



# in TOUCH

UNC EMPLOYEE FORUM NEWS | READ US ONLINE: FORUM.UNC.EDU | JUNE 2009

## Cuts, layoffs not equal among departments

The difficult task of cutting budgets and laying off employees this spring was harder on certain departments and units, which were told to make more drastic cuts than others.

Upper-level administrators determined the value of each unit when deciding how much it should cut. Certain departments also were forced to lay off people to meet the 5 percent budget cuts, the Employee Forum has learned.

The administration has not made public the rationale it used for treating departments differently and making unequal budget demands.

And now, permanent cuts of up to 11 percent might be on the horizon.

Throughout a difficult spring, UNC staff had to rely on messages from Chancellor Holden Thorp to understand what was happening.

The first e-mail came during the first full work week of 2009. The Chancellor explained the 5 percent cuts already in place and the request by UNC-system President Erskine Bowles to plan for more.

Thorp also outlined his commitment to protect the rights of employees. He urged "every unit to scrutinize any vacant positions and fill only those that are absolutely necessary and only with vice chancellor approval."

At the Forum's March 2 community meeting, Thorp reiterated his commitment to trying to cut the budget without laying people off.

But a little more than two weeks later, layoffs were on the table.

In a March 19 e-mail, Thorp instructed vice chairs to initiate layoffs as needed to comply with the 5 percent budget reduction mandate.



Chancellor  
Holden Thorp

By June 2 Thorp was discussing the prospect of an additional 11 percent cut, or about \$337 million across the UNC system, for 2009-2010.

Bain & Co., the University's cost-cutting consultants, have assured the Forum that its purpose is not to recommend "cost efficiencies" through staff layoffs. Instead, Thorp says the company's job is to "identify innovative ways to streamline operations, become more effective, and perhaps achieve additional cost saving."

The Forum will monitor developments and advocate for protecting as many staff positions as possible.

## EPA Non-faculty workers have little job protection, could be at risk in crisis

Protection is not a dirty word. Eighty percent of UNC-Chapel Hill's 8,500 staff employees have it with their jobs.

But more than 20 percent of staff employees work at this University every day without any real hope of having it.

They are the EPA Non-faculty staff. And what little protection some of them used to have has evaporated, just as the Bain & Co. interim report cited middle-managers as a key obstacle to cost efficiency.

When the University became a part of the state system in the 1960s, University employees were divided into two groups.

The vast majority were staff in jobs governed by the State Personnel Act. They became known as SPA employees, who have some degree of job protection. By law, they cannot be fired willy-nilly, but only for just cause.

Most of the rest were faculty. They were exempt from the Personnel Act but had tenure to protect them.

But there were a very few positions that were neither classifiable under the Act nor classifiable as faculty.

These were the really high-level administrators. So a special job classification was created for them: Exempt from the Personnel Act—Non-Faculty (EPA-NF).

EPA-NF positions were created to be totally at-will positions — meaning that the person in such a position can be fired at a moment's notice for a good reason, a bad reason, or no reason at all.

But in fact, many people in these higher administrative positions were offered some protection in the form of fixed-term contracts that could be renegotiated and renewed as their terms expired.

Then, in 1997, the EPA-NF classification went on steroids.

The UNC system said that the Act didn't give them enough of the right kinds of positions. They needed more middle managers, they said, which meant extending the range of jobs that could be created as EPA-NF positions.

The University got its wish, calling it "personnel flexibility."

Since then, there have been three EPA-NF positions created at Carolina for every two SPA positions. Today, 21 percent of staff employees are at-will EPA-NF.

Some do have multi-year agreements. Or, at least, they did. On May 20, the administration announced that due to the budget crisis, all EPA-NF jobs must be strictly at-will.

It is worth noting that the interim report from Bain & Company cited the proliferation of middle-management positions in the administrative sector on campus as one of the key obstacles to cost efficiency that we need to fix.

It would appear the stage is now set for us to do so as efficiently as possible.

## Administrators nix easy e-mail access for housekeepers

BY MIKE MCQUOWN,  
OUTGOING CHAIR, STAFF RELATIONS,  
POLICIES, & PRACTICES COMMITTEE

I thought this campus prided itself on its computer connectivity — both within itself and to the world at large. Apparently not.

There's a big gap in access to electronic communications among employees. Most take e-mail and Internet at work for granted, but Housekeeping employees have no access.

Members of the Forum learned of

this dis-connectivity in June 2008, at the Forum's annual retreat.

The housekeepers' access problems result from several issues: UNC's computer labs are closed when some housekeepers work. There aren't PCs in or near the housekeepers' work areas or where they clock in or out, and traveling to the nearest PC would take more time than they have.

Why is this a problem? Because a large percentage of intra-campus communications — both two-way and one-way — increasingly happens on

computers.

The Forum's Staff Relations Committee decided to look into this.

Why were there so few computers for housekeepers? Because it's not in their budget, we were told.

So we found a work-around.

A committee member got permission to transfer to Housekeeping approximately ten IBM PCs and accessories that were scheduled to be surplus.

UNC policies provide for the transfer of resources between University departments. The University has sufficient software licenses. Forum members volunteered to provide technical support.

Any technical problems seemed nominal. All were ready to roll on to the next step: setting up equipment.

Then we hit a roadblock at a higher administrative level in Facilities Services. According to them, housekeepers don't need computer access.

The real issue, as the conversation developed, seemed to be concern about PC "abuse."

Having computers available for housekeepers, this administrator suggested, would lead to them spending time looking at pornography online. A Forum delegate from IT responded by offering to block porn sites — in fact, all off-campus sites — from the housekeepers' computers.

The administrator was unmoved.

The collection of computers, enough to fill a small lab, is sitting somewhere in storage, collecting dust.

This is shameful, and a waste.



PHOTO BY MIKE MCQUOWN

Alan Moran, Dan Barme and Brenda Denzler talk during the Employee Forum staff retreat in June. The Forum elected officers, made committee assignments and talked about goals.



## Censorship case resolved

FROM THE HOPE COALITION  
NEWSLETTER, VOL. 3, ISSUE 1

The Employee Forum and University administrators have resolved their censorship dispute — a resolution that resulted in the publication of this edition of *InTouch*, inserted into *The Daily Tar Heel*.

Two years ago, the Employee Forum tried to publish an article on collective bargaining in *InTouch*.

The Forum usually had published electronically, but once a year it published on paper as an insert to the *University Gazette*. The *Gazette* is the bi-weekly publication for university employees.

The article in question was written by Raj Ghoshal, a doctoral student in sociology.

The title was "Collective Bargaining: A Human Rights Issue?" The university's public relations department refused to publish the article because it was an opinion piece that dealt with matters before the legislature on which General Administration had not taken a position. The department also stated that *University Gazette* constitutes speech by a government agency and is, therefore, not subject to the First Amendment.

Then-Chancellor James Moeser supported that position.

Employee Forum members consulted the N.C. chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union. Legal Director Katherine Parker and intern Billy Corriher prepared a brief countering the University Counsel's arguments.

In February, Employee Forum Chair Tommy Griffin met with Chancellor Holden Thorp in an effort to resolve the impasse.

Thorp offered to authorize spending the Forum's staff development fund so the Forum could publish *InTouch* independently on paper several times each year. The offer was for \$2,500 in the current fiscal year, and \$5,000 in each of the next two fiscal

years.

The Forum referred the matter to the Education and Career Development Committee, who recommended accepting the offer for the first two years, but wished to re-examine the expenditure for the third year.

June 3, the Forum accepted the Committee's recommendation. Brenda Denzler, editor of *InTouch*, described the outcome as a win-win result. The position of the university's public relations department goes unchallenged legally, while university staff are now able to publish without the threat of censorship.

Denzler made a deal to have *InTouch* published by *The Daily Tar Heel*, the independent student newspaper at UNC-Chapel Hill.

Paper publications are more readily available to employees who do not have access to computers, and the DTH is more widely read by staff than the *University Gazette*.

On behalf of the Forum's Communication and Public Relations Committee, Denzler expressed her appreciation to the N.C. Chapter of the ACLU, without whose assistance this result would not have been possible.

"The danger of there being a lawsuit against our own employer is now over," she said.

Read more: <http://forum.unc.edu/documents/InTouch8-special2.pdf>

### Get in the loop!

Join the Employee Forum listserv ([forum@listserv.unc.edu](mailto:forum@listserv.unc.edu)). This listserv is moderated, but is open to everyone: all staff, faculty, members of the press. A lot of useful information is disseminated in this manner, so give it a try and see what hot topics we are discussing and working on.



The Employee Forum swore in its 2009-2011 delegates May 6. New members: Ashley Fogle, Koyah Rivera, Bonni Baird, Clifton Webb, John Cashion, Robert Humphreys, Chuck Kaylor, Danny Nguyen, Gina Platz, Teena Burton, Ingrid Camacho, Ruth Novocek and Carrie Goldsmith. Re-elected: Catherine Cunningham, Myra Quick and Jackie Overton.

## Message from Chair: Count blessings in tough times

BY TOMMY GRIFFIN

Hello, folks. Here we are getting close to the end of the state's fiscal year, and we still aren't sure about the future of State employees or our University's future.



Meanwhile, State employees are continuing to make sacrifices daily. All of us have given up some of our pay, and too many have given up jobs already. For those who remain, we have more work and more responsibilities added to our jobs on a daily basis.

But we all continue to try to shoulder our daily work load without much complaining. No matter how hard it is to survive, we continue to move forward and get our jobs done so that Carolina can continue to be the No. 1 public university in our nation.

Do you ever wonder why we all care so much about our University? Well, I am sure it's because we care so much for each other. We are a big family that enjoys working with each other. So the bottom line is that we want to see our University survive these hard times, and we want to save everyone's job if we can.

But it will not be easy.

This is going to take all of us working together to make this happen by saving money wherever we can. We will need to create and accept new ideas and processes for how we get our jobs done. We will need to be open-minded about making these changes in our daily work lives. There will certainly be issues we need to work through on a day-to-day basis, but we will continue to do our best to create the very best working environment we can working together.

It would be wonderful if we could turn our economy around overnight, but we all know that this is not going to happen. Instead, we all must continue to be patient and keep hope alive.

Despite all that we don't have, we still have things in our favor. First, we have the Employee Forum, which continues to stand up for staff employees at Carolina and work for their welfare.

Next, we have Chancellor Thorp, who has shown himself to be a strong supporter of the Forum, in particular, and of the staff who work under him, in general.

And finally, we have each other and our common dedication to serving the citizens of North Carolina.

Thanks to these three things, the next year or two may not look bright, exactly, but it is not as dim as it could be.

## UNC-CH delegates to Staff Assembly weigh in on furloughs, flextime, health care

Since its founding in 2006, the system-wide UNC Staff Assembly has addressed issues that are important to the entire University system, including increasing health costs in light of decreasing pay, diversity initiatives, barriers that low-paid employees experience, planning for long-term workforce needs, and planning for a pandemic.

In 2007, the UNC-CH delegation presented the first resolution considered by the Staff Assembly. It was for a pay increase, and it wasn't received very well due to institutional animosity.

Then President Bowles announced that he was forming a task force to develop a "substantially equivalent" human resource program that would give the UNC system more flexibility in administering their staff personnel. President Bowles selected five Staff Assembly delegates to represent staff on this Task Force, including Chuck Brink from UNC-CH.

Members of the Task Force developed the proposed Article 16, to be included in G. S. Chapter 126 (State Personnel Act) if approved by the legislature. The Staff Assembly passed a resolution endorsing

the proposed article while affirming the protections provided under the Act.

In 2007, the UNC-CH delegation established itself as a driving force on the Assembly's Human Resource committee, bringing several resolutions to the floor for consideration. We were able to get a strong pay raise resolution passed that was well received by both the Staff Assembly and the General Administration.

During the 2008-09 academic year, UNC-CH delegates on the Staff Assembly's Human Resource committee, Tommy

Griffin, Faith Thompson, Alan Moran, and Chuck Brink (alternate) helped produce two letters to the President. One addressed furlough implementation, and the other dealt with compensation and a flexible scheduling policy.

The HR committee is currently working on a resolution about the tuition waiver program that seeks to extend the benefit to include spouses of UNC staff. The Forum contributed to this effort by facilitating a system-wide survey of staff employees to get their feedback and ideas about educational benefits.

# Survey suggests voluntary furloughs best option for employees

Between March 18 and April 15, the Employee Forum conducted an online survey, soliciting employees' opinions about the prospect of furloughs and layoffs.

There were 1,420 responses—nearly 12 percent of faculty and staff.

Although there are legitimate questions about how closely such a survey reflects the true opinions of employees, a weighted analysis of responses indicates that the results at least moderately to highly reflect employees' opinions.

About 60 percent of respondents are entirely on state funds, about 20 percent are entirely on grant/contract funds, and the remaining 20 percent on a mix of both. As expected, SPA employees are twice as likely to be solely on state funds, while faculty and EPA Non-faculty are almost evenly split between state and non-state funds.

Respondents were first asked to select multiple answers for what they would be willing to do to help with personnel expenses in this time of crisis. About one-fourth preferred to make no changes. While the survey did not ask for reasons, it's probable that this group cannot afford to be laid off or have an unpaid furlough for very many days annually.

About 54 percent of employees said they are willing to be furloughed, and 44 percent are willing to bank hours. Only 20 percent said they would be willing to have their hours permanently reduced.

When forced to make a single choice when "making no change" is not an option, 41 percent of employees said they were willing to be furloughed, 30 percent were willing to

bank hours, and about 8 percent were willing to permanently reduce hours.

It should be noted that "banking hours" is not an option that the State has placed on the table.

About 47 percent of all employees said they would look for another job if four hours or less per week were temporarily cut. That number jumped to 61 percent if hours were cut permanently. It's unclear if the other job would be instead of their UNC job or in addition to it.

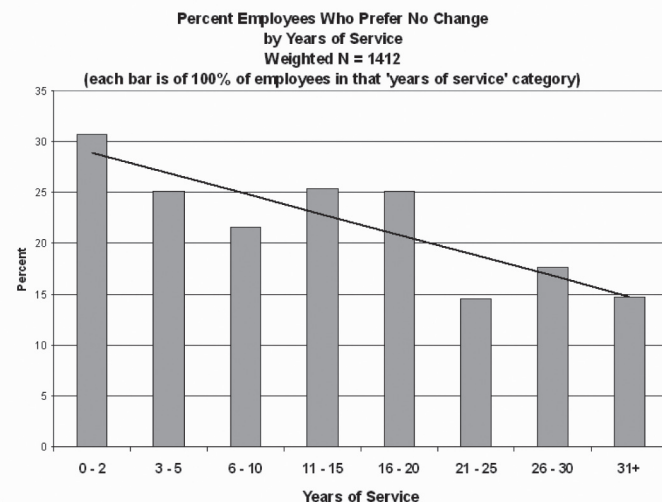
Employees tend to be divided into two groups when it comes to the number of hours they are willing to be furloughed, have banked, or have permanently reduced—those who prefer 5 hours per week or less, and those who prefer more than 5 hours per week.

Perhaps the most striking result is that those in the latter group, although they are two-fifths of all employees, are willing collectively to sacrifice twice as many hours as the three-fifths of employees who would prefer to sacrifice fewer hours per week.

From a management perspective, the overall results are challenging, especially if there's an emphasis on treating everyone equally. There is the one-fourth of employees at one pole who prefer no change, while there is the two-fifths at the other pole who are willing to sacrifice more hours. This strongly suggests that the better management course may be to promote voluntary furloughs.

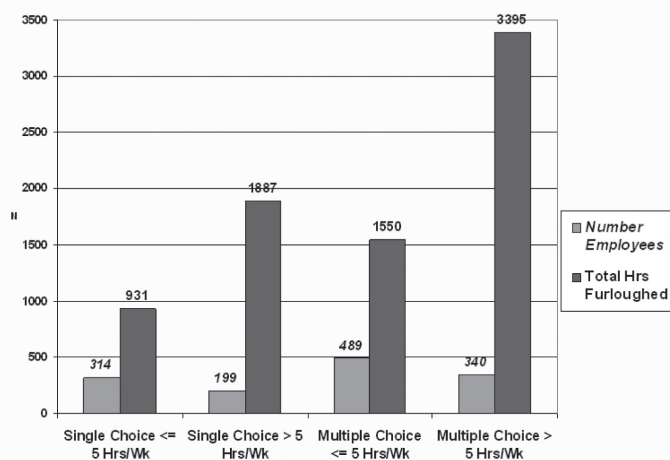
*A Powerpoint presentation covering more of the survey results can be found on the Forum's website at [forum.unc.edu/documents/BudgetCutSurvey.ppt](http://forum.unc.edu/documents/BudgetCutSurvey.ppt)*

## Employees with fewer years of service are more likely to prefer no change



When furloughs were selected either as the single choice (left) or as a multiple choice (right), employees selecting more than 5 hours per week would double the cumulative hours sacrificed by employees even though those employees are only 2/5 of the total number of employees.

Sum of Number of Respondents and Furlough Hours



## ASK HR ON HAZMAT AND BONUS LEAVE

**Q:** *Employee Forum delegates say they have heard of several different instances in which employees were directed to clean up or handle hazardous materials without any safety training or equipment. The employees felt they would be threatened with insubordination if they refused, but worried they would endanger their health and potentially the health of their families if they agreed to do the work. How should an employee handle this situation?*

No UNC employee can be disciplined or threatened with insubordination when reporting or refusing to do work due to health and safety concerns. The employee should immediately call Environmental Health and Safety at 962-5507. After hours, the employee should provide EHS with contact information or clearly state their concerns and the location of the problem. EHS will investigate and, depending on the nature of the concern, partner with the Office of Human Resources to determine the appropriate course of action. Employees can also contact the Ombuds Office.

**Q:** *Some employees who have received bonus hours have been directed not to use them. What is the policy for using bonus hours, and what should an employee do if management won't authorize their use of bonus hours for vacation purposes?*

Bonus leave may be used for any purpose for which regular vacation leave is used. Bonus leave shall be charged in units of time consistent with regular vacation-leave guidelines.

The employee shall determine whether to charge approved leave to regular vacation leave or bonus leave. Bonus leave shall be taken only upon authorization by management. As with vacation leave, management must consider operational needs when approving or disapproving bonus leave, but is encouraged to be as flexible as possible in accommodating employee needs. Employees should contact their Benefits Specialist in the Office of Human Resources for assistance working with their department's management.

## Tuition waivers benefit could be reduced

This year's State appropriations may reduce the number of classes staff and faculty can take for free. Under the new provisions, the current three classes per year would be reduced to only two per year.

Coming at a time when the statewide UNC Staff Assembly has documented widespread staff sup-

port for expanding tuition benefits for employees rather than reducing them—and at a time when almost every other form of staff benefit is being called into question—this is disappointing news.

To learn more, go to [www.ncleg.net](http://www.ncleg.net) and search for Senate Bill 202, then scroll down to Section 9.21.

## inTOUCH

*inTouch* is a publication of the Employee Forum at UNC-Chapel Hill.

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Production: The Daily Tar Heel





PHOTO COURTESY THE DAILY TAR HEEL

## Scooters help environment; riders shouldn't be penalized

BY CARRIE GOLDSMITH

IN-COMING CO-CHAIR, COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Scooters are a great, inexpensive, eco-friendly way to commute to and from campus, right?

A fantastic way to avoid the large carbon footprint of a car, and quicker than walking.

Under N.C. law, any scooter with an engine under 50cc is considered a moped. They are not required to be registered or insured, and they are allowed to be locked up at bike racks as they are, in essence, a bicycle with a motor.

But UNC is planning to reverse this policy for our campus by mandating the registration of all scooters and restricting parking to motorcycle parking areas. These permits will cost \$175 or about \$50 if patrons also have car permits.

This change is being pushed through very quietly while much of the UNC community is away for the summer. Notice of the new policy has thus far only been given to parking coordinators. If not for an article in the DTH, it could have slipped in without anyone noticing.

For a campus that wants to be "greener," it just doesn't make sense. The required permit to park a lower-footprint vehicle on campus for eco-friendly commuting will actually cost MORE per year than the non-required insurance and registration. And that will discourage their use.

There has to be another way to make a few extra dollars on this campus than to punish the people who spent the money and took the time to really try to "green up" UNC.

## Forum needs more resources to remain effective voice for UNC staff

BRENDA DENZLER  
COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR

Four and a half years ago, I became a delegate to the Employee Forum. I was almost totally uninformed about issues of concern to staff employees. I had little idea of exactly what the Forum did, and I was extremely naïve about how this University works.

Needless to say, I am not in the same position today! Since most of you will never get to become Forum delegates, let me share with you what I've learned.

The Employee Forum does an amazing job, given the resources at its disposal. The Forum:

- Advocates for things, like pay raises and improved benefits.
- Advises the Administration, as when Bain & Co. came to campus.
- Initiates things, such as like the literacy program and the Commuting Costs Task Force.

■ Advocates against a few things, like the plan to change the payroll to monthly for all employees.

■ Tries to keep all 8,570 staff employees informed about things they may want or need to know, through this newsletter and events like our community meetings.

Just as importantly, the Forum serves as a resource for groups of employees who need help with work situations. While the Ombuds Office must take a neutral approach in helping employees with work-related concerns, and the Office of Human Resources is an arm of the Administration, the Employee Forum exists solely for the purpose of representing and advancing the interests of staff employees as workers. Sometimes that includes quiet, background troubleshooting.

And talk about cost efficiency! The Forum does all this with a budget of only \$26,000 and an office

assistant funded by Human Resources.

In fact, the Forum's lifeblood is the bits and pieces of work time that departments around campus give to delegate-employees so that they can attend to Forum matters...plus the hours of personal, off-the-clock time that some delegates wind up contributing to the cause.

Given this, the accomplishments of the Forum are nothing less than phenomenal. Indeed, the Forum is often asked how we manage to do the things we do. The answer is: a strong sense of shared commitment to advancing the welfare of staff, a refusal to be intimidated when the going gets tough, and the steadfast support (if not always the agreement) of our Administration.

But here's the bad news: In my opinion, the Forum is stretched to the limits of its capacity.

The 80-20 rule applies to the Forum, as it does in most organizations. Eighty percent of the work gets done by 20 percent of the people. The other 80 percent of delegates aren't slackers, they're just busy doing their jobs.

This constraint on the Forum's productivity was noticeable when the economy was flush and the Forum was asking for 5 percent pay increases. Today, when the Forum is simply asking that staff not be laid off or furloughed, it's worse.

Due to the layoffs, stress among staff employees is high. In many cases, tasks from eliminated positions have been redistributed to the remaining employees. Plus there's the sheer stress of trying to work extra hard and keep your head low so that you don't, yourself, become the next layoff victim.



Under these circumstances, it's going to be hard for the Forum's 20 percent not to get caught in the deflationary spiral and wind up at 14.3 percent. This is unacceptable.

At the same time that Forum delegates' plates at their "real" jobs are fuller than ever, they are being called upon to address a growing range of staff employee needs. To meet these needs, they need more resources.

Specifically, the Forum needs:

1. A full-time professional program manager for the Forum office, whose role would be to oversee the various projects of the Forum.

2. An office assistant position that is paid for with Forum funds rather than through HR.

3. Graduated cost offsets for the home departments of all Forum officers, to compensate them for time spent on Forum business.

4. A larger operating budget. The Forum has a constituency that is almost three times larger than the faculty, but the Faculty Council budget is five or six times larger.

5. Permanent funding for print publication of the newsletter at least three times per year.

Today, with our economy in a shambles, the University may find it difficult to fund these urgent needs. With people begging to keep their jobs, it may seem as if we could do without the Forum or could allow it to go into a decline.

But that would be a huge mistake. Tomorrow the economy will recover. The University will be looking to see which experienced staff employees are quitting and wondering how it can convince them to stay.

In being a bulwark and a voice for staff employees, a vigorous Forum can play a critical role in helping Carolina get past the current dark times and safely into the better days that are sure to come.

## Weekend work, summer overtime pay keep Housekeepers, administrators at odds

Disagreements between housekeepers and administrators have dwindled, but not ended, during Chancellor Holden Thorp's tenure at UNC.

The biggest disagreement began when Facilities administrators decided to change housekeepers' schedules to provide weekend cleaning in dorms. Housekeepers observed that a weekend work schedule would introduce transportation and childcare hardships, among other problems.

In response to these criticisms, Associate Vice Chancellor Carolyn Elfland formed a special committee to address these questions. Elfland closed all meetings to the public on the grounds that personnel matters were being discussed, although Housekeepers contend no confidential individual or zone-level matters ever were discussed in the meetings.

Housekeepers on the committee told a Forum housekeepers' support group that

the main subject addressed in the close-door meetings was the new "staggered work schedule" plan.

So what does a staggered schedule mean? Housekeepers thought it meant needing to add workers to fill a seven-day work schedule. Facilities administrators saw it as redistributing existing workers to fill the longer schedule.

Forum Delegates James Holman and David Fraley, who were on the special committee, say administrators told them not to speak with anyone outside the Housekeeping Department about the negotiations, effectively forbidding them from speaking to the press or participating in Employee Forum discussions.

At this point, housekeepers marched on South Building and spoke with Chancellor Thorp. Thorp asked the housekeepers to trust him: No presently employed housekeepers would have to work weekends.

Housekeepers thought this meant the University would hire weekend crews. Instead, the University forced temporary Housekeeping employees to work weekends, leaving the permanent crews to pick up the weekday workloads formerly handled by the temps. In the restructuring, some areas lost work responsibilities while others gained them.

The Chancellor asked for a 60-day moratorium on the discussions starting in January. Things have been quiet since that 60-day period expired.

At the heart of this controversy is whether a weekend crew is necessary.

Holman said students didn't complain about the state of housekeeping on the weekends. This being the case, housekeepers said Facilities Services needs to be more sensitive to the needs of its workers.

Holman and Fraley say one administrator told them that "money is not the

issue."

"If it's not money," Holman asked, "then what is the issue?"

Most recently, discussions have dealt with the provision of break rooms for housekeepers in all campus dormitories.

Facilities Services department administrators initially asked some housekeepers to take their breaks outside or in their cars. After some protest, administrators worked to find break rooms in all but one of the buildings involved.

Tonya Sell of Facilities Services has invited the Employee Forum Executive Committee to meet with her office to find a way to resolve this impasse.

Also at issue was the decision to eliminate overtime for housekeepers working during the summer.

Some housekeepers feel this is unequal treatment because other Facilities Services workers regularly receive overtime pay.