



BOT Tuition Hearing Statement

Presented by Dr. Dierdre Glenn Paul

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Text of Statement

Good Afternoon. 2008: the economy is bad, and funding is limited. And another tuition increase looms.

According to CNJSCL President Nick Yovnello, the higher education budget will provide overall support for higher education in the amount of \$2.098 billion, which represents an overall reduction of \$76 million from the \$2.174 billion spent during the current fiscal year. State support for public colleges and universities will total \$1.437 billion, a decrease of \$63 million from the current level of \$1.499 billion. Direct operating support for the state's public colleges and universities will decrease from \$901 million to \$805 million. This reduction will be offset by the State providing over \$38 million to fund negotiated salary increases. It should also be noted that New Jersey's community colleges and privates are taking a harder hit than the four-year, public colleges and universities are.

Montclair State University's share of State funding will go from to \$48.6 million during 2008 to a proposed \$43.7 million in 2009 This reduction of \$4.9 million is the largest reduction of the nine state colleges and universities represented by the Council.

Given the economic realities the University faces, I can understand that MSU may have to raise tuition.

My feelings about any tuition increase are conflicted, however, for the following reason. While I consider higher education a right of every NJ citizen who wishes to avail him/herself to the opportunity, it is becoming increasingly difficult for the citizenry to exercise that right. That many cannot afford a college

education puts our students and our state at a disadvantage in a global market place.

Before the Board decides anything about a tuition increase, I would ask that the Board eliminate wasteful practices and mismanagement as quickly as possible, prior to determining any significant increase to student tuition.

One such practice that I can cite is the bottomless pit of expenditures made on temporary housing for students. Very reliable sources have informed me that credible offers have been made by two neighboring colleges and universities to the MSU administration to assist them with their housing crisis, using dorms and facilities on their respective campuses. The facilities are a distance from MSU similar to that traveled by students to their housing at the hotels.

During the June 2007 BOT meeting, the Board approved an expense of \$1,902,000 that was added to equally outrageous amounts that had already spent on such housing. This questionable practice of housing students in local hotels (even if we're told that some of them prefer living there rather than in campus-based housing) is cost-ineffective. Aside from the fact the University receives very little return on its investment here, the hotels are unsafe and cause parents and guardians of the young people housed there a great deal of legitimate concern and alarm. One can merely peruse the latest edition of the *Montclairion* to determine that their concerns are valid.

Another practice that needs to be reviewed is the awarding of no-bid contracts on a routine basis, especially in light of the concerns regarding contracting and procurement abuses that were unearthed in the State Commission of Investigation report on New Jersey Public Higher Education. In this time of fiscal constraint, it seems prudent for the University to try to get the best price possible from the most reliable vendor. The Union believes that the heightened focus on strengthened oversight; accountability and transparency should compel the University administration and Board to be especially vigilant about even the appearance of impropriety.

So, I ask that the University fully explore other modes of cost-saving prior to raising student tuition. I also remain realistic and aware of the fact that we are all, as a campus community, caught in a quagmire.