

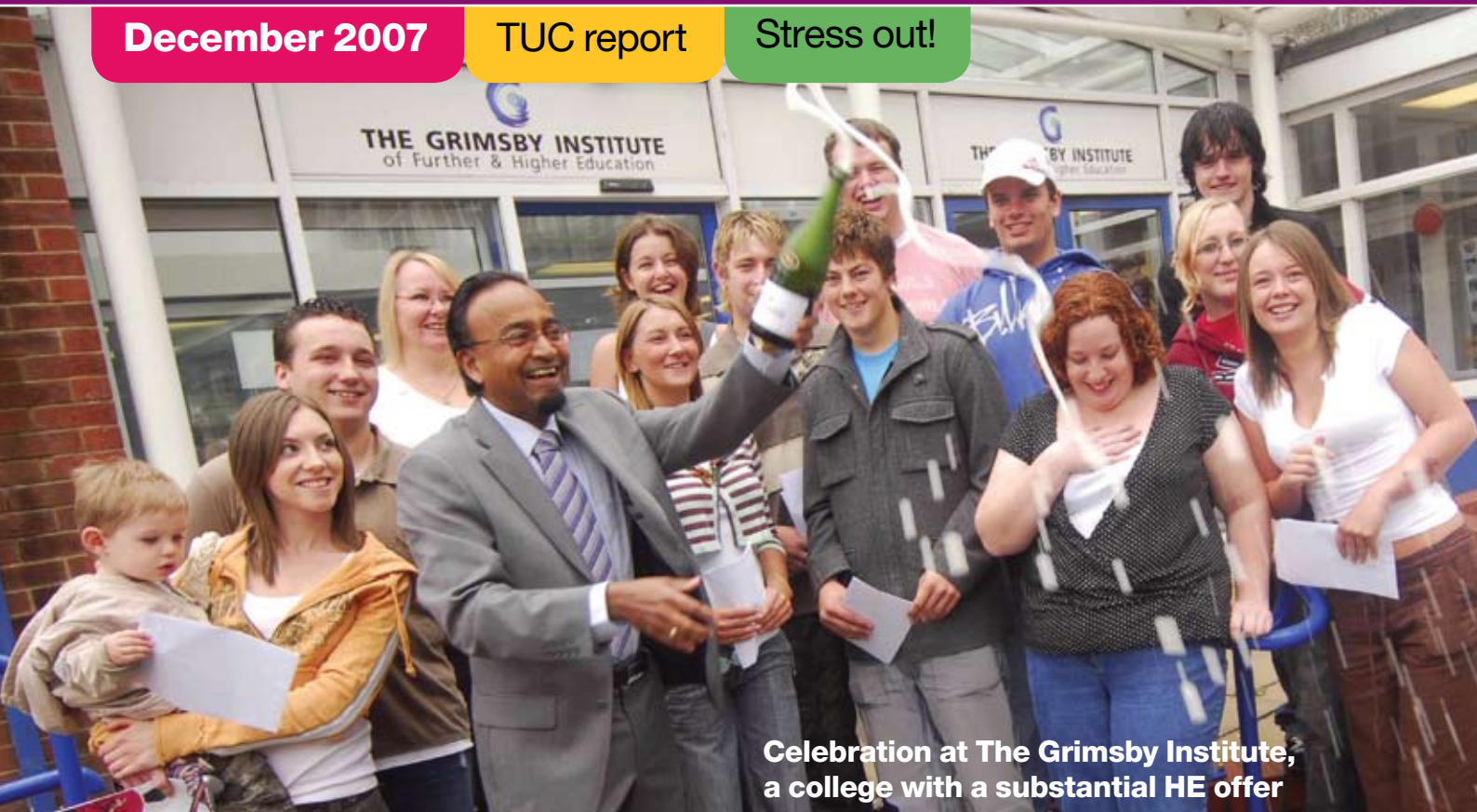
College Manager

acm

December 2007

TUC report

Stress out!



Celebration at The Grimsby Institute, a college with a substantial HE offer

It's HE Jim, but not as we know it

The HE in FE debate rumbles on with the publication of the results of the HEFCE consultation on higher education in FE colleges. **John Dishman**, Dean at Leeds Metropolitan University, reads between the lines.

HEFCE consulted with universities, colleges, Sector Skills Councils, lifelong learning networks, the Learning and Skills Council and others on its policy for supporting higher education in further education. Respondents strongly backed HEFCE's view of the distinctive contribution that FE colleges can make to the overall pattern of higher education in this country.

Helpfully, HEFCE has begun to articulate its vision for higher education in FE colleges. That vision is distinctively different to what you might expect to see in a university.

The organisation's vision for the future of college-based higher education is that it should focus on higher-level skills. This could be thought of as essentially vocational provision related to the needs of employers. Such a vision chimes well with the demands of the Leitch report but it may mean that colleges are left with only a narrow definition of higher education to work with. It might suggest that higher education in further education should only be about skills development and meeting the needs of local employers. That is not a bad thing, but should it be the only higher education that colleges can offer? Furthermore, will it limit the role universities may wish to play in higher-level skills development? ►

◀ Facing reality

HEFCE's view is that colleges should focus on the needs of their localities. It says that colleges in isolated areas should provide 'broader provision' and those in urban areas should seek to shape provision which complements that provided by their neighbours. This view may reflect the economic realities of higher education in further education. Colleges that serve a dispersed community are unlikely to have sufficient numbers of students to make more than a general HE course financially viable. Is there an argument for funding rural provision more generously? Can the same argument be made for small levels of HE provision in rural colleges as for running small sixth forms in rural schools?

Colleges in close competitive proximity may split the market if they don't share students, resources or even courses. This is an argument for colleges to work in partnership with other institutions. Colleges in such urban locations may want to reflect on their disposition to lifelong learning networks at this point.

Colleges, in HEFCE's view, would only attract students from a national market by offering niche provision. Yet many colleges attract students from well outside their region, and international students (who are not mentioned as part of the vision) are currently being recruited to college-based HE programmes.

It would seem that HEFCE recognises the FE sector as innovative in terms of curriculum design and delivery. It says that colleges should focus on 'dynamic, flexible, short cycle provision (that is equivalent to two years' full-time study or less) and that it should come in 'a variety of modes including work based'. College managers will recognise that the vision being proposed is one of further education providing 'sub-degree' provision. Provision that is delivered in the equivalent of two years' full-time study or less could not be beyond foundation degrees in terms of level. Already 15% of HE in FE students study to honours degree and a number of colleges offer programmes at master's level.

Celebrating the best aspects of FE

HEFCE sees colleges as having a particular role to play in widening participation. Universities have struggled to widen participation from under-represented groups and HEFCE rightly recognises the success the FE sector has had in this area. It sees a strong role for colleges in encouraging progression to higher education from within their own institution. It would be true to say that colleges often look to recruit from their FE students. However, if this vision of college-based higher education is realised then such progression would be to a more limited form of higher education than a student would get had they gone to a university. When coupled with the proposals for FE colleges to award their own foundation degrees, this vision for higher education in further education has the potential to limit what colleges can offer to simply a re-hashed HND/HNC model.

The real distinctiveness of higher education in further education becomes apparent when colleges are given the freedom to develop HE provision that meets the needs of the communities they serve. Colleges are adept at being able to respond to the market. They manage with smaller class sizes and with courses that have shorter lifecycles than universities can. Furthermore, they respond quickly to new opportunities as they become available. Higher education in further education is made sustainable when colleges enter healthy partnerships, sharing resources, experience and expertise with universities. Further education and higher education can work in a reciprocally beneficial way. Any vision for higher education in further education should not offer colleges a reductionist view of higher education and 'going it alone' but encourage an enriching experience for learners through FE and HE partnerships. ●

The views expressed above are personal and not necessarily those of Leeds Metropolitan University.

Sector self-regulation

In October ACM, the Learning and Skills Network and the 157 Group hosted a seminar focused on sharing views about sector self-regulation. Colleagues will recall that at the 2007 Association of Colleges conference the then Secretary of State threw down a challenge to colleges to come up with a viable model of self-regulation. 'I am challenging you today to develop a proposal for self-regulation ... the responsibility for improvement must rest primarily with FE institutions themselves' (Alan Johnson, 21 November 2006). That thinking, currently under the leadership of John Taylor, Leader of the Self Regulation Implementation Group, is well underway and ACM will be communicating with members when the model is ready for consultation. We expect rapid progress over the next few months and plan to play a lead role in encouraging debate and dialogue among college professionals.

ACM introduces childcare voucher scheme

ACM has launched a childcare voucher scheme. Open to all staff, it works through a salary sacrifice arrangement, which means an employee receives childcare vouchers instead of part of their salary. The employee does not pay tax or National Insurance on the childcare voucher element. Employees could save up to £1,200 a year and the employer saves money on National Insurance, too. For further information on childcare voucher schemes, please visit www.hmrc.gov.uk/childcare

Maggie Dollin Evans

Maggie Dollin Evans, long-term member of ACM Council, has died after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Maggie was a manager at Blackpool and The Fylde College and she will be deeply missed by her many friends and colleagues at Blackpool, ACM and from across the sector.

The Successful College Manager Conference

Colleges for the future

Friday 23 May 2008

International Convention Centre, Birmingham

ACM celebrates its 21st year in 2008 and will mark the occasion with a special anniversary conference. The challenges facing the sector will be the main focus and the conference will provide managers with the knowledge and skills they will need to meet the ever-changing demands placed on them.

A number of interesting and inspiring speakers are being arranged, so put 23 May 2008 in your diary and look out for further details over the coming months.

Burma protest

ACM has written to the Burmese Embassy about the current unrest in what is the largest country in mainland south-east Asia. This follows a decision taken at the last ACM Council meeting. The letter expresses concern at the suppression of protestors and calls for the release of those arrested. It also urges meaningful dialogue with the protestors, with a view to restoring democracy and improving the lives of all Burmese citizens.

Last chance to recruit your colleagues

Don't forget you have until 31 December to recruit a colleague and receive your £20 Marks and Spencer voucher.*

Write your name and organisation on the application form available at www.acm.uk.com/joinacm and pass it on to a non-member colleague. If they subsequently join, we will send you your voucher. Remember, the more members we have, the more powerful we are as an organisation.

* This offer is valid until 31 December 2007 and is open to fully paid up ordinary members of ACM. No member who is related to, or has an association with, an ACM employee is eligible to participate. To qualify for your voucher, the new member you have recommended must be in membership for a minimum period of four months. We will send you your voucher as soon as the minimum period has been completed.

Lifelong Learning UK's workforce strategy for the FE sector in England, 2007–2012

This Association and the college sector welcome this consultation and congratulate Lifelong Learning UK (LLUK) on a clear, intelligent and thoughtful document which will help to develop a dialogue on these important issues.

The vision proposed by this document is generally clear. However, it does not, as yet, have a sufficiently informed, detailed and imaginative conception of the future. It is both overly self-referential to the lifelong learning landscape and largely confined to the parameters and dimensions of the 'now'. While it is important to address 'internal' issues such as the nature of the sector and the balance of the workforce, we should also take account of wider economic, political and social factors as well as the direction of change. We need to encourage dialogue and exchanges across the sector that will assist the development of possible future scenarios in some detail. In particular, account should be taken of:

- the radical impact of technology on work, learning and identity (easy to say – more difficult to model in detail)
- the impact of globalisation
- the impact of the significant increases in the mobility of both the European and the global populations
- the demands made of the sector by the challenges thrown up by rumbling social conflicts.

Professional development for all staff – not just teachers

ACM would emphasise the importance of a commitment to developing the learning of *all* staff. The discussions and debate about the professionalisation of the sector led by the Department have been overly focused on teaching staff. Naturally, ensuring excellent teaching must be a top priority for policy, however, securing consistently top-class teaching relies heavily on good management. Professional development and support for managers has scarcely been admitted into official conversations during discussions about the new regulations. A failure to address the learning agendas of managers will significantly undermine attaining the goal of consistently excellent provision. (Consider: if one regularly fails to get good service from the public library/trade union/travel agent/bank or hospital, one does not put this failure down to the individual member of staff. One interprets a consistently poor service as a management problem. So it is with teaching and learning.)

On a similar theme, every member of a college's staff contributes to an all-round excellent service, including catering, cleaning and security staff. However, the learning needs of these staff are too often neglected by colleges. If the ambition in this vision that the FE sector should be recognised as an exemplar employer is to be realised, a great deal of progress must be made in respect of the learning of these cohorts of staff. The tendency of colleges to criticise (other) employers for failing to train their staff sounds hollow in this context, since on ACM's evidence the majority of colleges neglect the learning of their most disadvantaged and low-skilled staff. ►

With regard to making the sector attractive to people reflecting on their career choices, while we recognise that issues of pay and conditions of service are beyond the remit of the LLUK consultation, ACM must stress that pay and conditions are always important factors, and often the determining factors, in people's career decisions.

In addition to pay and conditions, young people making career decisions take a range of factors into consideration, including:

- a culture that values and respects employees
- flexibility around family responsibilities
- the latitude to innovate and make good ideas happen
- training opportunities
- a sector that enjoys public respect and prestige
- an environment that is attractive and enjoyable to work in
- a modern, upbeat vibe.

The college sector does not always measure up to these modern expectations, and until it does we are unlikely to attract the workforce we need.

Nature of identity

One of the challenges lying in wait for teaching and learning over the next decades concerns young people's relationship with cyberspace. For many adults cyberspace is hazy territory that e-mails travel through and that photos are downloaded or uploaded across. For young people, cyberspace is a landscape that they live on; it has a different ontological status than for older generations. Important to their identities is how they establish themselves on that landscape through sites such as YouTube, Facebook and MySpace. This phenomenon is in its infancy at present but will expand rapidly. While for most people the internet is essentially a download experience, for those under 25 it is as much if not largely an upload experience. We need to consider carefully how this shift in the nature of identity will impact on teaching and learning.

Note: Due to space limitations, only edited highlights of ACM's response to the consultation are reproduced here. ●

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ACM at the 2007 Trades Union Congress

It was a successful, if somewhat controversial, TUC for ACM delegates Peter Pendle and John Lowe. Both of the motions ACM put forward won overwhelming support from the other unions, but not without an unprovoked attack from one of the UCU delegates at the conference.

The incident came after ACM General Secretary Peter Pendle had moved the composite motion on raising the participation age in education and training. The motion, which said employers' record of training is largely unimpressive, called for training provision to be of a high standard and of proper value to young people. It was being supported by the teaching union NASUWT, the construction workers' union UCATT, and the UCU.

But from the speaker's rostrum, the UCU delegate sparked controversy when she made an ill-disguised attack on ACM and college managers, claiming that we supported compulsion.

This prompted a robust response from Peter Pendle, who made it clear that agreement on the content of his speech had been sought from the UCU General Secretary and President in order to avoid any misunderstanding.

Commenting afterwards, Peter said: 'Sadly a public attack of this nature can only cause harm to the sector, dividing staff at a time when we are all facing big problems.'

Immediately after this debate both unions were again at the rostrum moving and seconding a composite motion calling for steps to prevent more job losses in further education resulting from college restructures and mergers and to campaign for long-term stability in the sector, particularly in terms of public funding and staff pay and conditions.



ACM delegate John Lowe told congress, 'Restructuring has become a disease. It is the biggest single reason for a member to contact us, and redundancy dismissals arising from a restructuring are the single most common issue dealt with by ACM officers.

'The impact on staff is serious. They are forced to reapply for their jobs, often with an increased workload. Many will actually lose their jobs. But this isn't a case of colleges losing excess capacity slimming down to some leaner and fitter state. Certainly not. FE staff already work extraordinary long hours and with massive workloads.

'What we are seeing simply isn't sustainable in the long term. Dedication to education has a limit, and staff will leave the sector once that point is reached.'

The composite motion also expressed concern that entire departments will be contracted out to private providers putting commercial interests before those of learners, and called for a moratorium on further initiatives such as contestability and public-private partnerships until the impact of such initiatives has been fully evaluated. ●

Looking forward to the New Year

John Lowe
ACM Council Member

This is the time of year to reflect on the old year and look forward to the new. In the last newsletter I contemplated the plethora of changes that FE colleges have been asked to cope with – not just this last year but ever since incorporation. Now is the time to look forward. Where will your college be next year? Will you be able to recognise it?

It is two years since Foster's review of further education brought the question of our identity into sharp focus. 'Above all,' he said, 'FE lacks a clearly recognised and shared core purpose'. The government was not slow to pick up this criticism. In its White Paper *Further education: raising skills, improving life chances*, it proposed a clear mission for the FE system focused on helping people gain the skills and qualifications for employability, thus both contributing to the strength of the economy and improving the quality of their own lives.

This simplified vision for further education was to be the clear identity it had lacked. But did the vision simplify only by losing the sense of richness and diversity from the contribution further education makes to the people of this country? Is there not more to this than skills for employability? What about FE's contribution to 14–19 diploma partnerships, adult and community education, ESOL and skills for life; and its access to and provision of higher education for non-traditional participants in the university experience?

Achieving a fit at local and national level

The trouble with a clear identity, a brand, is that it has to be distinctive to be effective. The glory of further education is that it is inclusive. Foster himself noted this dilemma when he wrote that 'the diversity of college activity, often seen as a strength, brings confusion about their [colleges'] role and purpose'. Chris Hughes, in a think-piece commissioned by Foster about FE's image and reputation, tried to resolve the dilemma in the phrase 'An economic mission with inclusive values'. His vision was that further education should meet the skills needs of the economy through comprehensive and diverse learning opportunities.

Can we have our cake and eat it this Christmas? How can colleges conform to the national template laid down by the government and sustain their local identity within the community they have traditionally served? Can we fuel economic development through enabling individuals to realise their personal potential? Can we sustain our local diversity and inclusiveness while focusing on the government's national agenda?

'FE colleges should be enjoying a golden age, given the correspondence between their potential and the nation's needs.' Not my words but Foster's.

So, the opportunity is there. Creating and sustaining a winning brand is difficult at the best of times. Doing so in a time of constant change is the challenge facing us as we go forward to the new year. Let us know how you cope with the challenge and we will share your good practice with colleagues. ●

Stress: a load of tosh or a serious problem?

David Green
ACM Head of Employment Relations

In the last few years a growing number of ACM members have contacted us because they are suffering from work-related stress brought on by excessive work pressures or bullying. Indeed, we have seen a doubling of helpline calls on stress and a 30% rise in calls on bullying.

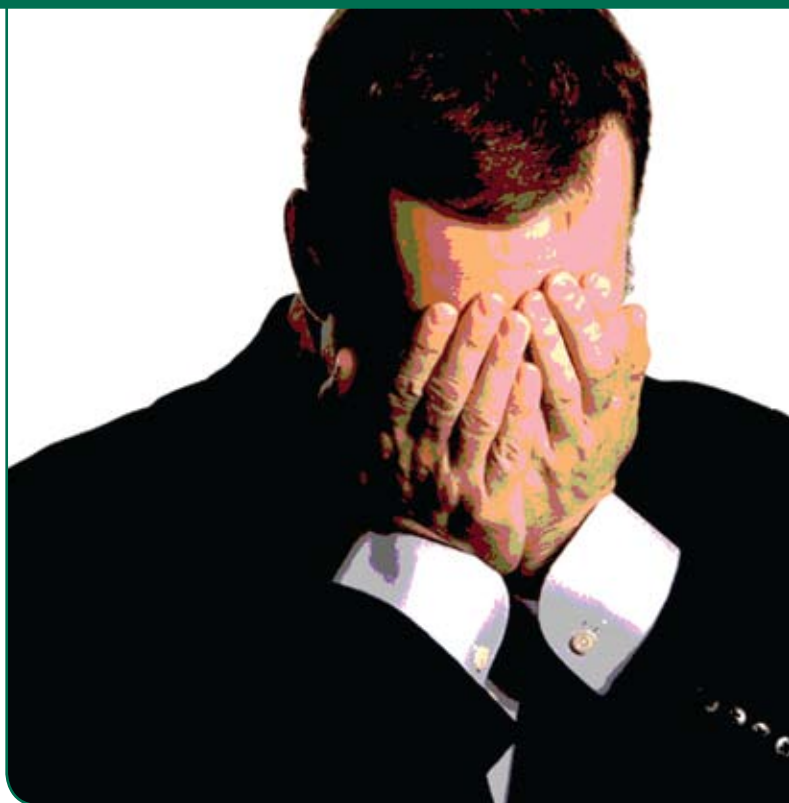
These are not members simply trying it on because they don't like a line manager's decision, or because they aren't meeting targets. They are college managers who, through their work, have become ill. It is a serious problem and one that their employers really should be taking seriously.

'But what a load of tosh,' I hear the sceptical mutter. 'It's easy to say you're stressed.'

Is it? If you have ever experienced the days of nausea, dizziness, shortness of breath, or the crying, the panic and the feeling of despair, then you might start to understand.

Yes, there are times when someone is given bad news about their performance, and they say they are being bullied or they go sick. But in part it is the very nature of our target-obsessed workplaces, our use of restructuring to remove people that are no longer wanted and a lack of proper training in people skills that perpetuates this problem. Hardly surprising then that a manager who has never had any capability issues raised in many years of working at the college takes it badly when they are ambushed at a routine meeting by someone from HR!

Of course, there are some employers who simply don't believe a doctor's note. But to me that is doing a great disservice to a profession upon which we all come to rely at some point in our lives. Indeed, we have come across some colleges that will ignore the medical evidence, expecting the employee to deal with reports, phone calls, home visits and restructurings while they are off sick.



This though, as a recent case has shown, is a risky strategy. The Employment Appeals Tribunal found in favour of a woman who had been certified as suffering from stress by her GP. The employer had a discretionary clause in its contractual sick pay scheme, allowing for it to be withheld if there were doubts about the genuine nature of the absence.

The employer had its doubts and withheld the woman's sick pay for seven weeks. But her claim against the employer for unlawful deductions from wages was upheld because at no point in its investigation did the employer seek any medical evidence of its own (*Merseyrail Electrics 2002 Ltd v. Taylor*: UKEAT 0162/07).

But whether you believe a doctor's certificate or not, work-related stress is a very serious problem. The Health and Safety Executive (HSE) has already identified education as one of the worst offenders, accounting for 13% of all the incidence of work-related stress in this country. The UK economy loses something like 12.8m working days a year through stress, with each affected employee, according to the CPID report *New directions in managing employee absence*, taking an average of 21 days off sick as a result of the illness. ►

You'd think then, given the duty of care owed to the individuals concerned, and given the impact of absenteeism on organisations, that colleges would want to try and prevent such problems. But almost 40% of colleges don't have a policy for preventing work-related stress according to a recent survey of ACM branches. What's worse, when asked what happens when a risk assessment reveals high levels of stress, the top response was 'nothing' (20%)!

For health and safety practitioners, for trade unions and for the senior management teams and staff in our colleges, this apparent inactivity poses a real challenge but one that needs to be addressed.

The issue has already been taken up by the Further Education Safety and Health Forum (FESH). This tripartite body, made up of representatives from the colleges, unions and the HSE, has made work-related stress one of its priorities; and as chair of the forum, I will do what I can to ensure that a workable strategy emerges. But turning a strategy into operational reality will require commitment from us all. The alternative – doing nothing – can only result in more work-related stress, something we surely all wish to avoid. ●

Restructuring still top issue

Problems with restructuring remains the number one reason for seeking ACM help. Of 519 new enquiries received by the helpline and regional officers in the first three quarters of the year, some 191 (37%) were about restructuring.

The next most frequent reasons for calling ACM are grievances (12% of total) and pensions (9%). David Green, ACM Head of Employment Relations, said: 'Every year we hope that restructuring is fading away and sadly, every year we are disappointed.'

Ruling welcomed on redundancy consultation

ACM is taking legal advice on the implications of a new ruling over collective redundancy consultation. A recent case at the Employment Appeals Tribunal (EAT) established that as well as consulting over the process of redundancy dismissals, an employer now has to consult about the reasons behind the dismissals. Previously, an employer's duty in relation to the reasons merely extended to a disclosure of information.

But as well as widening the remit of consultation, the ruling may also mean redundancy consultation should start earlier.

David Green, ACM's Head of Employment Relations, explains. 'Usually a proposal to restructure receives approval from the corporation before any collective consultation begins. This makes it very difficult for ACM because by then, the proposals are usually a *fait accompli*. However, this ruling may give us a right to be consulted at a much earlier stage, before the corporation has made its mind up about any proposed redundancies.'

The EAT case in question involved an employer who argued that it did not need to consult over the actual reasons why it was closing a colliery. However, the judge said, 'the obligation to consult over avoiding the proposed redundancies inevitably involves engaging with the reasons for the dismissals, and that in turn requires consultation over the reasons for the closure' (*UK Coal Mining Limited v. BACM and NUM*).

David added, 'We are already considering action against some colleges that recently went through a sham consultation process. This latest EAT ruling is therefore very welcome.'

Pay negotiations update

As we go to press it seems that pay negotiations in both England and Wales have stalled again.

In England, the Association of Colleges (AoC) offered to recommend to its members a staged increase of 3%, with 2% paid from August and a further 1% in February. Although less than hoped for, the offer is still above the increase being made to schoolteachers and will further reduce the difference between salaries in colleges and schools. The offer also addressed some of the underlying issues of low pay for support staff in the sector. AoC further agreed to develop joint advice for colleges on a range of issues raised by the unions, including workload and stress, staff development and training, and facility time for representatives. Five of the joint trade unions have agreed to accept the offer. UCU consulted its branches and although a majority indicated that the offer should be accepted, it decided at a special conference to reject the offer and ballot members for industrial action. AoC will not formally advise its members to implement the pay award until all unions have accepted the offer. Discussions between the unions are continuing.

In Wales, fforwm offered to recommend to its members an increase of 2.5%, which would equal the increase being made to schoolteachers and maintain parity between college and school employees. It also agreed to enter into discussion on a range of condition of service issues once the Webb review of further education in Wales concluded its work. Once again, a majority of unions were willing to accept the offer but UCU has decided to ballot its members for industrial action.

ACM will continue to work with other unions and the employers in order to find a resolution as soon as possible. However, it is unlikely that the majority of college employees will receive any increase before the start of the New Year.

ACM annual survey

Starting this December ACM plans to conduct an annual survey of all its members with the intention of understanding how we can improve our services to you. The survey can be completed electronically and is accessible from the home page of the ACM website: www.acm.uk.com It takes about 5 minutes to complete and your feedback will help the Association strive for continuous quality improvement and to be more responsive to members' needs. We'd really appreciate your input on this. Many thanks.

Performance management research

ACM is conducting CEL sponsored research about excellence in colleges. The central idea is to identify and describe effective models of performance management in colleges. In particular we aim to explore how different models of performance management connect the three main strands of the process: lead, direct and support; hold accountable; recognise, reward, celebrate or challenge. If your college has a cross college performance management system which you consider important in your college's progress to excellence we would like to hear about it and possibly to include it in our research. Please contact Nadine Cartner on nadinecartner@acm.uk.com

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Proud to represent ACM and its members



ACM focus group

At the start of the autumn term, ACM conducted a small survey to gauge members' views on a range of issues. The results will be used to inform strategic planning by the Association's National Executive. The responses were generally supportive and some of the key outcomes are listed below.

Most valued features

- The understanding ACM staff have of the nature of the concerns and interests of their members
- The focus on college managers as a specific cohort in the FE world (and the niche focus and size of the organisation)
- The quality and (right level) quantity of communication methods and materials
- The focus on professional development and the quality of individual professional development events and materials
- The reasoned, sensible, considered, professional brand of ACM's public presence
- The quality of advice to individuals and therefore of the union's officers and their responsiveness.

What ACM could do better

- While the quality of staff is excellent, they are sometimes unavailable for key college negotiating meetings because of conflicting priorities. Association employees seem therefore too stretched on some occasions. The capability of local reps needs to be enhanced through more effective development programmes.
- ACM sometimes struggles because of its size to maintain cohesiveness – whether to operate most at national, regional or local level.

- ACM's position on national issues is sometimes not voiced or, if it is, heard. Colleagues would like ACM to have a higher national profile, perhaps even a more campaigning stance.
- ACM needs to find ways not only of representing members' interests but also of helping to promote the value to the country of the FE sector.
- There is an imbalance in attention devoted to the teaching aspects of the business as opposed to the managerial. Functional/operational managers (as opposed to principals) may feel somewhat neglected at national level as well as in individual branches. ACM could do more to research and campaign on the pressures that members face as managers in their day-to-day lives.
- Some of the training courses offered are already very well done by other providers and may be trailing the game rather than being at the leading edge.

The Association's National Executive will be addressing these issues in the coming months. Our thanks to those members who participated in the focus group.

Wise words

Back in July, we asked whether you agreed or disagreed with colleagues who asserted that they work for the college and students, not for their individual line manager. The results were tight. 32 votes supported colleagues who disproved of managers who speak of their 'subordinates' or of those they manage as 'working for me'. 31 votes were not in support.

Do you agree or disagree with this statement?

The college sector is of such enduring benefit to the UK economy that it will survive all the revised missions and reviews that this and any other government can throw at it.

Vote on the ACM website at www.acm.uk.com or send an e-mail to feedback@acm.uk.com



Felled at the final hurdle

Like most English men and women, I was hugely disappointed by the recent failure of our sporting stars to win the big prizes after having done so much, against all the odds, to put themselves within reach of victory. After four years of struggling, and following an early stage 36–0 thrashing by the Springboks, England's rugby team reached the World Cup final only to fall at the last scrum. Our football team, after poor results against Macedonia and Israel, recovered only to lose to Russia after taking the lead in this all-important Euro 2008 qualifier. Lewis Hamilton, in his rookie year as a Formula 1 driver, managed to top the leader board until the final two races when basic errors cost him the world championship. What struck me most, however, were the similarities between these sporting defeats and the dismal outcome of the FE pay negotiations in England and Wales.

In both countries the joint trade unions came together to formulate an agreed pay claim and, against all the odds, managed to achieve a good outcome. In England, after much negotiation and against a difficult financial background for colleges, the Association of Colleges offered a settlement better than that offered to schoolteachers whilst addressing issues of low pay in the sector. It agreed to have discussions on a number of other conditions of service matters raised by the staff side.

The unions decided to undertake consultation exercises with their respective memberships and five reluctantly decided to accept the offer. The Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) took a different approach: although a majority of branches indicated that the offer should be accepted, the UCU decided to have a national ballot for strike action!

A similar situation emerged in Wales. fforwm agreed to recommend to colleges an increase that would keep FE salaries in line with those of teachers. It even agreed to enter into discussions on national conditions of service if the FE Review in Wales were to give a nod in that direction. UCU's response: to reject the offer out of hand and ballot for strike action.

Now I could understand the rush to take industrial action if the recent track record demonstrated that it would reap dividends. Unfortunately, it doesn't. In both England and Wales the campaigns, led by militants with their own political agenda, have had little significant impact on colleges or the ultimate outcome. It seems that the UCU is intent on snatching defeat from the jaws of victory although, unlike England's sporting stars, it is doing it by scoring a spectacular own goal. And, as predicted in the previous issue of this newsletter, the outcome will be that nobody in further education will receive a pay increase until well into the new year, if at all. Perhaps now is the time for ACM members to mention to management colleagues the benefits of Association membership! ●

A very happy Christmas to all ACM members and colleagues, and good wishes for a great 2008.

Quote of the issue

[Outstanding leaders are] ambitious first and foremost for the cause, the movement, the mission, the work – not themselves – and they have the will to do whatever it takes to make good on that ambition. [Outstanding leadership exhibits a] 'compelling combination of personal humility and professional will.

Jim Collins, Good to great, 2001

Know a good saying about leadership that applies to work in colleges? Send it to memberfeedback@acm.uk.com