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## **UCU CONGRESS 2008 – REGISTER NOW!**

UCU Congress will take place this year in Manchester from 28 – 30 May 2008. The first report of the Congress Business Committee has been issued setting out the motions submitted to Congress. Branches are reminded and urged to register their delegates as soon as possible - we hope that as many branches as possible will be represented. Full details, including links to on-line registration, can be accessed from this link

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/congress>

Any queries about registration can be directed to Sue Moss in the Conference Unit, [smoss@ucu.org.uk](mailto:smoss@ucu.org.uk)

## **STORM CLOUDS GATHERING OVER PAY**

While the debate over the future of the national pay bargaining structures continues prospects for next years pay round do not promise any easy ride. Although employers are committed to the remaining instalments of the 2006 pay agreement of 3% in May and the higher of 2.5% on the RPI and recently published accounts for the year ending July 2007 show the sector to be in a fairly healthy state; institutions are looking to talk down their financial prospects. Much of this is in anticipation of the government's review of student support next year when some institutions are looking for the cap on tuition fees to be raised or scrapped entirely. Elsewhere we are seeing increasing unrest over pay. Our own dispute in FE is a part of this together with action taken with the NUT in their case over a below inflation increases proposed. Action is also being taken across many parts of the public sector. Some universities try to argue that they are not part of the public sector. Despite such a dubious claim we will remind them of that if they try next year to claim that they must abide by Treasury norms. At the HE branch officers' meeting on 2 April these prospects

were considered as we set in train the process for developing next year's pay claim. This will be discussed again at Congress on 29 May and a special HE conference will finalise the claim in the autumn. If the reform of the bargaining machinery is not resolved by then our pay campaign must make it clear to employers that their interests lie in being part of a national pay process and not trying to go it alone.



**STOP PRESS – HE NEWS has just heard that following a petition to the visitor prepared by UCU lawyers on behalf of Keele, UCU committee member Peter Fletcher, the visitor has asked the university to take no further steps towards implementing its proposals pending consideration of the petition.**

Members at Keele University want to thank everyone for the support they have received right from the start of the campaign to stop compulsory redundancies.

## **SAVE KEELE**

Hundreds of supporters turned up to the Rally on 3rd April from all over the country and from across the Trade Union movement. There were banners from UCU Brighton, Leeds and London Met, CWU Burslem, Unison Telford, Cambridge, Wolverhampton, Amicus Telford and PCS (Apologies if we have missed anyone). The Rally was held to coincide with the University's Council meeting, which was to decide the fate of members within SEMS (School of Economic and Management Studies). A dossier of the emails received from all over the world and the thousands who signed the online petition was sent to each Council member before the meeting, to show them the level of anger.

Despite changing the start time from 11am to 10 am at the last minute, hundreds of supporters turned up in time to let the Council members know the internationally respected School should not close.

*Solidarity wishes were sent from all over the world, including Australia and Zimbabwe who clearly had other things to be dealing with that week.*

*Speakers included Alastair Hunter (UCU Vice President) Malcolm Keight (UCU*

*National Head of HE), Paul Willis (UCU Keele branch), David McEvoy (PCS National Learning Officer), Tony Jones Unison Regional Officer, Mark Holland (Keele University Student's Union KUSU), Roger McKenzie TUC Midlands Regional Secretary.*

Each one pointed out the anger felt across the country at the closure of the only course that offers academic study on IR issues for Trade Unionists. This closure is not because there is no demand, it is a decision made purely by 'business folk'. To date very little discussion has been held on the academic impact to current and future students. Members are angry that the SEMS Dean has not attended any of the consultation meetings so far, and has not been public in what she sees as the future of this new 'Business School'.

After most supporters had gone the Council decision confirmed that the proposals are to go ahead. UCU is still in consultation with the University, and is deciding how to step up the action. Please continue to support members in this campaign, after all if they get away with it here it will be on your doorstep soon.

## COMMISSION FOR DISABLED STAFF IN LIFELONG LEARNING

The Commission for Disabled Staff in Lifelong Learning, on which UCU was represented, has produced its final report. The Commission reports that disabled staff in the lifelong learning sector face widespread institutional discrimination.

The report makes a number of recommendations for employers in FE and HE as well as recommendations about how trade unions should improve their practices.

A summary is available at:

<http://www.niace.org.uk/projects/commissionfordisabledstaff/docs/Compliance-culture-summary-report.pdf>

## JNCHES guidance on work-life balance

The national JNCHES guidance for institutions on work-life balance has been revised and updated in line with legislative changes. This has now been circulated to all institutions.

It is available on the UCU web site along with a UCU commentary on issues to consider when negotiating a local policy on work life balance.

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1969>

## ELQS: THE BATTLE HOTS UP

Following a damning report from a parliamentary select committee on the lack of evidence for the decision to withdraw £100m from ELQ student funding, UCU has urged education secretary, John Denham, to step back from the brink. The committee received some 500 submissions, nearly all hostile to the changes. Apart from the principle, UCU believes that the inadequacy of the exemptions, the confusion over the actual cutbacks and safety net funding for 2008/09 present an operational nightmare for institutions. Like the select committee, UCU remains convinced that the issue should have been referred to the 2009 fees review.

You can read the select committee report at

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm/cmdius.htm>

Five motions on ELQ s have been submitted for UCU Congress in May but it's important to continue the pressure now. The government appears resolute and the first stage is 2008/09. You can help by writing to your MP. There's a model letter for you to use at

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=2947#do>

Branches/LAs are beginning to feed in information on what's in prospect in terms of students, jobs and courses. **This information is needed urgently.** Please email reports to Rob Copeland, [rcopeland@ucu.org.uk](mailto:rcopeland@ucu.org.uk). Please send in copies of letters to MPs and their responses too.

## THE JISC TECHDIS SERVICE

The JISC TechDis service (hosted by the Higher Education Academy) provides advice and guidance on the use of technology to achieve a more accessible experience for students and staff in higher and further education.

To assess their impact in HE and inform future work a survey is being undertaken. Responses are sought from anyone and everyone working in HE (including in FE), from a wide range of subject disciplines, role areas and institutions. Everyone who completes the survey can be included in a draw for one of eight £25 book tokens (usable online and in stores), although it's also possible to complete the survey anonymously.

The survey - live until the end of June - can be found at <http://tinyurl.com/3DTQFY>. It should take between 2 and 10 minutes to complete. Please encourage members to respond.

## REWARD AND RECOGNITION SURVEY: VIEWS SOUGHT

The Higher Education Academy (HEA) is exploring the views of academic and academic-related staff about the recognition and reward for teaching in higher education. The HEA would very much value your views on the status and acknowledgement of teaching in the sector as a whole and in your own institution.



The survey can be found on the UCU website at:

<https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/survey/rewardandrecognition>

**Deadline for responses is Friday 16th May.**

### GLASGOW CALEDONIAN UNIVERSITY COMBINED UNION COMMITTEE

Unions at Glasgow Caledonian University encouraged the Principal and Senior management to break their silence and engage in a debate on the involvement of the private company INTO in the education and recruitment of International Students.

This follows a successful rally called by the Combined Union Committee on April Fools' Day (1 April) attended by Pauline McNeill and Bill Kidd MSP. Since that time, management have refused to answer detailed questions on their secret deal with INTO.

Dr Nick McKerrell, Convenor of the Combined Union Committee said:

"Staff are perplexed. More and more murky details are being discovered about INTO by the day yet senior management will make no public comment"

"We are challenging the Principal and the Executive to answer a series of questions staff have over this deal."

"We would be prepared to have a public debate on these issues perhaps chaired by our Chancellor Lord MacDonald of Tradeston".

## "LECTURERS MUST BE AT THE HEART OF THE DEBATE OF FUTURE OF HE IN SCOTLAND"

**UCU Scotland congress** took place on Friday 4 April at the Airth Castle, near Stirling. Topics discussed included the 'huge unaccountable' salaries awarded to university principals, pay and conditions for staff, student housing and Kosovo.

Terry Brotherstone the first elected President of UCU Scotland told Scottish lecturers that they must be at the heart of any debate about the future of higher education in Scotland. Speaking to UCU delegates at the annual Scottish conference he warned university principals that a plea of poverty would not wash when trying to justify redundancies and that the fight against privatisation had just begun.

He addressed the issues of funding, redundancies, privatisation, the Future Thinking taskforce and the National Conversation. Excerpts from the speech are below.

*On funding he said:*

"The funding settlement was worse even than expected, though subsequent one-off funding announcements mean there should still be real-terms increases each year. So no nonsense about a need for redundancies, Principals, please!"

On the Future Thinking Taskforce, set-up by the government in league with the Principals:

“The idea that the Principals should be seen as the sole voice of ‘the universities’ in planning the longer-term future and that a committee on which none of those who actually do the teaching and research,

no trade unions and no student body is represented can determine strategy for higher education for the next twenty years is a democratic, intellectual, and planning absurdity.”

*And on the wider Scottish debate:*

“If the current National Conversation is to be something more than a contribution to ephemeral political point-scoring between ‘nationalists’ (or ‘separatists’) and ‘unionists’, it should include an interrogation of what the myth of the ‘democratic intellect’ might mean in practical terms in an ‘independent’, or even in a more effectively devolved 21st-century Scotland. The education system and higher education in particular has to be a vital part in the ideological equation at the centre of the Scottish debate. That’s where Scotland’s universities should be, and by universities I don’t mean the Vice-Chancellors. I mean those who make the universities what they are and fight to defend them against the marketisers, privatisers, and cutters. I mean the colleagues we represent.”

Promising to step up the fight against privatisation of higher education services:

“I congratulate our union colleagues at Glasgow Caledonian on their successful demonstration against the secret deal between their management and the predatory private service company INTO. They are launching a fight that must be stepped up, through vigilance and local action wherever necessary, so that scrutiny of this and other such enterprises informs a UK-wide anti-privatisation campaign.”

### **21ST CENTURY LIFE IN POST-16 EDUCATION: WIN PRIZES IF YOU TELL US YOUR VIEW**

Dreaming spires, ivory towers, lengthy holidays, Brideshead Revisited, Tom Sharpe’s Wilt books – all stereotypes about the life of British further or higher education.

Is this a true and accurate reflection of life for UCU members? UCU is undertaking a poll in conjunction with the College and University Support Network to discover what life is really like in our universities and colleges in the 21st century.

Make sure you have your say, and have a chance of winning substantial prizes, by visiting:

[http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=o4qR6reXTL51POFKyPUkzQ\\_3d\\_3d](http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=o4qR6reXTL51POFKyPUkzQ_3d_3d)

It will only take a few minutes and the more responses we get the more chance we have of really telling the story of modern day education to the media.

### **FIXED TERM AND HOURLY PAID NEWSLETTER**

The Fixed Term and Hourly Paid committee has just produced its **first** newsletter. Copies are expected to be available in delegate packs at Congress.

You can also access this newsletter and read more by copying and pasting the following link in your URL

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/FTHPnews>