

HCC BOT Meeting (03-22-2023)

Hearing of the Faculty Speakers

1. Suzanne Devore, Theater, YB (Value of faculty)
2. Jeremy Bullian, Librarian, YB, FUSA Vice President (Grievance Arbitration)
3. Tony Buonaquisti, Physics, DM (Impasse Hearing)
4. Elizabeth Key-Raimer, Counseling, DM (Confidence Vote)
5. April Muchmore-Vokoun, English, DM (Confidence Vote)
6. Sherry Sippel, Math, DM, FUSA President (Budget)

Written versions of the statements follow.

Suzy DeVore, Tenured Theatre Professor at the Ybor City Campus

I have been at HCC 13 years. I have grown the Theatre Department to almost double its size from when I started. I currently work 50 hours a week and more during production time. As for “all of our time off”, I am still asked to be in meetings, teaching overload classes, and continuing to work on unfinished projects from the previous semester or work on new projects for the upcoming semester, none of which I am compensated for, all above and beyond my contractual duties. I could say no, and I do say no more and more. Think about what happens when faculty stop working above and beyond their contractual obligations, you will lose HCC presence in the community and student enrollment. I love teaching my students. I am passionate about my profession as a theater educator, and the importance of theater in society. I do NOT love the institution that I work for anymore. This institution has become a tragic example of a dysfunctional and toxic work environment that does not value the very employees who are the backbone of what the institution does, and that is to educate students, and to provide community partnerships. The statistics are evident of the lack of financial compensation to the faculty, which is even more detrimental in an economy with the highest inflation and cost of living rates in years. I am living paycheck to paycheck and teaching overloads every semester and every summer, and we are told not to depend on overload. If I did not teach overload, I would not be able to pay my bills. The faculty are what kept enrollment going during the pandemic and are the ones who continue to and who have always helped it to grow.

Faculty attend and facilitate enrollment and recruitment events without pay and is not contractual. These are just a few examples that I either coordinate and/or attend.

- **Fiesta Day, Ybor City**
- **The College Performing Arts Fair, The Straz Center**
- **Host Arts Immersion Day, event where prospective performing arts students visit the Ybor City Campus**
- **Present to K – 12 Theater teachers at Hillsborough County In Service**
- **Coordinate on campus events with EDC's**

When I share my stories of frustration to colleagues from around the state and the nation, I am often asked why I stay. It is harder and harder to answer that question. Perhaps you see losing tenured faculty as a benefit, as you will save money with lower incoming salaries, but I know that mentality will not benefit the college. I have seen it in departments across the country that thought the same, but instead what they got were more disgruntled employees, lack of consistency for students, a break down in the departments, and therefore a decline in enrollment, not to mention the tarnish on the institutions name. We the faculty urge you to give us back our worth and our value and pay us a living wage.

Suzanne Devore

Theater, Ybor City Campus

Madam chair, members of the board:

I'm Jeremy Bullian, Professor at the Ybor Campus and FUSA VP. You're all probably thinking, "here come the red shirts again." Yes, we are back.

You've heard our frustration over the sorry state of contract negotiations and our entreaties that Dr. Atwater has devalued the very faculty he is charged with leading. We are back.

We are here again, our 4th address to the Board, to not to trod well-worn ground but to emphasize the consistent pattern of disregard and disrespect toward faculty and the CBA. We are back.

In the recent Grievance decision, the arbitrator sided with the college noting it has the managerial right to determine the availability of funds. Yet all the grievance ruling has ultimately done is tell us what everyone already knows: Dr. Atwater does not consider faculty to be a priority. Here are three key excerpts from the arbitrator's opinion that build to this point:

1. *"...the Union presented testimony from an expert who had analyzed HCC's books and records. She concluded that HCC did have available funds to pay the negotiated step increases. Under the parties' Agreement, however, it is management's job to determine the availability of funds.*
2. Referring to the contract, *"We are left then with the current language. "Faculty salary increases are contingent upon funding availability." The Union may think that HCC should have paid the step increases and not use available resources for other institutional needs. Management, however, reserves the right to allocate available funds.*
3. *"HCC determined that priorities other than the step increases would be a better use for whatever funds were available."*

The arbitrator also noted that the union "can attempt to negotiate a better system", or "the Union could have negotiated language making payment of step increases the "first priority" for available funds. The UNION did try to negotiate making the step increases part of the budget process and having "first priority" over all other items in the contract. The College rejected these proposals.

In the same sense that not all laws are just, "managerial right" does not make it right. The forensic accountant showed that money was available. But a choice was made to prioritize other things over faculty year after year after year. What is "just" about signing a contract in supposed good faith and then turning around and repeatedly renegeing on the terms of that contract? It is not just. It is not right. And we will be back.

Jeremy Bullian
Librarian, Ybor City
FUSA Vice-President

Text for Presentation to HCC BOT
Anthony Buonaquisti
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3/22/2023

Dear Board of Trustees:

I recently attended the Impasse hearing. I expected to hear considered thoughts from administrative colleagues who I know to be good and intelligent people. Foolish me!

With regard to the ticking-time-bomb that is the sweetheart deal given to the ex-administrator / current-math-faculty-member; -- the judge was told that President Atwater can put whoever he wants on the lucrative Full Year contact and that he doesn't need to justify his decision to anybody. Really? I think taxpayers would disagree.

With regard to the underpayment of lab teaching; -- the judge was told that this was due to co-teaching by lab technicians. To be clear, co-teaching is not part of anybody's job description. If this has ever happened the administration should have stopped the practice. Nevertheless, following the administration's logic, online labs must surely be paid at 100%, because online lab technicians do not actually exist. Yet online labs are still paid at 80%. It seems that logic is a step too far when it comes to faculty pay.

With regard to faculty step and cost of living adjustments, we are in a catch 22. The administration cannot budget for increased faculty pay until it knows next year's State Budget, but by the time it knows the State Budget, it is too late for us. The basic message was, be grateful for what we give you, and be quiet until we start this farce all over again next year.

On the lighter side, attorney Mark 'faculty are garbage collectors' Levitt equated 'work' with 'being at work'. His logic was that schoolteachers go to school 5 days a week while faculty go to college 3 days a week, so schoolteachers should earn more. It seems that the lawyer does not recognize or value working from home, even though, -- he was working from home that day! Presumably we don't need to pay him for his services that day.

To be clear, our financial problems are due to President Atwater's policy, not circumstances. President Atwater has stalled all year, sending good people on a fool's errand to waste our time and their intellect on sham negotiations. This is shameful!

Tony Buonaquisti
Physics, Dale Mabry

Madame Chair, Board of Trustees, Administration,

Thank you for allowing me to present. I am a professor of counseling at Dale Mabry and immediate past president of FUSA. I've been a counselor 2 months shy of 27 years. The faculty before me presented issues that lead to the vote of confidence.

The faculty have spoken. On March 10th, 209 faculty voted they have "No Confidence" in Dr. Atwater's ability to lead the college and 10 voted they have "Confidence."

In summary, April Muchmore-Vokoun and I will illustrate the reasons this group of dedicated professionals whose primary goals are to provide high-quality instruction and to ensure that HCC remains one of the best undergraduate colleges in the country, proceeded with the vote.

1. Dr. Atwater's absence from college functions such as missing the opportunity to greet his faculty in person at a college-wide faculty-focused function since January 9, 2020. He sent a 40-second video.
2. On July 11, 2022, President Atwater publicly stated that any shortfall in revenue from a pandemic-related decrease in student enrollment had been offset by an increase in state funding. On September 16, 2022, he shared with faculty that we lost more than \$17M in revenue since Spring 2020.
3. Continued inconsistent messaging concerns the faculty-involved hiring process. In 2022, FUSA requested that HR workshop with faculty to improve the clarity of the hiring process to include updating the hiring manual. It seems that Dr. Atwater did not have the same conversation with the Director of HR, as our request to collaborate was rejected.
4. Dr. Atwater is reactive rather than proactive. During FUSA meetings with Dr. Atwater, we proposed several cost-saving methods for the college. Our ideas were acknowledged at the table with no follow-up or collaboration from the Administration.
5. Dr. Atwater has held the position that faculty salaries are not part of the college's cost of doing business. He stated this viewpoint despite being told that there was a serious morale problem and a perception by his faculty that they were not a priority. His position on this topic has not changed during his entire tenure at HCC.
6. Dr. Atwater acted irresponsibly when promoting an Administrative Salary Step System that inevitably caused financial hardship and necessitated drawing down faculty compensation. Board of Trustee member Betty Viamontes warned of this recklessness in her comments claiming the move was "financially irresponsible."
7. HCC faculty have no confidence Dr. Atwater ever intended to honor, maintain or fully execute the step system.
8. Dr. Atwater has not become the "leader of all," does not understand the roles that his faculty perform, has not developed strong relationships with his faculty community or become an administrative leader. He seems willing to sacrifice the academic aspect of the college to further his administrative ambitions. His ambitions should not be achieved at the expense of faculty, especially as faculty are at the front-line executing the primary college objectives of education and student success.

The aforementioned issues have culminated, once again, like in 2015. 95% of the voting faculty are communicating to you that we have No Confidence in the college President. It is the sincere desire of the faculty that these issues be addressed and resolved so that the college can move forward "collectively and collaboratively."

Elizabeth Key-Raimer, Counseling, DM
April Muchmore-Vokoun, English, DM

Good Afternoon. My name is Sheryl Sippel, and I am the FUSA President.

The last two years have been miserable, plagued with grievances, failed bargaining and communication, impasse, and now another vote of no confidence.

So, where do we go from here? We now await the magistrate's recommendation regarding the 2022-2023 contract.

Meanwhile, the 2023-2024 budget process is beginning.

Along with contract negotiations, I have attended the budget workshops for many years. When the 2022 Budget Workshop included a key metric of "... a step increase for faculty, subject to contract negotiations", it did not concern me at all that it did not specifically mention raises, because we hadn't even begun to bargain economics yet. We had successfully bargained most contracts after the initial budget, under the assumption that the budget would be adjusted as needed, "subject to negotiations".

However, that does not seem to be the case for 2022-2023. Between bargaining sessions and the impasse hearing, it is now apparent the Administration had no intention of ever negotiating a raise, declaring, among other things, "it is not in the budget".

So it seems that is where we need to start – with the budget process.

The College has funds. Budgets are about priorities. The College has made giving the Administrators a 30% raise a priority. The College has made raising the minimum starting salary for staff to help with recruitment a priority. The College has made funding new positions a priority. The College has made saving excess recurring revenue to fund future projects and pay off loans early a priority.

It is time the College made faculty wages and raises a priority, which begins by including annual steps as part of the "cost of doing business" and planning for potential budget adjustments "subject to negotiations.", beginning with the 2023-2024 budget.

Sheryl Sippel
Math, Dale Mabry
FUSA President