us to ask: "Isn't someone responsible for checking each reclassification to make sure that inequities aren't being created? Is

this being done at both the campus-wide level and the district-wide level?

In a response to a request for information by union president Alan Hall, Sandra McMullan, Vice Chancellor of Human Resources & General Counsel, writes, "Human Resources reports to EC this list of individual reclass requests, along with other positions that will be 'impacted' by a reclass. Members of the Executive Council may request that additional positions be included as potentially 'impacted' by the reclass of other positions that are on the list." In an email to all NHMCCD employees, dated Sept. 7, 2000, McMullan also writes, "Internal Equity: persons performing similar functions at different locations should receive equivalent pay, regardless of the organizational structures" In this instance, the inequity is not at different locations. It is on the same campus, in the same building, in the same room. If this practice of thoroughly reviewing the impact on other positions is in place, then why are these and other inequities still occurring?

Heightening the inequities is the district's response. An investigation can stretch on for months. Once the administration admits that an inequity does exist, they refuse to make a salary adjustment retroactive, adding insult to the original injury and affecting an employee's annual income and retirement. To prevent such a situation, the district should actually follow what McMullan lays out as established guidelines.

In the next few weeks, we hope to find answers to some of our questions and concerns regarding the reclassification issue. We will keep you updated on what we discover.

Dawn Baxley
Alan Hall

No Confidence Stands

In the October, 2000 issue of The Advocate, the union reported a vote of no confidence in what turned out to be the semi-final draft of the proposed new faculty evaluation presented by the Evaluation Taskforce. At that time, the taskforce was undertaking one more revision. That revision is

complete, and the final proposal has been distributed electronically by the taskforce chair. The final proposal reflects some change from the semi-final version but remains substantially the same document. Therefore, the union's position has not changed.

I was a member of the taskforce and slowly became troubled over the direction it was taking. At the conclusion of the work, I requested to be recorded in the dissenting minority of the taskforce. I submitted the following statement to the chair.

[...]I want to record my reaction to the document as a whole. In two or three of our meetings, I raised my concern that the taskforce was straying from two of the values that we established at the outset, to keep the system as simple as possible and to make it as easy to administer as possible. My concern met with some resistance each time. I can count a room, so I decided that it was fruitless to pursue the point. Instead, I focused my efforts on changing what faculty reported to me to be the most troubling elements of the document. I do, in fact, represent faculty. We did change or modify several areas about which faculty were most vocal, and I am proud of our work in those areas.

There are some excellent elements in the document, but simplicity and ease of administration are not, I believe, among them. Therefore, I want to be recorded in the dissenting minority of the taskforce. As a practical matter, my "no" vote will have little impact. I've counted the room. The report will go forward to EC. I simply do not want the impression created that there was complete consensus on the taskforce.

The cover email, dated November 20, 2000, that accompanied the final report to all faculty does mention minority opinions: "Sometimes agreements were unanimous, but more often than not, decisions were based on consensus or majority rule. However, on every issue, minority opinions were heard and considered." While this statement recognizes the existence of minority opinion, it does not fully characterize my position, which was a "no" vote, not on a single issue, but on the entire proposal.

Alan Hall

New Dues Structure

The union's executive committee approved a new dues structure at its November 10, 2000 meeting. Executive committee member Cris Neuman raised the point that a number of employees listed as support staff actually supervise several employees and operate large budgets. These individuals include program coordinators, corporate trainers, and so forth whose job responsibilities differ from what we typically consider support staff and whose salaries are higher than support staff salaries. She pointed out that, in fact, a new Professional Staff Council is emerging.

The union has always had a sliding scale for monthly dues based on income. Based on Neuman's recommendation, the executive committee approved a new category in the following dues structure.

Full-time Faculty	\$24.55
Full-time Professional Staff	\$21.00
Full-time Support Staff	\$17.40
Part-time Faculty and Staff	\$14.30

With the exception of the new category, all dues rates remain the same. The executive committee agreed to grandfather anyone currently paying support staff dues but in a professional staff position. With this announcement, any new members in a professional staff position will pay the new rate.

Staff

PUT IN ON PAPER

If you want your students to get the most out of assigned readings, opt for the handout, not the hyperlink. A study of 131 undergrads at Ohio State University, who each read two articles that had first appeared in *Time* magazine, shows that the group that read the print versions found the material to be more accessible than did the group that read the articles on the computer screen. The experiment was conducted by a team headed by Karen Murphy, an assistant professor of educational psychology at OSU, who reported on her findings at the summer meeting of the American Psychological Association. While all of the students had learned something from reading the articles, the screen readers found the material harder to

understand, less interesting and less persuasive than the print readers reported. "It may be that students need to learn different processing abilities when they are attempting to read computerized text," Murphy says. (For the full story, see www.salon.com/books/wire/2000/08/10/reading/index.html.)

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VERMONT FACULTY WANT A VOICE

There are plenty of times when faculty want to be privy to the decision-making process at a university. But when a university runs into money problems, faculty don't want to be left out in the cold as the budget meets the ax.

Last spring, faculty at the University of Vermont spoke out before the UVM board of trustees in opposition to an early retirement plan to eliminate full-time faculty positions. The plan was passed, and this fall, the faculty are organizing. With a committee of more than 100 faculty affiliated jointly with the AFT and the American Association of University Professors, the UVM United Academics are hoping to hold an election soon.

A study by the AAUP shows that UVM administrative expenditures increased 58 percent from 1991 to 1999, while instructional outlays went up by only 28 percent. The faculty have watched with concern as central administration has proliferated. In the past year, the university has taken two strident actions to correct cost overruns—a budget cut of \$1 million and the three-year buyout, which will cost \$2.5 million.

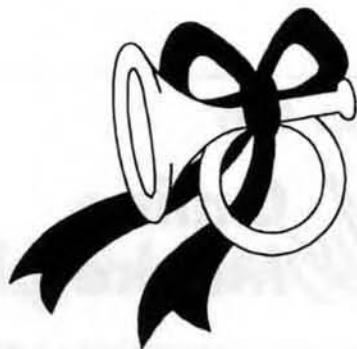
"There are presently no checks on either the growth of central administration or the power that central administration can exercise over us and the university as a whole," says Mark Stoler, a professor of history and 30-year UVM veteran, who spoke at the Burlington press conference announcing the union drive.

"The administration talks about improving quality," says English

professor Lee Thompson, "while at the same time their financial mismanagement has led to a situation where we will be losing 50 full-time faculty positions. Those cuts will result in higher class size with significant pedagogic impact."

"For me, the union is primarily about the faculty securing a real voice in running UVM," says Elaine McCrate. "My top priority is maintaining and improving the quality of education at UVM."

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UNION-FRIENDLY WEB SITE GIVES AFT MEMBERS DISCOUNTS, SERVICES

There is now a new home on the Internet created just for AFT members and their families: MyAFT.org. A new AFT PLUS Member Benefit developed in cooperation with workingfamilies.com, MyAFT.org allows members to stay in touch with their union, connect with the labor community and take advantage of benefits negotiated specially for union members. At MyAFT.org, members also can get the latest news, weather and sports; check out movie and TV listings; pay bills online; and even track stocks. MyAFT.org also offers links to special resources for educators, including classroom materials and lesson plans, education news and more. Other features include the Resources for Working Families Center, a Worker-Friendly Marketplace, free e-mail and the ability

to subscribe to unlimited, premium Internet service for just \$14.95 a month. Through this site they will also have an easy link to the AFT's own Web site for thousands of pages of information, AFT news, reports and valuable links. Also featured are special member-only savings on IBM and union-made computers. Visit the site at <http://www.MyAFT.org> and keep coming back as new features are added throughout the holiday season—watch for special money-saving "Hot Deals of the Day," along with "Extreme Buys" merchandise at incredibly low prices.

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CURRENT DUES

FULL-TIME FACULTY - \$24.55 per month
FULL-TIME PROFESSIONAL STAFF - \$21.00 FULL-TIME STAFF - \$17.40
ADJUNCT FACULTY and PART-TIME STAFF - \$14.30

CALL FOR ARTICLES

We invite you to send us your opinions, your news, your questions and so forth. The Advocate is a forum for information and free interchange of ideas. Send your articles to Dawn Baxley, Editor, NHC, or e-mail: dawnb@nhmccd.edu, or submit to any of the following officers: Alan Hall, President, ACAD 217, NHC, Velma Trammell, WNSP 174, Rich Almstedt, KC; Tim Howard, NHC, Julie Alber, MC; Cris Neuman, NHC, Mary Ella Phelps, TC Bob Locander, NHC, or Allen Vogt, NHC.

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