

ULSTER COUNTY LEGISLATURE

COMMITTEE MEETING

NAME OF COMMITTEE: Education, Culture and Economic Development Committee

DATE: April 19, 1995

TIME: 5:00 P.M.

PLACE: Ulster County Community College

LEGISLATORS PRESENT: Chairman Dunn and Legislators Contini, Naccarato, Jennings, Wadnola, Bertone and Provenzano

LEGISLATORS ABSENT: Legislators Felicello and O'Reilly

OTHERS ATTENDING: Robert A. Brown, President, UCCC; Charles Schenck, Acting Dean of Administration, UCCC; Bruce Whyte, Executive Director, Ulster Arts Alliance; Joseph Munster, Ulster County Public Information Officer

A quorum being present, Chairman Dunn called the meeting to order at 5:00pm and recognized Robert T. Brown, President of Ulster County Community College, who advised the Committee that he had very little to report until such time as a State budget has been approved.

If the State budget is approved in its present form, the President said there is no restoration of Aid cut by the Governor for Community Colleges. In any event we will be increasing tuition, asking the County for additional funds, and also eliminating anywhere between fifteen to twenty-five positions.

This is the bottom line; and a major problem is the loss of \$300,000 in State Aid as well as the loss of \$700,000 in tuition and charge back money, all in one year because of the loss of the Prison Education Program. This will, at least for the time being, drive tuition higher and appears now that we may be the highest in the region. It will also drive the County's contribution higher. The President explained the way the State Aid formula works and said we are looking forward to adding the ten classrooms in the Business Resource Center, as enrollment there could take us to a

level where we could get more state aid for more enrollment in the next fiscal year (1996-97).

In actuality, said President Brown, not only are we losing \$700,000 for the PEP for 1995-56, we will lose State Aid for three years. This three-year reduction will be for 153 ftes; 50% to be deducted next year; 30% the following year; and 20% the year after.

We do see our current financial problem taking two or three years to work out of he said. There are positive things on the horizon; however, we are not there yet. President Brown said it may be difficult to convince the Legislature to fund us at a level we need to keep the quality of our instructional programs. It will also be difficult to exceed the level we are allowed to charge as tuition. This year it is \$2,100 and there is also a limitation that we cannot have more than one-third of our revenue derived from student tuition.

Our goal, said the President, is to maintain the quality of instructional programs, the quality of our support services to students, and he said he guarantees we will do that regardless of what happens.

Leg. Jennings asked about SUNY New Paltz's registrations being up and the President said he knew about that, but ours is not. In fact, he continued, applications are running behind and he doesn't know why. We expected enrollment to be up because of SUNY's tuition increase, but it has not happened. It is possible, said Leg. Jennings, that people are in a wait and see attitude. The President agreed and said admissions over the summer could be happening. He believes our credibility is there.

President Brown said he would be quite vocal if restoration is made only to SUNY four-year colleges and not to Community Colleges. Although he does support some restoration to other units. If other SUNY units funds are restored and ours are not, after our having no demonstrations or student revolts, they will be sending a message that it pays to misbehave. He mentioned that John Guerin was here recently and was very impressed with the quality of our campus.

Leg. Provenzano said many parents try and steer their children to Community Colleges, since they don't always know where they want to go to school and in two years they grow up a lot. She said she is afraid that education is again going to be at a premium.

Leg. Naccarato asked if TAP is out completely for prisoners. The President said it is out completely for prisoners and EOP students. Dean Schenck said that it has been removed from both Graduate students and from prisoners.

Chairman Dunn noted that the larger colleges and universities have large alumni contributions. People who have graduated from certain colleges are always getting asked for money. President Brown said that we do raise some money from private funds, and he

hopes to get some alumni funding, since we are now getting a group of successful alumni.

Leg. Naccarato asked that, in view of the fact the college is losing money from the prison program, if the other programs are being affected. President Brown said that we are taking money from other allocations and eliminating some of our services.

Leg. Naccarato asked the President what he thought generally about Gov. Pataki not wanting to educate prisoners. President Brown said that is the current mood in the country; however, he thinks it is wrong. He said these were all post-Attica programs. The current Acting Corrections Commissioner, Phil Coombs, convinced him, when he was a Superintendent, that we should have a Prison Education Program. The President said he can illustrate how people have been released from prison and have not returned because they have gotten an education. This is not a Republican or a Democratic matter, he said. This is a nationwide response to what we should do with criminals. The Commissioner is pro-education, and said he would continue with the GED program, but that is all.

Dean Schenck said that all of the data shows that the only thing that makes a difference is education. President Brown said the money in question came from TAP and PELL, but most of the charge backs came from New York City.

President Brown said he was trying to find a way the college can be held harmless from loss of State Aid for three year and he is currently working on this. It is a three year problem. He said we will have to continue to readjust our organization to spend most of our money on instruction and take away services. We will be cutting out services and people will be complaining about that. They pay taxes, but we are going to have to charge for the use of our facilities, which we have not done before. The money has to go into the instructional programs.

Continuing, the President said our budget may not be passed by Graduation. AT the meeting with the Board of Trustee's last night, he informed them that the last possible day to pass a budget is the Tuesday after Graduation, May 30th; with a possible public hearing in early June. We don't, however, want to get out in front of the State budget, but we may have to if it goes that far.

Dean Schenck said we are talking layoffs of some magnitude in realistic terms, and of real people with real jobs who don't know what might happen. We cannot wait until the end of June to tell them they won't have a job at the end of August. President Brown said that the Prison Ed. staff all know their positions are gone.

Leg. Provenzano said that locally all she got is one side of the picture at the State level. She asked in the President knew what Mr. Silver was holding out for, and the President said that as far as he knew, it was for restoration of SUNY four-year unit cuts only, and not for Community Colleges. He said the State was

receptive to our position but have not included any restoration at this point. He also said that no matter what happens, we will continue to make sure our students get a good, quality education, which is our mission.

The President said that starting the Business Resource Center is a very good thing for the College. We don't know how many State workers are coming, but that they should help even more. We are ready to serve the people that are going to be there. Changes are going to take place, although it may take two or three years to get there. He said our mission is classroom learning, and that is where we are going to put our money. The President said we have a lot of contingency plans. He hopes New York State can find a better way, such as a policy of agreeing on revenue up front and by April 1st, for a budget, or to adopt the one submitted by the Governor. He said he will keep the Committee informed of things as they happen.

Dean Schenck reiterated our guidelines for budget preparation. We are not going to mess with academic programs. We may eliminate a program, but that is because we cannot make it a good program. We are also seriously questioning the administrative structure. He said the bulk of layoffs would occur in offices which are traditionally at middle management. We have got to find ways in which we can make sure everyone understands the values of this structure so that they can make more decisions. Those are the two principles that we are driving us. Dean Schenck also said we have to move technologically into the end of the century; we all desire and plans, but we have no resources and are looking more thoroughly into availability of grants.

President Brown said we are looking to see how we can share services with other County Departments and accomplish the same tasks for less money totally for the County. In Joe Lemme's area, there is a need for training. They could then provide us with a service that they do very well. He is looking at it as an opportunity to pursue some organizational changes that will make us even more efficient, and looking at new ways of doing things.

Leg. Naccarato asked if the College was giving any retirement incentives, and President Brown said we can offer nothing that is not in the collective bargaining agreements or in State Law. He said that for early retirement we would have to target position, and the eligible positions just do not fall the way we want. We would be left with not being able to replace that position, and giving up a good service. We just can't do that. He said there are several contingency plans ready to go with the State budget finally comes out, but this Committee should not be surprised when we ask for more money, even though he knows these are difficult times for everyone.

Dean Schenck reported that revenue streams are on target, and we are continuing to be tight-fisted with spending. There is a reallocation account, which is money taken from individual budgets

to remove the temptation to spend. Our goal was to have \$300,000, and there is now \$287,000 in that account. It has been very effective. These funds will help to off-set issues of lay-offs and penalty payments we may have to make with people being laid off.

President Brown said that reallocation was made as a base budget adjustment taken out of this years budget, and will be taken out at the start of next year's budget also. We have a problem in the Business Resource Center, in that we don't know exactly how much it will cost. He said he has good estimates and reports but right now revenues and expenses are still in the guessing stages.

Chairman Dunn said that if there is a crown jewel in Ulster County is the Community College, and we have to protect that. There has been a commendable job done, he said, by President Brown and by the Board of Trustees. The College has a high quality staff all leading to an end committal of doing the best they can do with what they have. Chairman Dunn said that when the Legislature doesn't have any more money, it will just have to say no.

The report of Ulster County Community College being completed, Chairman Dunn recognized Joseph Munster, Ulster County Public Information Officer.

Mr. Munster reported on the current status of the Catskill Interpretive Center, which he said is not dead. He would like to have the members of the Committee visit the site on May 19th. He will also be inviting Sen. Monihan, Sen. D'Amato and Gov. Pataki, and/or their representatives. He is trying to salvage the whole thing, and said we cannot let the \$1.5 million go to waste. There is a recommendation for approval of our ISTEIA grant to cross the highway, and we will be able to cross the road to the Catskill Mountain Railway will have a twelve mile round trip.

The end result, he said, will hopefully to build a smaller scaled-down version, which would be about \$600,000 for a wood frame information building, which is feasible. This could be added on to in the future if possible. It could also be used as a caretaker's property if a large center ever becomes possible. We cannot go another year. He said there have been a lot of needless delays; and what's there can't deteriorate, but it just can't be allowed to sit empty.

Leg. Wadnola asked where they spent \$1.5 million, and Mr. Munster explained the lease allocation of \$10,000 per year payable to the Catskill Center. He said by the end of the lease, they will be reimbursed for the cost of the lease owned by the Catskill Center. He said that if the State owned the property it would be in the "forever wild" area. The Catskill Center is a non-profit organization; a type of watchdog of the Catskills, who are well-intentioned people, but who are not elected or appointed officials.

He went on to give a detailed background on the Interpretive Center and why there has been such a long delay in the construction

of this facility. He said the cost is now rumored to be \$400 per square foot; however, that is not the cost of constructing the building. The cost has increased from \$3 million to \$4.5 million because of mistaken bids, increased design changes, water demands, supplemental reservoir, and other items.

Regarding the Wildlife Festival, he passed photos from a Wildlife Festival he had recently attended in Virginia. Bruce Whyte asked what are the chances of the municipalities getting paid back from the Wildlife Festival.

Leg. Provenzano said that if Kingston could draw 5,000 people for a Shad Festival, we should be able to get 10,000-15,000 for this event. She said she thought, personally, that we might not see all the money come back in a check amount. We have to look at things like sales tax revenue; however, we do expect to be paid back. There was an amendment to the Resolution that any monies after expenses are paid, is to go between the City of Kingston and Ulster County proportionately. She said she will be very surprised if the County is not paid back.

Mr. Whyte said he resigned from the Board because he felt he couldn't be successful looking at their financial situation. He feels there is going to be some fallout, and he doesn't want other non-for-profits in the County hurt by a bad experience with the County giving money to this Wildlife Festival. Leg. Provenzano said it was something that had to be done, as they were too far into the process.

Mr. Munster said he believes it is a good gamble, especially for future events. He exhibited the full page advertisement in the April 6th issue of the New York Times. He said the caboos at the Thruway is being cleaned up and will be used as a ticket booth and he may fly one of the balloons there.

Regarding the cabooses, he said the Highland caboose is going to Milton, and the one in Ellenville is being moved two blocks away. In reply to a question he said the current location of the Highland caboose is inaccessible - it's too close to the approach to the bridge. the Milton location is very good; right on the 9W entrance to the County.

Leg. Jennings asked about the caboose and bathroom facilities in Ellenville and Mr. Munster said they will use a portapotty again. He said they could water but the cost to tie into the sewer system would be very costly. It was suggested that maybe the Town could provide this and since he is currently working with the Ellenville Chamber of Commerce he will try this approach.

Mr. Munster played the demo tape prepared for the low power radio station being erected by Cornell Cooperative Extension in conjunction with the Sea Grant project. The tape listed current events being held in the area and directed people to stop at the caboose at the Kingston Thruway exit. The list of events would be updated every week.

There followed a general discussion regarding the Hudson River Wildlife Festival and the demographics involved.

Chairman Dunn advised that a meeting will be held to discuss casino gaming in Ulster County. This will be an informational hearing and he is asking people to come and tell the Legislators what they want; whether they are for or against it. This way the County Legislature can make a decision based upon those who have come out. He was very pleased with the turnout at the last hearing in Ellenville. This meeting will be held at the Ulster County Community College Student Lounge on April 25th at 6:00pm.

A general discussion followed on the advantages and disadvantages of casino gambling.

Chairman Dunn said that both Jolie Milstein, Executive Director of Ulster County Development Corporation and Lee Reidy, Director of Cornell Cooperative Extension, were both out of town on business, and their absence was excused.

The Committee then discussed the Internet and the advantages both to tourism and economic development of having a Home Page on the net. This technique is meant to augment existing marketing, and is not meant as a replacement.

Leg. Provenzano asked if anything had been heard about the head trauma center, and said this would help the area. Chairman Dunn said each Legislature had sent a letter of support and Leg. Wadnola said he believed they did not have their approvals as yet.

Chairman Dunn discussed the advantages of the Revolving Loan Fund and said we cannot afford to lose any more businesses in this County. The people, he said, have to be helped. While the County is not starving, just look at what things were like when IBM was here in full force.

There being no further business, a motion to adjourn was made by Leg. Bertone and seconded by Leg. Provenzano and Chairman Dunn declared the meeting officially adjourned at 6:55pm.

Respectfully Submitted:...

Vincent Dunn, Chairman
Education, Culture and Economic
Development Committee