

Board of Regents Public Forum on the University Budget
Wednesday, June 17, 2009
Testimony of Cherrene Horazuk, Chief Steward of AFSCME 3800

My name is Cherrene Horazuk. I have worked at the U for 5 years, and am the Chief Steward of AFSCME 3800, representing clerical workers at the U of M.

Before I speak specifically about President Bruininks' budget proposal, I would like to ask the University leadership to challenge the governor's plans for unallotments of desperately needed services, including higher education. The legislature was elected and entrusted by the citizens of this state to represent them. I question the constitutionality of ignoring that democratic process and unilaterally imposing a budget that meets the Governor's whims. The University needs to take a leadership role in challenging the unallotments, and in working with the legislature to increase revenue. AFSCME has worked at the capitol to push for increased funding for higher ed, including securing a 1% salary supplemental increase in 2007. We were there continuously this past session calling on the legislature to fund the services that the citizens of this state need.

Regarding the U budget proposal, AFSCME 3800 calls upon the Board of Regents to not utilize layoffs to balance the budget. Find the money elsewhere. And there is money to find – as other AFSCME members will testify later. The University does not function like a factory, where products are in less demand in a down economy. Instead the demand for higher education increases. It makes no sense to cut jobs when the work is expanding. This University works because we do. Yet, we have already had more than 40 clerical workers laid off since January.

When our union was formed 16 years ago, we had 3200 members. We now have 1600. The work has not been reduced in half. Instead, our members work harder than ever to do the jobs that were previously done by two or three others. Clerical positions have been cut to the bone. There is no way to further cut them without jeopardizing the academic mission of our departments.

During this same time period, P&A positions have increased from only several hundred to approximately 4000 positions. We challenge the notion that any U employee should lose their job through layoffs. However, because we have seen clerical jobs reduced by half while other classifications have increased 100-fold, we demand that the Board of Regents guarantee fairness in layoffs and budget cuts at the U.

We call upon the Board of Regents to adopt a policy committing to abide by Minnesota State Statute 43A.046, which reads:

“In order to maximize delivery of services to the public, if layoffs of state employees are necessary, each agency with more than 50 full-time equivalent employees must reduce at least the same percentage of management and supervisory personnel as line and support personnel.”

Because our members are more than 90% women, and have historically had our work disregarded and disrespected, we further demand that any and all layoffs that occur at the University be done in the utmost transparent manner. We call upon the administration to create a webpage where all

layoffs and staff reductions, including the non-filling of vacancies, are tracked, detailing classification, employee group, department, and savings gained. We further call upon the administration to require central approval of layoffs, in the same way that they require central approval of new hires. This ensures that each job, each employee is given the respect they deserve, and that frontline workers not bear the brunt of any job losses that occur.