

Dr. Robert R. Jones  
Administration introductory remarks for the collective negotiation session  
August 24, 2007

Professor Ambrose and members of the negotiating team:

Thank you for the exemplary effort, talent, and creativity with which you have tackled the collaborative rewrite of our agreement with the faculty union. Likewise, I extend many thanks to our administration team. In a spirit of mutual gains, respect, trust, and true caring for our students and each other, the management team feels we have crafted a document that will advance this college and improve the learning environment far into the future.

For my part, I could not be more proud to be a part of this effort. A high level of faculty engagement in shared governance and accountability has been proposed, along with improvements in administrative processes to support faculty. I predicted in my opening remarks in June that positive change would come but this evolution has even surpassed my expectation.

I estimate that the eight of us here today have collectively spent several hundred hours in the last few months to arrive at this point. It may seem evident to some that we are all a little tired, but I'd rather focus on how eager we all are to feel the benefits of our efforts. This day will come, so now we are ready to move forward with the final component –the financial package.

It should interest the faculty present to know that the administration has been keeping an eye on the state wide economic downturn and communicating facts with the faculty leadership throughout the summer. Two unprecedented reductions (the perfect storm) have taken place since our budget was established in July. First, the governor vetoed the anticipated tuition increase, costing the first drafted college budget \$700,000. Next, the state revenue made up largely from sales tax decreased, leaving a shortfall of 4%. For Edison College, this translates into a funding reduction in the range of \$1 to \$1.3 M. In fact, we will not know exactly what our budget for this year will be until the conclusion of the September 18-Oct 2 special session of the legislature. At that time, the funding for Edison College could be cut by 4% or more.

The events and decisions in Tallahassee are affecting our only two sources of operating funds. While we are not eminently threatened by these cuts as a one year occurrence, we are very alarmed by the notification that we could experience further reductions in subsequent years. This presents a challenge to some of the budgeting solutions that Dr. Walker and the management team have identified.

With that said, we are here today to begin the process of bargaining in good faith, albeit rather resourcefully and creatively, given the financial uncertainties of the moment.

For those in the audience who are not familiar with the collective negotiations' initial proposal exchange, please know that this is a process of exploration and that the scenarios presented are part of a process of arriving at a common understanding of an equitable and sustainable compensation for our much appreciated faculty.