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## AoC Refuse to Budge on 1% Pay Offer

Trade Union negotiators reacted angrily at the second national negotiating meeting held on Friday 5 June where the employer's side refused to improve on its 1% pay offer for 2009/10.

Despite previously indicating at the first negotiating meeting in April that the offer would be revised, the AOC made a disgraceful U turn and stated that the 1% offer should now be regarded as final because of the economic climate faced by colleges.

In rejecting the offer the trade union side recognised the future financial uncertainties for the sector but did not accept that a more reasonable offer was not possible this year. Nothing had substantially changed since the last meeting in April, many colleges had substantial reserves and it was premature to make such bleak knee jerk conclusions at this stage.

With schoolteacher's pay set to rise by 2.3% this year, a pay rise of 1% at a stroke would seriously undermine recent progress made on narrowing the continuing pay gap. For support staff at the bottom of the scales it would mean a paltry 5p extra an hour.

Negotiators made it clear that this miserable and insulting offer is all the more galling when we take account of the pay rises enjoyed by college principals.

Between July 2007 and July 2008, average principals' pay rose by 6.5%, while the maximum pay increase for other college staff was 3.2%.

Between July 2002 and July 2008, the average pay increase for principals was 41.6%. The maximum increase for college staff was 20.1%.

The trade union negotiators welcomed the only one positive feature of the meeting – the agreement to start negotiations on a revised national agreement on redundancies – but in no uncertain terms suggested that the employers think again on pay and return to the negotiating table.

### What Next?

National Officials are maintaining contact with officials from the employer's side and continue to press for a resumption of talks. Branches are urged to contact their management urging them to do likewise.

Look out for local and national press releases and articles that are being planned for release over the next two weeks highlighting the position of principals' pay compared to other FE staff.

Sign the joint trade union online petition on pay and funding (see text below)

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

**Continued...**

The annual national FE sector conference held in May instructed the FE Committee of the national executive (FEC), in the event of a breakdown of negotiations, to organise effective industrial action, seeking to unite with other unions in our sector and other public sector workers.

The FEC will meet on 26 June to discuss the situation. It will make recommendations to a special national sector conference, planned for Saturday 11 July, which will be attended by representatives from branches and determine future action.

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## **Online petition to launch funding fight**

UCU and the other FE trade unions have launched an online petition as the first step in a fight for funding for further and adult education that will be crucial to saving jobs and courses in the next few years. As we run up to the next general election it is vital that we raise the profile of the crucial role that further and adult education play in our communities and the national economy. Now is not the time to be putting the infrastructure of FE, both human and capital, at risk with funding cuts. See the joint unions' petition statement below and follow this link where you can help the unions' campaign by signing the petition online now.

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

## **Joint FE Unions' petition statement**

"We the undersigned call upon the government to protect and maintain funding for the vital economic and community services and infrastructure that further and adult education provide. There is no more powerful tool than education to help people affected by the economic downturn build or retain their confidence, skills and self fulfilment. The very same education simultaneously broadens the skill base of the community and economy making it more resilient and creating the platform for future growth and recovery.

At a time when the nation is relying on further and adult education more than ever, to go ahead with plans to cap and slash funding for these vital services is extremely short-sighted. Shortfalls in capital funding, frozen and reduced workplace learning allocations and slashed funding in the name of "efficiency" savings will result in course and department closures, fewer training opportunities for the unemployed and a wave of job losses across further and adult education.

While the workforce in further and adult education are asked to meet the challenges of the recession they have for years received pay increases well below the economy wide average and below inflation. It is vital that the human resources of these sectors are protected, valued and rewarded with job security and pay that reflect their important role in the economy and the community as a whole.

The government does have the money. We have seen unprecedented amounts of public funds bail out the banks, it is therefore entirely appropriate and necessary that further and adult education are protected from funding cuts."