

Update from HUCTW on the Economy and Harvard Finances



February 9, 2009

As the national economy continues to sputter and political leaders debate solutions, HUCTW leaders and members are working hard to understand the impact of negative economic conditions on our Harvard jobs. This letter is intended to provide an update on recent developments and current understandings.

Across the Harvard campus currently, union members and management colleagues are all dealing with uncertainty. The scope and consequences of budget cuts for the next fiscal year (beginning July 1, 2009) may not be well-known until March or April. But several things are clear:

- Harvard schools and departments have been asked to submit budgets for next year with reductions in expenses ranging from 5 to 15 percent.
- University leaders have stated that cuts will be undertaken strategically, meaning that not all budgets will be cut, or not all by the same percentage.
- University and school leaders have assured the Harvard community that they are closely examining all cost-reduction options, including the pace and scale of capital projects, consulting fees, catering, travel, supplies, and energy costs.

In ongoing meetings between HUCTW leaders and Harvard officials, at the University level and in the schools, recent discussions have focused on the important question of **how** to reduce costs. **Our union has continued to speak strongly and our message is clear and consistent:**

- Harvard units should focus budget cuts first on non-personnel expenses, such as catering and consulting costs, and energy conservation efforts.
- The University should save as much money as possible by delaying or curtailing capital projects, including the new Allston campus.
- We are ready to consider creative programs which could reduce staffing costs by encouraging voluntary schedule changes or similar initiatives.
- Layoffs should be a last resort.

In the past few weeks, hundreds of HUCTW members have shared views about the financial situation in union meetings or individual conversations, and some important themes have emerged:

- Union members will continue to work diligently on ideas and suggestions about how to save jobs. Union members and managers have discussed many of the

- options mentioned above and we will do everything we can to make sure that layoffs are a last resort.
- While we can all agree that it is important to review vacant positions carefully, we also know that attrition can lead to questions and problems about changing workloads and job responsibilities. HUCTW will focus attention and resources on efforts to give every union member the necessary skills and strategies to negotiate about workloads, classifications, and overtime.
 - Training budgets are an important area for ongoing policy discussion. Union members need to be involved in helping to make smart, balanced decisions about job training and professional development opportunities in challenging financial times.

It is our union's primary goal to be sure that strong, thoughtful staff voices are clearly heard and deeply involved in all deliberations. Stay tuned for more updated information, and please join the conversation by taking part in HUCTW information meetings, or calling or writing to anyone at the HUCTW office.

Harvard Union of Clerical & Technical Workers
15 Mount Auburn Street
Cambridge, MA 02138
617-661-8289
www.huctw.org