

September 14, 2009

Dear UAW 2865 members,

Throughout the summer we've had conversations with thousands of fellow members about the crisis facing the University of California and its implications for our working conditions and the quality of education at the UC. As the academic year begins to pick up momentum, we wanted to take the opportunity to welcome everyone back, to share our analysis of the causes of the crisis and to propose how we can all act collectively to work towards solving it.

UAW 2865 members are in a unique position as both students and workers impacted by the UC's response to this crisis. As students we are faced with increasing fee hikes -- state education and registration fees went up 9.3% this year and the Regents are considering approving another 32% in increases to take effect by next fall
<[http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ht7JqYZyqW3G2vlpf6eBm5Bs2SlwD9AL9G280](http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5ht7JqYZyqW3G2vlpf6eBm5Bs2SlwD9AL9G280;)>
<<http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2009/09/11/MNAB19L7Q9.DTL>>. And as workers we are finding employment opportunities harder to come by as courses and educational support are cut. Since we provide the majority of face-to-face undergraduate instruction, we are also in a unique position to see the impacts of these responses on the quality of higher education.

Members are reporting a number of negative impacts, which include students receiving less individualized attention and fewer course offerings, and having to make difficult choices about whether to continue their studies due to a lack of financial aid and the burden of loan debt.

Our analysis of the current crisis is centered on two interconnected problems: 1. California's budget and tax policies; and 2. The UC's response to the state budget shortfall.

CALIFORNIA'S BUDGET AND TAX POLICIES

Even in good economic times, the budgetary process in California has proved to be disastrous. In today's economic climate, it is debilitating. California is one of only three states that does not pass a budget by a simple majority. Over the years, and especially this year, this two-thirds requirement has allowed a minority of anti-government politicians to hold up the budgetary process and force drastic cuts to public goods such as higher education -- cuts that a majority of Californians do not support.

Moreover, California is one of only a few states that requires two-thirds majorities to raise taxes. Thirty percent of our senators and 34% of our assemblymembers have pledged to "oppose and vote against any and all efforts to increase taxes." What these anti-tax legislators and their supporters do not acknowledge is that when the cost of student fees and tuition go up, that's a tax on students. And when workers are furloughed and their wages and benefits are decreased, that's a tax on workers. These legislators only oppose taxes on their wealthy supporters and corporations. Such opposition is not only undemocratic, but is also grossly ineffective from a public policy standpoint -- funds for public goods are most efficiently raised from those with the most money.

UC'S RESPONSE

We believe that the UC should be taking a more active role in mitigating the impacts of this crisis on students and workers at the UC. While we commend the UC for encouraging its employees and students to lobby the legislature for additional funding <<http://www.ucforcalifornia.org/uc4ca/issues/alert/?alertid=13940331>>, we want to see more of a commitment from the UC's leadership to prioritize quality and affordable education in California by advocating for raising taxes to increase funding for, among other public goods, the UC.

The UC must also reexamine its own budgetary priorities. The furloughs and reductions in salaries and benefits that the UC is implementing are disproportionately impacting low-wage workers, while raises are still being granted to top executives and the number of six-figure earners at the UC has increased dramatically over recent years. Later this week, the Regents will consider the fee increases discussed above. If approved, these drastic increases will render UC education even more unaffordable to thousands of eligible Californians. Fees must be rolled back, not increased.

UAW 2865 MEMBERS TAKING ACTION

There are a number of ways we can take action to address the crisis at hand. These include taking legislative action to fix California's broken budgetary process and lobbying legislators to fully fund higher education; engaging the UC through actions highlighting the impact of this crisis on students and workers; and helping to enforce our current contract, doing outreach to current TAs, readers and tutors and mobilizing for our contract negotiations, which begin in the spring. We'll be in touch about ways you can get involved, or you can contact us directly through your campus office or the statewide office.

Additionally, many of you have contacted us with questions regarding the September 24th actions that faculty, students and staff have planned across the UC system in protest of the UC's response to the budget crisis. In particular, members have asked what our contractual rights are if we choose to participate in the various actions. First of all, the contract does not apply to anything you do on non-work time or while working in a job title not covered by our contract (only employees in TA, tutor and reader titles are

covered by our contract).

Because these actions coincide with an unfair labor practice strike by UPTE's technical and research units, individual academic student employees (ASEs), according to the contract, "retain rights of free expression including their right to engage in activities in sympathy with other UC unions or bargaining units who are striking at the work location of the ASE. When ASEs exercise these rights and do not meet the expectation that they comply with the terms of his/her appointment, at the discretion of the University they may not be paid for work they do not perform."

Many of you have also asked us what unfair labor practices are. ULPs are illegal, bad faith bargaining practices. Examples of ULPs that the UC committed during our past negotiations as well as the current negotiations over a first contract for postdocs (our sister local, UAW 5810), include withholding information necessary to bargaining, sending people to negotiations who do not have authority to reach settlement, etc.

If you have further questions about your rights or want to get more involved in our local, please contact your campus office or our statewide office. For a pdf of the entire contract, visit <http://www.uaw2865.org/rights/files/UAW_UC_07_09.pdf>

In solidarity,

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