

## **In this issue**

**College Building Funds**

**Progress of Pay Implementation**

**The Year of the Agency Worker**

**Job Threat at Doncaster College**

**Major Conference and Rally**

**Bishop Auckland**

**Adult Learning**

**Funding**

**CALL Lobby**

**Solidarity with Palestinian Educators**

**UCU, NIACE, NRDC Conference**

## **College Building Funds Fiasco**

Members will probably have seen recent publicity that at least 79 colleges in England have had allocated money for new building projects frozen because the LSC has overspent on the relevant budget.

Applications were approved and £2.7 billion allocated for projects at these colleges and £3 billion earmarked for another 65 colleges have completed costly feasibility studies.

There is a potential financial disaster for these colleges. Over the past 18 months many took out loans, employed architects and in others, such as Barnsley College, builders have actually started the work. The college principal told the BBC: "it leaves us with a building site, "It leaves us with 7,000 students in a mixture of accommodation, including a substantial amount of rented accommodation, and it potentially leaves the college technically insolvent."

The government has laid the blame squarely at the LSC, whose chief executive, Mark Haysom, has now resigned over the issue. However UCU is not so concerned as to who is to blame but what is to be done to remedy the situation and ensure that any college students, staff and their communities do not suffer over this fiasco.

UCU and other FE unions are having an emergency meeting with the LSC on Tuesday 31 March and are seeking an urgent meeting with Further Education Minister, Siôn Simon. We are pleased to hear his recent public assurances that "We are absolutely not willing to see colleges go bust" and that he has appointed Sir Andrew Foster to conduct an investigation into the whole sorry affair.

UCU will be very clear, however, that the buck stops with the government and will be demanding that it ensures that no college suffers detriment for expenditure already incurred or planned on these capital projects.

Branch officers are asked to approach college management to obtain local details on any local effects of this decision and report any difficulties to the regional office.

UCU will report back to all members when we have more information.

---

### **Progress on Pay Implementation**

The period since the last edition of FE News has seen much activity in our "IOU" campaign to get the national pay scales implemented in all colleges in England.

UCU members at 8 colleges took a one-day strike on 5 February to continue the pressure on local management to introduce pay scales that have been due since August 2004. The strike had solid support and attracted extensive publicity see:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3636>

Last minute talks at Nelson and Colne, Evesham and Askham Bryan colleges which were balloted for action, secured commitments from management to introduce the scales and to negotiate details with the union.

**Continued...**

Following the strike progress was made at another 3 colleges – Sussex Downs and Greenwich colleges achieved commitments to negotiations and an agreement to implement was secured at Sandwell. We have also just heard that following the threat of balloting for action, Stratford upon Avon College branch has now also secured a commitment to implement.

The campaign continued on the 24 and 25 of this month when 4 colleges – Doncaster, Dearne Valley, Rotherham and North West London took a further two days strike – check out the UCU website for more details.

A further 5 colleges are now likely to ballot in April for action and form a second wave to the campaign. Unless employers at Peterborough, Suffolk New, Canterbury, City Birmingham and Leeds Art and Design colleges provide a commitment to introduce the scales, strike action is planned for the third week in May.

The current overall national position is that 69% of colleges have either reached agreement on the national scales, have an interim agreement or are currently in negotiations. Clearly there is still much to achieve but the message to all branches is that campaigning eventually produces results.

---

## Let's make 2009 the year of the Agency Worker!

Two important things happen in the world of agency working in 2009

- **Colleges will be charged an extra 15% for VAT on top of agency workers' entire salaries from 1 April 2009. In the past VAT was only applied to the agency's fees.**
- **The UK Government will hold consultations in 2009 on how to put the European Agency Workers Directive into UK Law.**

These two events create the first opportunities to try and improve the situation for members working for agencies in FE for many years.

To coincide with these two events UCU will be providing new resources and guidance for branches to recruit agency lecturers into the union and negotiate with management on their issues. Branches will shortly receive an email with the following:

- **Guidance on how to approach college management about transferring agency staff to direct employment contracts to avoid the extra 15% VAT charges on salaries.**
- **A leaflet for distribution to agency lecturers explaining UCU's position on the VAT changes, agency workers contracts and information on how to help the union in the upcoming consultations on the European Agency Workers Directive.**

Also going live within the next week will be a new web page, found at:

[www.ucu.org.uk/agencyworkers](http://www.ucu.org.uk/agencyworkers), which will have more information on these two important developments and guidance on how to help the union's campaign for better rights, pay and conditions for agency workers in FE.

### **Tell us your story as an agency worker in FE.**

If you are an agency worker in FE and you have experienced unfair or unequal treatment compared to directly employed colleagues we need your stories so that we can use as evidence with the government for why any new laws for agency workers must cover lecturers in FE.

All evidence will be treated confidentially (names and details that can identify you will be removed) unless you tell us otherwise. Please email us your story to:

[agencyworkers@ucu.org.uk](mailto:agencyworkers@ucu.org.uk)

Further guidance on how to write your story as a case study will be available shortly at:

[www.ucu.org.uk/agencyworkers](http://www.ucu.org.uk/agencyworkers)

## Jobs Threat at Doncaster College

UCU members at Doncaster College who took two days strike as part of the IOU campaign, (see above) expressed their outrage at what they see as a succession of attacks on hard-working staff by a failing management. Managers appear to have completely reneged on earlier indications that they would consider implementing the 2004 pay agreement and have informed staff that they intend to cut around 300 jobs. Some will be replaced with lower paid 'Assessor' jobs, reinforcing the idea that the college is trying to deliver teaching on the cheap. The college is also failing to consult properly with unions, with no indication of who is at risk or why.

UCU is campaigning hard against these plans, which will devastate FE provision in Doncaster at a time when there are 19 unemployed people for every job advertised in the city. The union is calling for full and open consultation and no compulsory redundancies and has warned that it will use every option available to defend members and education in the community. For more information go to:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3760>

### WHAT YOU CAN DO

Please send messages of support to the branch by emailing Justine Stephens at [jstephens@ucu.org.uk](mailto:jstephens@ucu.org.uk) and we will pass them on.

---

## Major Conference and rally- 'Defending Education, Defending Jobs'

Responding to the current wave of proposed job cuts and course closures UCU is organising a major conference and rally which will take place on Thursday 2 April between 4-8pm at the University of London Union (ULU), Malet Street, Central London. This conference is designed to equip branches, regions and officials to:

- **Campaign effectively against job cuts**
- **Share negotiating strategies**
- **Build campus based coalitions of learners and staff**
- **Use local and parliamentary resources to win**
- **Learn how to run an effective media campaign**

### Afternoon session 4pm – 6pm:

- Redundancies from an IR perspective
- Funding and the RAE (UCU Policy department)
- Building a campaign locally – national and regional support

### Evening– Mass public rally - 6pm – 8pm:

A major rally – open to all. Confirmed UCU speakers from current campaigns at London Met and Liverpool and many more to come. A host of external speakers have also been approached.

---

## Congratulations to Bishop Auckland Branch

A determined campaign with regional and national support has successfully seen off a vicious attack by management on staff terms of employment. A well attended branch meeting on February 27 voted to accept an offer in relation to a 7-month-old contract dispute.

In August last year the college gave notice of its intention to dismiss and re-engage all members of staff on (unspecified) worse contracts of employment. A packed branch meeting, attended by the Regional Official and National Head of FE, voted decisively to move to strike action unless the college withdrew the threat. In addition, as a result of a national appeal the branch was flooded with messages of support

Whilst the college did not withdraw the notice it did agree to suspend its implementation to allow negotiations to take place. After 14 negotiating meetings the final settlement resulted in no real worsened conditions for members and has strengthened the branch.

## Adult learning: the UCU vision

### A One Day Conference: 30 April Birkbeck College London

With an ageing population and a severe economic recession adult learning has never been more vital. Yet government policies seem only to recognise economic rationale for adult learning and its policies seem to limit adult learning rather than expand it.

UCU members across all the sectors of post compulsory education are at the heart of adult learning. This one day conference will discuss a UCU vision for adult learning and hear presentations from leading theorists and practitioners on the current and future state of adult learning. For further details and an application form, contact:

[Dtaubman@ucu.org.uk](mailto:Dtaubman@ucu.org.uk)

or through the UCU web site [www.ucu.org.uk](http://www.ucu.org.uk) where there is an on-line application form.

---

## Funding

Following a regular meeting between the FE unions and the LSC, it is understood that the provisional allocations for FE 16-19 work are now with providers and allocations from the adult responsive funding stream should be with colleges by the end of March. Train to Gain funding, because it is dependent on a competitive bidding process, will take longer to get to colleges.

The adult responsive funding looks as though it is slightly better than had been indicated last year when indicative 3-year LSC funding was published. The Development funding stream, which puts resources into amongst other things, low level literacy, numeracy and ESOL programmes that are precursors to full Skills for Life courses continues to be squeezed.

Numbers of 16-19 year olds not surprisingly given the job market are up in schools and colleges even beyond that growth that the LSC had planned. Additional money is promised from government for this.

If your local management is reporting cuts in funding, get the details, alert your regional office and let Dan Taubman know:

[dtaubman@ucu.org.uk](mailto:dtaubman@ucu.org.uk)

## Campaign Alliance for Lifelong Learning



### CALL Lobby an overwhelming success

February 25 saw over 500 CALL supporters lobby their MPs on the current parlous state of adult education in the country, asking them to sign the Early Day Motion 533 on adult learning which currently has over 150 MPs signed up to it.

More than 100 MPs met campaigners on the day to hear first hand how changes to adult education funding and policy had affected them locally.

A packed lobby meeting heard speeches from CALL campaign supporters and MPs including a passionate vision of adult learning from the ex-Secretary of State David Blunkett

The meeting ended with a question and answers session with John Denham, Secretary of State, in which CALL campaigners challenged many of the government's policies for adult education. For more information and photos of the day and much more visit the CALL web site on:

[www.callcampaign.org.uk](http://www.callcampaign.org.uk)

---

## Solidarity with Palestinian educators - Palestine twinning and exchange seminars

UCU is holding two seminars to help develop twinning and exchange links between UCU branches and Palestinian educators and researchers. Following the Congress motion in 2008, UCU has organised these seminars to take place at SOAS in London on Thursday 2nd of April, from 14.00 to 17.00, and Manchester University on Wednesday 22 April from 12.00 to 15.00. The seminars will aim to share experiences and good practice, with the aim of encouraging further twinning between UCU branches and developing a wider range of potential partnerships.

**Continued...**

Both seminars will be open to all branches. In particular, we anticipate the seminars examining:

- **institutional links (e.g. college to college, university to university etc);**
- **'union to union' links; and**
- **community twinning and exchanges.**

Branches may register one or two representatives in this programme, but should attend only one seminar. Please register your interest with Paul Bennett :

[pbennett@ucu.org.uk](mailto:pbennett@ucu.org.uk)

---

## **UCU, NIACE, NRDC Conference 11th May Freedom to teach, freedom to learn**

Jeffery Hall, Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL

The professionalisation of the Skills for Life workforce and the more recent requirement for teachers in the post-16 sector to have Institute for Learning membership, means that teacher training and continuing professional development have a very high profile. Teachers are required to engage in regular CPD, which both addresses their own needs, and those of their organisation. It also equips them to deal with curriculum development issues such as the introduction of Functional Skills. Amongst these competing demands, the issues of teacher autonomy and creativity risk being sidelined.

NIACE, National Research Development Centre for adult literacy and numeracy (NRDC) and University and College Union (UCU) consider that it is vital to ensure that learning which takes place outside of this employment context is also valued so that all potential learners, whatever their purpose, are able to engage in literacy, language and numeracy learning, and that professionals should feel confident about using creative approaches to teaching and learning. This conference will provide a opportunity to think about literacy, language and numeracy teaching outside of the constraints of funding arrangements, national tests and targets, and refocus participants on the essentials of teaching and learning.

It is a chance to rediscover the creativity and passion that motivates us all in our work with learners.

**Event Fee per person: £135 for full-time staff £65 for part-time staff (includes lunch, tea/coffee and a certificate of attendance)**

Applications on NIACE web site:

[www.niace.org.uk](http://www.niace.org.uk)

or Gurgit Kaur 0116 204 2833 Fax: 0116 254 8368 Minicom: 0116 255 6049 E-mail:

[gurjit.kaur@niace.org.uk](mailto:gurjit.kaur@niace.org.uk)