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ANNUAL REPORT ON STATE OF THE UNION

It has been ten years – the duration of “HFC’s Lost Decade” – since I have been able to present an optimistic report on the State of our Federation rather than a catalog of administrative, State, and Federal threats to our faculty and Union. Admittedly, the College and Local 1650 faced challenges in 2018 and will do so in 2019, but let us begin with the positive.

Interim President Appointed

We began 2018 with Vice-president/Controller John Satkowski serving as an Interim President. During Mr. Satkowski’s interim tenure, the relationship between the Administration and Local 1650 improved dramatically and substantively. Despite an administration still tainted by the residual toxicity of the President Jensen’s years, John Satkowski operated with his characteristic respect for others, dedication to resolution of differences, and inherent decency – a refreshing reversal from the previous ten years of arrogance, contempt for faculty, and futile efforts to intimidate.

Under Mr. Satkowski’s leadership, several long-standing grievances were resolved in a fashion benefitting both the College and faculty. The entire College community owes John Satkowski its gratitude for his steps to restore collegiality at the College, despite the resistance from Dr. Jensen’s remaining administrative acolytes.

New President Impresses

July 2018 brought HFC its sixth President, who has already restored morale, not only among embattled faculty, but among other HFC employees who, lacking the job security afforded by the due process protections of tenure, had to hunker down under a culture of intimidation and outright threats. The Local 1650 contract only permitted faculty to speak truth to power – and even then it was a constant and exhausting undertaking.

I have heard many employees from virtually every College employee group – and yes even from exempt employees – that they deeply appreciate the culture that President Kavalhuna is reestablishing at the College. I have heard this as well from many community and civic leaders.

Though only recently arrived at HFC, President Kavalhuna worked ceaselessly throughout the community to secure the College’s millage renewal, even in the

face of an unjustified and misleading anti-millage, anti-faculty, and anti-College campaign mounted by one HFC Trustee and his spouse. Unlike his predecessor, President Kavalhuna has acknowledged the pivotal role Local 1650 once again played in drafting millage advocacy literature, the distribution of that literature, the securing of broad labor support, and the staffing of polls on Election Day. He also recognized the significant, much needed, and much appreciated financial commitment of the Adjunct Faculty Organization (AFO) to the campaign.

New President Faces Challenges

President Kavalhuna, nevertheless, faces important challenges. He must address declining enrollment, five years of neglecting relationships in the Detroit and downriver communities, and the dire need – and contractual obligation – to restore the cohort of full-time classroom teachers to 200 teachers. While he has been successful in securing over \$6.7 million in State funding for expansion of HFC's technical facilities and enrollment, the College must match that amount. Dr. Mee's tenure tells us that to do so out of our operational fund balance is highly problematic. One hopes that the Office of Development can secure private sufficient contributions to minimize the redirection of internal College funds.

In addition, one of the employment specifications under which President Kavalhuna was interviewed and hired requires a thorough review and, if found needed, improvement of the administrative structure imposed on the College by Dr. Jensen in the final throes of his presidency. That such review is very much needed has been a consistent message in President Kavalhuna's listening sessions with HFC faculty. While there are challenges before us, our new President has restored collegiality, a sense of optimism, and a sense of the possible at the College.

State Victories

A sense of optimism and renewal is true of the political arena as well. Local 1650 has a long and formidable tradition of political and legislative activism. Our political activism in State politics is proof that Local 1650 fights well above its weight class with respect to political influence. A special thank you is due to Eric Rader who assumed a leadership role in the Local 1650 and in AFT-Michigan political efforts at the State level, while I concentrated on the College millage and Trustee races.

Eric developed the informational literature distributed to faculty regarding the Michigan candidates and ballot proposals, and he walked neighborhoods for AFT-Michigan's endorsed candidates on nine Saturdays!

The Michigan vote produced many important victories that will prevent further Republican laws under-funding education and attacking our bargaining rights, such as: the hard cap cost shift of insurance premiums to faculty, the taxation of pensions to help fund huge tax breaks for corporations, the gutting of K-12 tenure, the prohibition of payroll deduction of K-12 union dues, and of course "Right-to-Work for Less" legislation, which set the stage for the Janus decision nationwide, and the list could go on.

We were successful in supporting the victories of AFT-Michigan's endorsed candidates for Governor, Attorney General, Secretary of State, five Senate seats, six House seats, one Supreme Court seat, all University Regent seats, and the two State Board of Education seats. Proposals 2 and 3 also passed, ending gerrymandering and empowering voter participation in elections.

What is more, we and AFT-Michigan succeeded in turning back lame duck anti-union legislation and Republican efforts to strip longstanding authority from the incoming Governor, Attorney General, and Secretary of State. As is the case locally, union successes are often those in which we prevent something from happening, not just those we achieve in codifying improvements in wages, hours, and working conditions.

Millage Victory

Equally important is the political influence we exert locally. The HFC Millage renewal passed by an overwhelming percentage (70% YES, 30% NO), despite the efforts of Trustee Hussein Berry's misleading campaign opposing the millage renewal.

I should also recognize the important contributions Local 1650's Administrative Assistant, JoAnne Dalton, made to the millage campaign. Ms. Dalton prepared the many pieces of campaign literature for layout and printing. Most difficult was her responsibility to compile an ever-changing and ever-growing list of poll workers, shift times and locations. These are critical tasks she has worked on in every millage campaign.

Our endorsed Trustee candidates, though, were not successful. We knew going into the campaign that current Trustee James Thorpe and former Trustee Roxanne McDonald would be very strong candidates, and they did prevail.

The Federation was unable to support either Trustee Thorpe or Trustee-elect McDonald, since both had strongly supported Dr. Jensen, despite his public and private insulting, dismissive treatment of faculty and his self aggrandizing and detrimental policy decisions. Given their inability to see the multitude of problems caused by Dr. Jensen, they supported Dr. Jensen and would have supported retaining him. If their views had prevailed, Dr. Jensen would still be wreaking havoc at the College. Nevertheless, the Local has congratulated Trustee Thorpe and Trustee elect McDonald on their election to the Board of Trustees, thanked them for taking on a very demanding role, and extended the faculty's best wishes.

Checks and Balances Restored

While NO Local 1650 funds go to candidates for national office, the federal system of checks and balances has been restored with the election of a Democratic majority in the U.S. House of Representatives. Among those federal House victories were those of Elissa Slotkin (8th District) and Haley Stevens (11th District) in Michigan.

1650 Political Action and HFC

Again, thank you Local 1650 brothers and sisters who supported 1650's political efforts to support your College and your careers, your students, your professional lives, your professional standing, your livelihoods, and the large immigrant community we serve, against whom some very dark forces have been unleashed in the last two years.

Thank you – but our political efforts can not and must not abate. We have been successful not only through our own efforts but also through the relationships we have developed – and relationships we

must maintain – in the Dearborn community. We have strong relationships with the Arab American community; with Mayor O'Reilly and other elected Dearborn officials; with prominent business leaders and community leaders, with community service organizations, and with many community activists.

Community Service and Our Careers

Historically, such community engagement has resulted from the efforts of a few 1650 members. Such community presence has been amplified in recent years by the community service language of our contract.

Two important points in this regard:

1. Admittedly, there has been slippage in area of community service. Some of this due to the administration's not tracking service annually. Some of it due to some 1650 members' disregard of community service.
2. Given what this Local has negotiated for its members, given that community service was key to resolving a contract under President Mee, and most importantly given how our community and its taxpayers have unwaveringly supported the College and did so at the polls very recently, given all of this, 20 hours per year in community service is a modest expression of appreciation to our community – not to mention its opportunities to foster increased awareness of HFC in our major student feeder communities, and the potential impact upon enrollment at the College.

We have before us a renewed opportunity to partner with a collegial and re-energized College Administration, with our supportive community, and with elected officials who value education and collective bargaining. We have before us a renewed opportunity to secure our College and our careers. Let us all make the most of it.

John McDonald
January 14, 2019