

## **\$27 million reasons why we didn't "Give Back"**

Finally, on Oct. 9<sup>th</sup>, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania has a state budget and PASSHE knows its appropriation.

The amazing thing is that PASSHE will have more money to spend this year than they had last year – by a whopping \$32 million, or 6.7%!!!

The big bang here is a last minute surprise of \$27 million from the ARRA fund (aka "stimulus money") that is designated as 2008-09 "fill" (to make up for the cut we took in Oct. 2008), but comes to the system as cash.

In a meeting Monday with union leaders, the Chancellor said he had various ways he might use and distribute that money. One included pushing half of it into 2011-12, when we all expect the state appropriation to only be the \$444 million allotted this year (the other \$65 million is stimulus money).

But the point here is: he has many millions to make decisions about.

In May he wrote me a letter asking us to forego both our steps and raises. My written response (much less profane than many suggested) told him that his request was premature, since neither the appropriation had been approved (that's five months ago, you'll notice) nor the tuition set for the year. He had no idea what their budget for 2009-10 might look like. And they didn't know how many students they would have (which adds income, though their financial people are quick to point out that income comes at a cost).

Since May, there have been a series of meetings, including Monday's, attended by myself and an assortment of others (including one discussion at state M&D) where their theme has been "help us."

Now we know how much help they needed.

I told the Chancellor, and some of his staff, as politely as I could, but sometimes not so politely, that we didn't believe their numbers. Their pie charts were pretty, but, upon questioning, their numbers slid away – they didn't have the correct student count; they didn't calculate the right health insurance rate; they were depending on last fall's faculty complement numbers to determine faculty cost.

Today, with a budget approved, we already see that the state system is planning for 2011-12 – not crisis management for 2009-10. We expect the talk of givebacks and broad-based retrenchments will stop.

We also expect that they will manage wisely. Budget season is over, for a moment, so we can publicly question the state system's managerial growth, both in numbers and as a percentage of the budget, while recognizing student body growth (another record this year, up 4%) and no equivalent faculty growth spurt (we've seen less than 1% growth in tenure track faculty THIS DECADE!).

As Scarlett O'Hara said, "Tomorrow is another day." But today we have our contract intact, our pay intact, and more than little dignity in being one of the few faculty unions in the region to be able to say so.

In solidarity,

