



UTAH HIGHER EDUCATION STAFF ASSOCIATION

To: Utah State Legislators
From: Utah Higher Education Staff Association (UHESA)
Date: February 18, 2004
Subject: Information

2003-2004 -	UHESA President	Teresa W. McKnight	Utah State University
	President Elect	Shad Sorenson	Utah Valley State College

UHESA would like to thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to share a few moments with us so we may share information with you about staff within higher education.

The Utah Higher Education Staff Association (UHESA) was established in 1994. The mission of UHESA is to unify, train, educate, and cultivate higher education staff and their associations; to create a powerful voice for staff within the state of Utah; to instill a sense of pride in higher education staff; and to educate the citizens of Utah regarding the worth of higher education. Membership of UHESA consists of delegates from each institution's staff organization officers and all employees within higher education. UHESA meets twice yearly with special meetings scheduled on an as needed basis.

We would like to take a few minutes and outline the importance of staff within higher education. Classified and Professional staff assist higher education institutions to achieve their goal of recruiting and retaining students and enhancing the reputation of each institution and the State of Utah. Both Classified and Professional staff have daily contact with students, on advising levels (Professional) or on a registration level (Classified); both associations assist in the daily operation of the institution, on business, accounting, and development levels (Professional) or on a facilities level (Classified); both work in research, on research associate levels (Professional) or on a lab/research technician level (Classified).

Professional staff are contributors in teaching, advising, developing new technologies, recruitment, marketing, research, accounting, business development, engineering, program administration and coordination, administering the university network and many more vital functions of each institution.

Classified staff are contributors as assistants to administrators, office assistants, accounting assistants, technicians, human resource specialists, grounds keepers, computer technicians, contract coordinators, lab and research technicians, library assistants, food service workers, mail carriers, teachers' aides, facilities maintenance and other important functions of the university.

Additionally, Professional staff also recruit students, enhance research, negotiate contracts and grants, transfer and license technology, and assist in incubating new companies, as well as enhancing economic

development for each institution and the State of Utah. Classified staff also maintain institution facilities, construction or remodeling of classrooms for the faculty to teach, students to attend, and offices for administration, faculty, and staff to work.

To show our commitment of higher education, all UHESA members attending today's UHESA Day at the Capital have taken personal vacation time to share information with you on how zero salary increases and increases in benefit costs have affected higher education staff.

The following are a summation of UHESA issues in regards to Higher Education budgeting:

1. Compensation and funding of new enrollments:

Salary and Benefits: Higher Education has not received a raise since 2001-2002 (over 2 years). Year One was a challenge for the entire state of Utah. Staff within higher education accepted zero salary increases as a way to support the state of Utah recover financially, anticipating that the following year would result in an increase in salaries benefit costs.

Year Two brought a different challenge to staff within higher education. Staff had to accept zero salary increases, and in addition, staff had to absorb additional responsibilities due to extensive budget cuts which resulted in positions getting cut and people losing their jobs.

Year Three has resulted in tremendous pressures and financial difficulties for all staff within higher education. Staff have been forced to absorb additional positions, including added responsibilities to their own positions in order to keep up with the growth of new enrollments. Staff are exceeding 40 hour work weeks and are not being compensated for their time, which has resulted in low morale, additional time away from our families and family activities.

In addition, because of zero salary increases over the last 2 years, more staff are requiring state assistance in order to feed and support their families.

The roughly 24,000 members of UHESA want to again thank you for allowing us time to share with you some of our feelings and information. UHESA employees work for the following Higher Education institutions:

- University of Utah
- Utah State University
- Weber State University
- Southern Utah University
- Salt Lake Community College
- Utah Valley State College
- Dixie State College of Utah
- College of Eastern Utah

We are counting on you!



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Letters from Staff:

- 1) I am a supervisor at the University of Utah. The first year of zero salary increases was a struggle for everyone, but as a supervisor, my biggest challenge came in the second year. You see, due to the drastic second round of budget cuts, I had to cut several positions within my department. It was a very difficult day for me. One of the many positions I had to cut was a father of four small children. He had worked for me for several years and was a dedicated and hard worker, always volunteering to work extra hours when needed, and always helping at the last minute. It was heart wrenching to call him into my office, look across my desk, and inform him that due to budget cuts, I had to dissolve his position and lay him off. I will never forget the look on this dedicated employees face as he looked at me and shed tears wondering how he was going to feed and support his young family.
- 2) I have worked for the State for 13 years now. Since the salary freezes two years ago, the following financial concerns have occurred for my family:
 - My children have gone on the “reduced lunch” program in their school district.
 - My children do not participate in extra-curricular activities that cost more than a few dollars, such as music lessons, sports, dancing, etc.
 - Our utility bills have increased by 50% in the last two years but my salary has taken a hit due to increase costs of benefits.
 - In spite of careful budgeting for anticipated costs, we have had to use meager savings to meet unexpected obligations. The meager savings come from outside work I have to do to make ends meet.
 - We feed a family of seven on \$400.00 per month. Needless to say, meat is a treat and so are fresh fruits and vegetables.
- 3) I have been blessed to have a second income to compensate for the lack of raises the last two years; actually, that is how I have coped with zero salary increases, by increasing my moon lighting hours. I won't be able to do that much longer. If we do not get raises this year, I will have to leave my position as will so many other employees who are left more over burdened than before and less compensated.
- 4) I graduated from USU in 1997 with a bachelor's degree in civil engineering in the top 10% of my class. Shortly thereafter, I was hired full-time at USU. Since then I have been a hard working dedicated employee (always receiving high poor performance appraisal). During the 6-½ years of service, I have achieved three separate professional certifications and have become a licensed professional engineer. My point is that I have two older children that qualify for reduced school lunch and my two younger children qualify for WIC.
- 5) I had to reduce my grocery budget to \$80 per week for a family of 6 (4 teenage boys) and we live on plastic more just to survive. Also, I had to take my oldest

son out of college. He had to get a full-time job to help support our family and to save up to pay for his future college education.

6) As a full-time professional employee, and after 3 years of no pay increases, I qualify for the following:

- Earned income tax credit
- Reduced school lunches for my daughter
- Free online tax preparation for low-income filers

The list is growing. I'm frugal with the money we spend. We don't eat out and we stick to a tight budget. But each month we're just a little further behind. I've had to start selling my blood plasma twice a week just to make sure all the bills are paid. My wife has chosen to remain at home to raise our two children, but it's becoming increasingly difficult to remain in this situation.

7) In 2003-2004 my family's prescription costs have more than tripled. What used to cost me \$52 now costs me \$157. This is an increase of \$420. Without raises in the past two years, and being a classified employee, my working salary has taken an extreme hit.

8) Please let Legislators know that there are outside agencies watching higher education institutions in the state of Utah. I am a Program Manager at the Kennedy Space Center in Florida and I am appalled that employees within higher education have not received salary increases in over two years.

The roughly 24,000 members of UHESA want to again thank you for allowing us time to share with you some of our feelings and information.

Please help us.

We are counting on you!

Thank you for your time.