

**In this issue:**

**2009 Pay Offer**

**Call for Day of Solidarity to Defend Jobs**

**Victory at Tower Hamlets**

**Stoke-on-Trent to Strike for Jobs**

**Barnsley College**

**Doncaster College**

**CPD Requirements**

## Conference Rejects 1.5% Pay Offer

### 2009 Pay Offer

Delegates at the Special FE Sector Conference held on 19 September voted to reject the Association of Colleges' pay offer of 1.5% for staff in colleges in England. Speakers supporting the Further Education Committee's motion rejecting the pay offer described it as derisory and as a step backwards in the fight for pay parity with school teachers who have been awarded 2.3%.

The Special Sector Conference was called to determine the union's position on the employers' pay offer of 1.5% and to consider strategies to fight job threats in the sector.

After the decision to reject the employers' 1.5% offer, Conference moved on to motions which dealt with strategies to achieve an improved offer from the employers. After a spirited debate, Conference agreed to hold a ballot of all FE members in England for a programme of escalating industrial action starting with one day and moving to two and three days action in subsequent weeks. It was also agreed that action should be coordinated, where possible, with the Higher Education campaign on pay and jobs.

Preparations for the ballot are to start immediately with branches being asked to complete membership checks by 16 October.

Other motions about pay which were supported by Conference highlighted the links between the struggle for fair pay and jobs in FE and those across the whole of the public sector and called upon the FEC to build solidarity with other public sector unions and wherever possible, co-ordinate UCU's action with these unions. Conference also supported a motion calling on the FEC to take a number of actions to tackle the inflation busting increases received by college principals which far exceed those awarded to college staff.

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### Call for Day of Solidarity to Defend Jobs Tuesday 29 September

Conference discussions on the fight to defend jobs in FE came to a focus around an emergency motion brought by the FEC in light of the increasing number of colleges fighting redundancies. The motion was overwhelmingly supported and called on all branches to show solidarity and support for colleagues who are currently fighting to defend jobs and education with a Day of Solidarity on Tuesday 29 September.

**Continued...**

Tower Hamlets college branch who have taken 4 weeks of indefinite action have won their demands for no compulsory redundancies – see below. Branches currently fighting job cuts include Doncaster, Barnsley and Stoke. Branches currently fighting for the 8 point pay scale in the IOU campaign and taking strike action on 29 September are Askham Bryan College, Doncaster College, Leeds College of Art, Rotherham College, Suffolk New College and Greenwich College.

All branches are asked to circulate the call to show solidarity to all of their members and organise for stalls, lunch time meetings, collections, petitions etc. on Tuesday 29 September. A poster supporting that can be used to support your colleges activities on the day can be found for downloaded from:

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

Following this protest at management's tactics, meetings are now being held between management and local and regional UCU officials to try and review the situation for members that have been adversely affected and to prevent any further attacks.

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## And at Doncaster College...

The college has just announced a new re-structure proposal that potentially makes 34 managers, 40 lecturers/assessors and 45 business support staff redundant. Meetings between management and all of the recognised unions are continuing on a weekly basis where the unions are fighting to protect jobs. The UCU Doncaster College branch vow to strongly resist any compulsory redundancies of members. The branch is already a part of the fight for the 8 point pay scale in the IOU Campaign and will be joining other colleges in taking strike action Tuesday 29 September.

## Victory at Tower Hamlets

Massive congratulations to members at Tower Hamlets. After taking nearly 4 weeks of continuous strike action they have successfully avoided all compulsory redundancies. In June the college announced that it was looking to get rid of over 40 full-time equivalent posts.

An agreement to avoid compulsory redundancies was finally hammered out during 18 hours of talks at the arbitration service ACAS. Please see the press release at:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4178>

The following is a message from the branch to all UCU members:

*Dear Colleagues,*

*On behalf of UCU Tower Hamlets strikers can I thank everyone who has supported us. We could not have done it without your support. Every picket that went out to colleges reported back the warmth and encouragement they received from you. Everyone we talked to said your fight is our fight and you collected over £20,000 in solidarity! Your collections and invitations kept us going, and every time we wobbled we were reminded of the thousands of UCU members backing us 100%. We will be there for you because we won this together.*

### **We fought and we won.**

*There were no compulsory redundancies. We saved the mentorship scheme that has helped over 700 young people to grow in confidence and study at university. We saved over 300 Esol places, helping people to learn English and join the community. We stopped all the compulsory redundancies in admin, support and youth work. We stopped cuts to A level hours. We doubled the VR offer and we saved learning mentors who provide vital one to one support for students.*

**Continued...**

*We have grown as a union and we feel stronger than ever.*

*We will be at the demonstration at the Labour Party Conference this Sunday with our banner 'UCU Tower Hamlets strikers, Defending Jobs & Education: Save Esol 'Guardians of education.' Come and join us at the front! A new campaign to defend education starts now. In solidarity,*

*Richard McEwan & Mark Winter*

*Joint Branch Sec UCU*

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## **Stoke-on-Trent to Strike for Jobs**

UCU Stoke on Trent Branch have won a ballot of members calling for industrial action in their fight against compulsory redundancies at the college. Having exhausted all internal disputes procedures and collective consultations the Stoke-on-Trent College branch now face a college management who intend to proceed with their plan for compulsory redundancies and refuse to engage in any further collective consultations. This has left the branch with few alternatives but to fight for their jobs with industrial action.

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## **Meanwhile at Barnsley...**

A number of lecturers from areas across the college were dismissed by redundancy over the summer break, with some now re-engaged on inferior terms and conditions as Associate Teachers doing the same work as they did before.

These management attacks on jobs, conditions and the professional status of teachers drew a sharp response from the UCU Barnsley College branch with a well supported strike on 17 September.

## **CPD Requirements**

A number of messages on the Activists Network have asked why UCU has not given any advice as to what UCU members in FE should do concerning the 30 hours CPD requirement and the on-line procedure to confirm whether a member has undertaken the 30 hours CPD.

The initial advice given to UCU is that the Regulations do not specify what action might take place if an IfL member does not undertake the required 30 hours. IfL have offered a meeting to discuss this and other matters. Since this involves a consideration of the regulatory framework senior officials and lawyers will meet to discuss this.

UCU is represented on the IfL Council and has been since its formation. The UCU representative has been very active on the IfL working party on governance. This recently produced a new IfL governance structure. This was approved at the recent IfL AGM. The new structure has a Council with 60 members, 45 of whom will be elected and 15 from stakeholders including UCU. This Council will then elect from their number a non Executive Board, again elected members will be in a clear majority. The IfL President will also be elected by the whole membership. IfL Council elections will take place in the autumn.