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## UCU Fighting Compulsory Redundancies

Over the last two months FE staff have been faced with an unprecedented assault on jobs from employers. Our latest figures show some 4500 jobs are at risk across England and rising. Some colleges are engaged in formal consultations on redundancies and, to date, over 20 colleges are balloting or have taken strike action against compulsory redundancies.

UCU action has already proved successful. Following a one day strike, demonstration and rally in London on 5 May, 5 out of the 11 colleges in London that took action have now reached a successful outcome and avoided compulsory job losses. Meanwhile, well supported strike action at Bradford and Northumberland Colleges has now led to meaningful negotiations.

In the wake of the announced funding cutbacks for next academic year, Colleges have moved swiftly to announce redundancies, coupled in many places with plans to increase teaching hours, cut holidays and the introduction of more trainer grades.

Of course UCU recognises the severity of the cutbacks, in particular to adult funding and we expect more bad news for the future from the new Conservative/Lib Dem government as it seeks to make the public sector bear the brunt of reducing the budget deficit.

Unfortunately, in many instances we have found that employers have put forward draconian proposals in a knee-jerk fashion or seeking to use the opportunity for unacceptable radical changes.

UCU is committed to engaging in constructive dialogue with local colleges to explore means to survive the funding crisis but we are clear that compulsory redundancies or massive increases in workloads are not acceptable.

In several colleges compulsory job losses have been avoided through negotiation without recourse to industrial action. But where we are faced with an employer that refuses to budge and engage meaningfully, UCU members quite rightly move to take action.

A ballot for strike action is to be held at City of Westminster College and following mass branch meetings, members are being balloted for strike action at City College Wolverhampton, South Birmingham College, Birmingham Metropolitan College and City College Birmingham. A public meeting is being called on 25 May to discuss the unprecedented threat of redundancies in Further Education and the impact on jobs and opportunities to study in the city. For further news on campaigns to save jobs go to:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=3787>

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### Pre Budget Day Protest

Arrangements are currently being put in place for a joint FE and HE union day of protest against funding cuts on 21 June - the day before the budget. The intention is to engage in a variety of activities including local lunchtime rallies, meetings with local politicians, and workplace demonstrations. More information to follow.

## Contracts Dispute at Manchester College

Members at Manchester face an unprecedented attempt by the college to introduce differential contracts for pre and post 19 work. As well as a massive increase in teaching hours for all and fewer holidays, the college wants a two tier teaching workforce with those teaching adults on worse conditions of service. UCU has been negotiating with management and has put forward alternative proposals. The college refused to budge and the branch will therefore be balloting for strike action within the next two weeks.

### Meanwhile...

Members employed by the college who work in prisons are also in dispute over redundancies and again an attempt to drastically worsen contracts. This comes on top of a pay freeze last year. A ballot for industrial action will be held within the next few weeks. The college has over 60% of all prison education work contracts in England.

## More Progress on National Scales

The UCU branch at Leeds College of Art has made fantastic progress in their fight to get college management to implement the national harmonised pay spine. The branch were part of UCU's IOU Campaign and have taken several days of strike action. College management have now implemented the 8 Point Pay Spine and a settlement covering pay progression is set to be agreed very shortly. Julie Kelley, Regional Official, said "the branch has made fantastic progress from a position where the employer flatly refused to negotiate or offer any commitment towards harmonisation we now have an agreement in place and the prospect of improved negotiation and consultation arrangements between UCU and the college management".

### Pay Offer: AoC offer 0.2% as a One Off Payment!

Negotiations on the Further Education joint union pay claim for 2010/11 (see box opposite) opened on Monday 17 May. In response to the claim submitted in April that included a modest 3.5% pay demand, the Association of Colleges (AoC) offered a one off "non-consolidated" 0.2%. This was rejected by all unions.

This offer is the lowest ever opening offer in the annual pay talks and the first ever to be offered as "non-consolidated".

It would mean that pay scales are frozen at 2009/10 levels with the one off payment not included in pension calculations. At around £55 for a lecturer in the middle of the 8 point scale at point 29, the AoC's offer is worth no more than a few M&S vouchers like those which some colleges already pay out under non-consolidated incentive and bonus schemes.

It amounts to less than £1 per week for those starting out on the bottom two points of the lecturing scale with no guarantee that even this paltry amount would be paid again in future years.

The AoC refused to make an offer on three other elements of the unions' claim relating to part-timers, ISA registration and contracted out service. They stated that they were outside the remit that their member colleges had given them for national negotiations.

The AoC described their offer of a one off 0.2% as part of a "pay and conditions package" which included a commitment to work with the unions on equal pay and disability discrimination elements of the unions claim. However the unions rejected the concept of the offer being a package pointing out that the equal pay and disability elements are already legal obligations on colleges. The unions therefore unanimously rejected the employers offer calling on the AoC to return with a credible increased and consolidated offer on the pay scales together with commitments on all elements of the unions' claim. The next meeting of the NJF is scheduled for 1 July.

- **3.5% increase or £1000 (whichever greater) and meaningful steps to ensure colleges implement equal pay audits and conduct Job Evaluation**
- **ensure new starters in contracted out services are placed on terms and conditions that are fair and reasonable and no less favourable than those of transferred staff**
- **take immediate and meaningful steps to ensure the full implementation of all elements of the Disability Equality Agreement signed in 2009**
- **recommend the transfer of all part-time, hourly-paid and agency employed staff to directly employed fractional contracts**
- **all colleges to agree to cover the cost of ISA registration.**