

Editorial:**The infamous Lumbee Hall runaround strikes again**

By Wade Allen
Editor

As a senior at UNCP and only one semester away from accepting that hard-earned diploma from the hand of Chancellor Charles Jenkins, I've made hundreds of trips to Lumbee Hall and rarely had a problem.

I've heard my peers talk disgustedly about the so-called Lumbee Hall

Opinion

runaround. That is being sent from office to office on a never-ending quest to get someone to help them solve a problem. I had never personally experienced it before.

No paycheck

That all changed on Oct. 19, which happened to be my birthday, when I went to Lumbee Hall shortly before noon to pick up a check the University owed me from the week before.

During the last academic year, the administration had implemented a gold button policy in which the employees directly assisting students were to wear a button that reads "UNCP – Students First" pinned to their lapels.

The campaign was an effort to put an end to the run around some students experience in Lumbee Hall.

Well, the only buttons in sight on Oct. 19 in Lumbee Hall were on the elevator, that faithful stainless steel box that became my best friend as I began a journey from

one floor to another with no end in sight.

Pursuit begins

Having not received my paycheck by direct deposit that the University owed me on Oct. 15, I went to the budget office on the third floor – which incidentally is not on the directories adjacent to the elevators – to pick up the check.

I was greeted by a canary yellow Post-It note on the budget office door instructing me to report to the payroll office.

Since I was on the third floor, I saw the Office of Human Resources and stopped in to inquire why the payment was late and if this would be an on-going problem.

As I entered the office, there was no one to be found.

The lights in the director's office were off, and there was no secretary seated at the desk. In a few minutes, a woman emerged from the back room.

I told her my story and she said that she could not help me, that it must be an issue with the payroll office.

I walked back to the elevator and pushed the button to the first floor. I found the payroll office and a staff person greeted me.

No record

She said that she had no record of the University owing me a paycheck and sent me back to Human Resources.

Luckily, the elevator was still waiting for me on

the first floor. I was experiencing the fact it doesn't take long for someone to pawn you off on another department.

I went back to the third floor and was greeted again by the same staff member.

She said she could not find my check either but instructed me to wait until I received word from her department. In other words, don't call us, we'll call you.

Disappointed, I thanked her and left Lumbee Hall to go to class more confused than ever.

Two more days

Two days later, on Oct. 21, I received an apologetic e-mail from Human Resources, instructing me, and the other student employees who also weren't paid on time, to pick up paychecks from the payroll office in two days on Oct. 23 after 10 a.m.

Oh boy, I thought, this is great. Not only did I get an apology for my inconvenience, but I might actually receive my paycheck.

It seemed a long time from August, when I had first begun to work for the money.

I reported to the payroll office on Oct. 23. The payroll office must exchange stationery with

the budget office because I was greeted by one of those canary yellow Post-Its again. This time, instructing students to go to the cashier's office to pick up checks.

Walking down the hall to the cashier's office, I entered and waited in line. All of a sudden, a gentleman waiting in line behind me was called to the window to pick up his check.

Watching this injustice unfold before my eyes, I bit my tongue and practiced my best manners.

When I was called to the window, I explained my story. She had a check waiting, and I signed the receipt for it, as proof that I received it.

Half the amount

As I exited the cashier's office, I looked at the check in dismay. It was for exactly half the amount owed to me.

Realizing the cashier was only in charge of distributing checks, I went directly to the third floor Human Resources office.

Once again, I found no secretary at the desk. I waited and, eventually, someone asked if she could be of service.

I explained that my paycheck was for half the amount it should have been. She told me I'd have to speak with the Human Resources Director Pamela Barkett.

For as long as I can remember, my fellow students and I have always

thought of Barkett as a God-like figure. We never see her, but have complete faith that she must be there. So, you can imagine the thrill of seeing her in-person instead of having her message forwarded to me through a lower-ranking staff member.

I opened her door and there she was – a tall, medium-built woman wearing black reading glasses, sitting before stacks of papers and a Styrofoam cup. I knew right away that this was a busy person.

I explained to her, and several of her colleagues, my dilemma and she ordered a staff member to retrieve my file.

Admitted error

The file confirmed that there was an error in my check. The staff member said that I should have been paid twice the amount of the check I had folded and put discreetly away in my jeans pocket.

Wanting to know when I could expect the other half, Barkett said, "I really don't know. I can't promise anything. I can tell you that you won't be getting another check today. It'll probably be Nov. 15."

She also said that "Raleigh" controls the check that I received bearing the pre-printed signatures of Chancellor Jenkins and Vice Chancellor for Business Affairs R. Neil Hawk.

No help

Bewildered, I asked her if she could help me, explaining to her that I had come to that department in search of an answer. I mean, after all, it's not called *human resources* for nothing.

I may only be a student but I knew, I just knew, that she must hold the key to the engine that,

when cranked, would resolve my problem in due time. After all, she *is* the director of human resources.

Barkett explained that it was not really her job to see that I was paid correctly.

Not to be outfoxed, I pointed out that it certainly was not my fault – surely, I was the victim plus I had bills to pay.

As I left Lumbee Hall, I was bewildered as to why she did not rise up, take charge and resolve my problem.

My paycheck was supposed to be issued on Oct. 15, and I found myself more than a week later on Oct. 23 still without the full amount.

Others like me

So, here I sit with a check in my pocket for half the amount it should be, just like many other student employees across campus.

I'm left with several questions, more than a few concerns and more confusion than a student has a right to expect. My hard-working student colleagues at UNCP deserve to get paid on time and in a trustworthy, reliable and courteous manner.

I've always agreed.

Put students first

I just wish the employees in Lumbee Hall in human resources, the cashier's office and the payroll office felt a stronger responsibility for putting students first and resolving issues that directly affect the livelihood of the people who make UNCP so great.



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Letter to the editor:**Lumbee tribe one step closer to recognition**

Dear Editor,

On Oct. 22, the United States Senate Committee on Indian Affairs voted "yea" on a voice vote to pass two bills sponsoring the federal recognition of six Virginia Indian Tribes and the Lumbee Indians of North Carolina.

Earlier companion bills have passed the United States House of Representatives.

There remains the need for an at large Senate vote and passage of the bills, as well as the President's signature for them to become law - federally recognizing the six Virginia nations and the Lumbee tribe.

Although the Virginia Indian Nations have maintained a 350 year tribute system with the colonial British and their successor in state government, including several treaties, they have never been federally recognized as Indian Nations.

The Lumbee, on the other hand, were federally recognized and terminated in the same legislation issued in 1956.

The failure to recognize these tribal nations is rooted in the apartheid history of the colonial South and subsequent prejudicial treatment of southern Native Americans.

North Carolina Senators Hagen and Burr have pledged to introduce the bills on the Senate floor for a vote; however, with the contentious issues of health care and climate change occupying the Senate at large, it may be difficult for these bills to receive affirmation.

At any rate, with House bills in place and passage through the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, this action constitutes the closest the respective Virginia nations and the Lumbee have come to receiving federal recognition as

Indian Nations.

After 400 years of contact and engagement with the Virginia Indian tribes and the shameless 1956 recognition and termination of the Lumbee tribe, it is certainly about time that these great wrongs perpetrated against these aboriginal peoples of Virginia and North Carolina be righted with justice served in granting federal recognition to these tribes.

Pray the promise of this act of restorative justice be served and fulfilled with an affirmative vote in the Senate and a presidential signature before the end of the year.

-Jay Hansford C. Vest, Ph.D., Enrolled member Monacan Indian Nation Direct descendent of O p e c h c a n o u g h (Pamunkey, Honorary Pikuni (Blackfeet) in Ceremonial Adoption (June 1989), Professor, Department of American Indian Studies