

SAVE

1650 REPORT

Henry Ford Community College Federation of Teachers

LOCAL 1650, A.F.T.

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ANNUAL REPORT ON STATE OF THE UNION

An annual report on the state of the Union is required by the Federation's constitution and affords an opportunity to review the Federation's response to the challenges of the recently concluded year and assess those of the year upcoming. Whether the focus is the College or the local, state, and national political scene, 2006 was a year of major transition and 2007 should prove likewise.

HFCC Administrative Changes

In the recently concluded year, the College and Local 1650 witnessed the retirement of HFCC President Andy Mazzara, the Interim Presidency of Dr. Sally Barnett, and the inauguration of Dr. Gail Mee. Given the retirement of a long-serving and very successful President, the retirement of three of the College's four vice-presidents, and the retirement of the HFCC's Human Resource Director and Interim President, the College community has experienced and is experiencing a period of unprecedented change.

Longstanding professional relationships have come to conclusion, and new relationships are being formed. It is to Interim President Sally Barnett's credit that the transition to Dr. Mee's presidency was seamless and productive. In her first few months at the College, Dr. Mee has demonstrated those qualities which the Presidential Search Committee prized and perceived in her candidacy. Dr. Mee has embraced the College's culture and its tradition of shared governance, while beginning to steer the College in new directions. She has established very positive relationships within the College community, has energetically cultivated the political and business leadership of the Dearborn community, and has already well represented the College at the State Capitol.

The College's new Director of Human Resources, Ms. Elizabeth Davis, has also demonstrated sensitivity to the College's traditions and practices and a commitment to positive labor relations. We shall soon have

State House, there should be fewer attacks directed at the State teachers' retirement plan and much greater effort to increase State revenues.

However, the Republican majority's elimination of the State Business Tax last year will add in 2008 over \$2.2 billion to the State's current \$800 million projected deficit. While the Governor has proposed replacing all revenue lost by the repeal of the Single Business Tax, the State Republican leadership insists on tax reduction, arguing that this will stimulate economic growth. There are very serious questions, though, as to whether Michigan can "grow" itself out of its structural deficit. Even if it could, what happens to essential State services, including higher education funding, during the interim, until this period of hoped for economic growth materializes?

Federal Government and Deficit Impact Higher Education

At the national level, control of the U.S. House and U. S. Senate has changed parties. When Republicans controlled both federal chambers, there were repeated calls to terminate Perkins funding, curtail Pell Grant Funding, and enforce highly questionable "accountability" standards in the Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, among them tying federal higher education funds to graduation rates. Elements of David Horowitz's so-called "Academic Bill of Rights" were also espoused by the Republican leaders, including the federal review of faculty hiring practices and college curricula to assure ideological balance. With the Democratic party in control of both the U.S. House and Senate, these threats are greatly diminished.

As is the case though with our deficit burdened State, the federal budget deficit generated by President Bush and his Republican majority over the last six years severely limits what can be done at the federal level to improve higher education programs. The \$5.6 trillion federal debt at the end of the Clinton administration is now \$8.6 trillion. The budget surplus of \$236 billion as President Clinton left office is now a federal deficit of \$248 billion. A deficit of \$339 billion is projected for 2007, and most of this deficit is due to tax reductions favoring the most wealthy of Americans and not the fiscal burdens of Homeland Security or the War in Iraq. Moreover, President Bush's \$1.7 trillion in tax cuts to the wealthiest of Americans, if made permanent, will cost, with interest, \$2.1 trillion by 2015 and \$7.2 trillion by 2025. The longstanding Republican strategy of "starving" government and thereby diminishing social and human services will severely constrain the new Democratic majorities in both

Given that the American auto industry, at the insistence of the United Auto Workers, has brought – directly and indirectly – tens of millions Americans into the middle class, a decision to purchase a union made American automobile – and in our case a union made Ford automobile – should be an easy one, since it is clearly in our self interest to do so.

Local 1650 Contract Negotiations

The State's economy, Dearborn's economy, the health of the automobile industry in general, and Ford Motor Company in particular, will have great impact on this College and Local as we negotiate a successor contract in 2007. The College and its employees are not immune from the forces buffeting the private sector. If good wages, comprehensive health care coverage, and secure pensions disappear in the private sector, they will surely disappear in the public sector. Elected officials will not long afford public sector employees what is no longer common in the private sector. Local 1650's negotiating team will work hard to bring back on equitable contract, but that team, this Union, and this College do not operate in political and fiscal vacuums. I hope we can achieve a good contract in 2007, and if we do so, it will be because this Union engages in political action, in Dearborn, in Lansing, and through the AFT in Washington. Maintaining professional compensation and benefits long term is an even dicier proposition. That depends upon the American middle class recognizing that it must support those unions and industries which brought millions of Americans into the middle class.

HFCC Adjuncts Attempt to Organize

One final point regarding transition in 2007. This year will probably witness an effort by AFT Michigan to organize HFCC's adjunct faculty. This is being done at the request of HFCC's adjunct faculty. Given 600 adjunct faculty and their potential voting strength, it is very unlikely that they will come into our 205 member Union. Nevertheless, we should and will support their efforts to organize a union. We should do so because many of them must cobble together a meager income from several college and they lack the due process protections we take for granted. They need to be empowered. We should and will support their efforts because we remember from where we came. Prior to the teacher union movement, public education was subsidized on the backs of all teachers. Over time, the teacher union movement has changed that and brought professional compensation and professional standing to many teachers. Much of higher education, though, remains subsidized on the backs of adjunct faculty