State Employees Are Ready for a Good Year

For the first time in several years there are signs that the General Assembly and the Governor are becoming more responsive to the needs of State employees. In early January, Governor Mike Easley approved $4.5 million to raise the pay of all State employees who earn less than $18,312 (or 20 percent above the Federal poverty level for a family of three), and increase salaries for some of the State employees whose wages are what the Office of State Personnel terms "non-competitive." Although these raises don’t go as far as they could, they are surely a step in the right direction.

In addition, State employees are hoping for a salary increase this year in real dollars. The current fiscal year, which ends June 30, marks the first time in several years where revenue collections are actually meeting—indeed even exceeding—projections. According to Dave Crofts, the General Assembly’s chief economic advisor, sales and income tax collections for the first six months of the current fiscal year were strong, putting North Carolina almost $26 million ahead of its target. If the trend continues, this year will close without the Governor declaring a budget emergency, which he has done for the last three years. State employees went the last two years without pay raises, while a small $625 pay raise three years ago was negated by increased health plan costs. During the September 2003 SEANC convention in Greensboro, Governor Easley promised State employees a meaningful pay raise to keep State salaries competitive in an effort to prevent experienced employees from leaving their State jobs for higher-paying positions in the private sector.

On January 5, in a WRAL-TV Channel 5 interview, Governor Easley had this to say, explaining why he approved small raises for some of the lowest-paid State employees and why he is planning to include a pay raise for all State employees in this budget year as long as revenue comes in as it has in the first half of the fiscal year: “You can’t ask State employees to stay at the same income level for three years at a time when the economy is picking up.” YOU’VE CERTAINLY GOT THAT RIGHT, GOVERNOR EASLEY.

New Media Campaign Targets State Employees

The “What’s In It For You” radio campaign began airing the first week of March and will run for the next five weeks. These spots feature ten State employees and the services they provide to the citizens of North Carolina. For more information, go to www.whatsinitforyou.org.

SEANC Helps Keep Mission Hospitals As Part of the State Health Plan in Western North Carolina

Joint efforts between SEANC and the Buncombe County office of the North Carolina Association of Educators (NCAE) resulted in a very good outcome for State employees and retirees who live in western North Carolina. An agreement was reached between the State Health Plan and Mission Hospitals in Asheville on a contract amendment allowing State employees, retirees and their families covered by the State Health Plan to be able to continue using Mission services.

Both Mission Hospitals and the State Health Plan administrators were pleased with the successful resolution of contract differences. They praised the involvement of both SEANC and NCAE. According to Kathleen McNeal, Director of Managed Care for Mission Hospitals, the Buncombe County Association of Educators and the State Employees Association of North Carolina “had an excellent grasp of the issues and how their members would be affected by changes. They made sure that all the necessary people got around the table to hear all the issues.”

On January 12, SEANC District 2 member Bob Brown facilitated a meeting in Asheville between Mission Hospitals, NCAE representatives, and SEANC Western Regional Representative to the Executive Committee Bob Orr. Potential solutions were discussed, and two days later Orr and Mike Long, Chair of SEANC District 5, represented SEANC members in a meeting between Mission Hospitals, NCAE representatives, and State Health Plan Executive Administrator Dr. Jack Walker. An agreement was reached on contract issues at this meeting, leaving Blue Cross and Blue Shield, the company that manages State Health Plan payments, to implement processes that would execute the agreed-upon changes. Dr. Walker stated, “I am delighted that we will be able to continue to work with the Mission system to provide State employees, teachers and retirees in western North Carolina the best health care services available.”

If these negotiations had failed, 50,000 to 75,000 State Health Plan members living in western North Carolina would have been adversely affected. Bob Brown, the SEANC District 2 member who facilitated the meeting in early January, stated in an article in the Asheville Citizen-Times, “It would have been devastating for all State employees from Morganton to the Tennessee and South Carolina lines (if the negotiations had failed). It’s the only health insurance I have. It’s the only health insurance a vast majority of State employees, retirees and teachers have.” Western Region Representative Bob Orr agreed with Brown and commented in the same newspaper article, “State employees, like everyone else, want the best health care we can get. That would include having access to Mission/St. Joe’s Hospital.” Fortunately the negotiations worked. Thank you, SEANC.

DISTRICT 19 OFFICERS

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Pamela Siler
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Raymond E. Dubose, Director of Energy Services at UNC-Chapel Hill, received the Person of the Year Award from the International District Energy Association at its annual conference in Philadelphia last year.

In addition, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy recently recognized UNC’s cogeneration facility for promoting efficient energy.

The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, along with the University of Michigan, received the Energy Star Combined Heat and Power Award that recognizes exemplary cogeneration projects for increasing the nation’s electric generation efficiency.

In 2000, UNC received a certificate from the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the U.S. Department of Energy in recognition of its project’s ability to demonstrate leadership in environmental performance.

DuBose said, “I think it’s an honor to be recognized twice in such an elite program. To receive recognition twice in a four-year period emphasizes the clean and efficient operation we have at cogeneration systems.”

Cogeneration produces significant environmental benefits, said Tom Kerr, chief of the energy supply and industry branch of the EPA, who presented the awards.

“Cogeneration uses less fuel, so you have less emission,” he explained. “When you burn less fuel, you’re also saving money.”

The cogeneration facility, located off Cameron Avenue, was completed in 1992. It uses advanced technology called circulating fluidized combustion, making it one of the cleanest coal-burning facilities in the nation.

The facility burns coal to generate and distribute steam to the campus and UNC Hospitals through about 40 miles of steam pipes and 10 miles of chilled water pipes. Steam is used for heating and cooling, as well as for heating domestic hot water, sterilization, humidification, cooking and cleaning. The plant also generates about one-third of the University’s electricity. The rest is purchased from Duke Power.

“The primary purpose of the facility is to produce all the steam for the University and UNC Hospitals,” according to DuBose. “We produce electricity as a byproduct of the steam and that means we can produce it a lot cheaper.”

UNC-Chapel Hill’s heating and air conditioning system serves about 200 campus buildings occupying more than 14 million square feet of floor space. The plant is capable of producing 750,000 pounds of steam per hour, while its generator can produce 28 megawatts of electricity.

DuBose went on to explain why the cogeneration facility is such an asset to UNC-Chapel Hill. He commented, “Because the University uses steam for heat during the winter and for air conditioning in the summer, the facility is able to generate power for little additional cost. Our cogenerated power costs less than a penny per kilowatt hour compared to purchased power cost of about 4.3 cents.”

Dean E. Smith was one of four recent recipients of the William Richardson Davie Award. Chancellor James Moeser and the Board of Trustees honored the Davie Awards winners during a dinner at the Carolina Inn.

The Davie Award, the highest award given by the Board of Trustees, is named for the Revolutionary War hero considered to be the father of the University. Created in 1984, the annual award recognizes extraordinary service to the University or to society.

Dean E. Smith was the men’s basketball head coach for 36 years before stepping down in 1997. He coached the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill to 11 Final Fours, two national titles and 13 Atlantic Coast Conference Tournament championships. He retired as the all-time winningest coach in basketball history, with 879 wins.


Smith and his wife, Linnea Smith, have supported UNC’s Schools of Education, Social Work, Journalism and Mass Communication, Medicine, the Libraries, the Sonja Haynes Stone Center for Black Culture and History, and the Medical Foundation, with special emphasis on the Childhood Trust which aids UNC Hospitals’s program on childhood trauma and maltreatment.

Barbara Semonche, Librarian in UNC’s School of Journalism and Mass Communication, was awarded the John Cotton Dana Award from the Special Libraries Association at its annual conference in Nashville. The award is given in recognition of exceptional service to special librarianship.

SEANC Membership on the Rise
Since the September 2003 convention, membership in District 19 has increased by 2.52 percent. District 19 held its own membership drive in November and recruited 80 new members.
District 19 Found a New Way to Raise Money But Not for Long

In the summer of 2003 District 19 went to the races. We operated two concession stands at the NASCAR Orange Speedway. We raised money for our District and had a good time doing it. However, we will not be back in Rougemont in the near future because the owner has closed the Speedway, citing rainy weekend weather and spotty attendance as the main culprits.

Ruth Lewter Serves on SEANC Scholarship Foundation Board

The Scholarship Foundation Board met in October to set new goals for 2004. Among these goals was the creation of an online application, now available on the SEANC web site. According to Board member Ruth Lewter, “The online application will expedite the whole process and shorten the time it takes for the applications to be mailed from the SEANC office.”

First established in 1974, the SEANC Scholarship Program provides endowments to SEANC members, their spouses and their children to attend technical schools, community colleges, trade schools, junior colleges or four-year universities on a full-time basis. Scholarships are also available for SEANC members who work and attend school.

SEANC scholarship applications are due April 15. You can find the application online at www.seanc.org by clicking on ‘Membership Benefits’ and then ‘Scholarship Program.’

Retirees’ Corner

Retirees Provided Volunteer Action for Service Projects

The retirees in District 19 have donated their time and money this year for two valuable projects. They made a donation to the National Diabetic Society in memory of member Jim Vaughn who died in 2003, and they presented stuffed animals to the Foster Care Division of the Orange Country Department of Social Services during the Christmas holiday season.

In addition, they had presentations at their monthly meetings by Kim Goss, a minister (inspirational message); Lucy Lewis, Director of the Orange County Literacy Council (the Patriot Act); Deborah Taylor, Agent with Cooperative Extension (identity theft); Milan Pham, Human Rights and Relations Office (cultural diversity); and Glenda Hightower, nurse (relieving stress).

Mariah McPherson Receives Pauli Murray Award

The 2003 Pauli Murray Human Relations Awards, given annually by the Orange County Human Relations Commission, were presented on February 22 to a retired Orange County worker, a senior at Orange High School, and a downtown Hillsborough business. We are proud that Mariah McPherson is one of these deserving recipients. She was honored for her work with young people of diverse backgrounds as a member of Orange County’s Cooperative Extension Service Program. Mariah McPherson has also served on various boards, commissions, committees, and task forces at the local, county and State government levels.

The award was established in 1990 to honor the late Rev. Pauli Murray, an African-American who challenged discrimination, racism and sexism throughout her life and long career as a lawyer, professor, priest, poet and activist. Her family had deep roots in Orange County, where her grandmother was a slave and her great-grandfather was a slave owner.

Mariah McPherson has been active in District 19 for many years and now serves as Chair of our Retirees’ Chapter.
District 19 Goes to the Convention

District 19 was well represented at the convention in September of 2003. Our delegates worked hard and had fun too. They learned a lot about policy platform, they voted on issues and candidates, and they are ready to go back to Greensboro this fall.

Steve Lusk, SEANC President, chats with delegate Ruth Lewter

Did You Know?
The State of North Carolina owns 12,214 buildings, valued at about $11.8 billion. Construction projects now planned or under way will add 1,362 new buildings with an additional value of $5.5 billion. Most of these new buildings will be on the university or community college campuses, a result of the capital improvement bonds passed several years ago.

Mark Your Calendars

District 19 meets the third Tuesday of each month at 5:30 p.m., at the Chapel Hill Public Library, 100 Library Drive. There is plenty of free parking and refreshments are served. All State employees are welcome.

April 20, 2004    Monthly Meeting
May 10, 2004    General Assembly Convenes
May 18, 2004    Monthly Meeting
May 26, 2004    State Employee Appreciation Rally, Raleigh
June 15, 2004    Annual Meeting
July 20, 2004    Monthly Meeting
August 17, 2004    Monthly Meeting
September 9-11, 2004    Annual Convention, Greensboro
September 21, 2004    Monthly Meeting

The Retirees’ Chapter meets on the fourth Tuesday morning of each month at 8:30. All retirees are welcome. For information, call Mariah McPherson at 732-2583.

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