

IN THIS ISSUE OF HE NEWS: NATIONAL DISPUTE UPDATE

UCU UNITED – DISPUTE UPDATE

At the special HE Sector Conference in Manchester on 25 November, UCU delegates from across the UK vowed to stay united in the face of the ongoing splits amongst the employers. At a packed meeting delegates noted that for the second year running UCEA has:

- Refused to negotiate a nationally agreed approach to improve job security and defend provision;
- Failed to act to address equality matters;
- Offered a real-terms pay cut.

Feedback indicated that members were most concerned at the employers' refusal to enter into a national dialogue on job security and at the employer led attack on pensions.

University staff face the worst job cuts for a generation

Thousands of jobs have already gone in our sector. 40,000 more staff are at risk from government plans to make further cuts. As part of the national claim we asked for talks aimed at agreeing national proposals to improve job security. For two years now, the employers have consistently refused to engage with us on this issue. The employers' refusal to work with us to find a national solution to the

problems affecting the whole sector has always been a bit bizarre, but in the current climate it is simply reckless and irresponsible. It is time for VCs to recognise the needs of the whole sector, not just their particular empire

Fair treatment

The joint union claim also asked for action to improve the lot of the lowest paid and most vulnerable staff, and to tackle the abuses of casual contracts and close the gender pay gap. The employers have refused real action on these issues.

University employers are once again eroding the value of our pay

We have not sought 'more money', but consolidation and protection from further attacks on salaries for hard-pressed staff. At a time when workloads are increasing, university employers have begun a renewed attack on your pay, making offers of 0.5% and 0.4% for the last two years, for periods when inflation has been in excess of 4%.

Pensions

University staff are under attack on every front. At the same time as they are cutting jobs and pay, the employers are attacking

the USS pension scheme and are expected to lobby for changes to the TPS pension scheme.

Dispute

We are in dispute with the employers over their failure to make a fair pay offer and their complete refusal to engage with the issue of job security. Where we have faced attacks at institutional level and we have taken a firm stand, we have shown that this can have a huge effect and that we can defend members. It is time now to take this determination to the national level in pursuit of an agreement that will protect pay and jobs.

UCU united

The employers are spilt but your union is united. UCU delegates from across the country met at the sector conference and agreed that if the employers continued to refuse to talk to us about measures to improve job security, and if they continued to attack our pensions, then we would ballot for strike action and action short of a strike early in the New Year.

Talks continue

UCU will continue to talk to the national employers to try and resolve the current disputes but members should start preparing for action to defend our jobs, defend our pensions, and to defend education.

For a copy of the joint union claim, please click:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=4505>

HE Campaigns – Defending Education

Delegates at the sector conference were reminded of the broader backdrop to our dispute, in which the entire fabric of higher education in the UK is under attack from the coalition government's proposed reforms.

A motion, unanimously adopted, noted with concern the Browne Review proposals to introduce a market in student fees and to withdraw state funding from so-called 'non-priority' taught programmes, and the huge cuts to university funding proposed in the comprehensive spending review (with 80% of current teaching funding to be withdrawn).

As the motion underlined, such proposals threaten to destroy UK higher education and leave generations without the opportunity of university education, hampering social mobility further and creating even greater social inequality. This level of cuts threatens jobs across all parts of the sector, setting institution against institution and colleague against colleague, leading to the implosion of the entire sector. Only unity across the sector can prevent this nightmare scenario.

In light of the above, conference resolved to run a vigorous political campaign placing our job security objectives in the context of a broader defence of education.

Working with Students

Conference also passed a motion congratulating and celebrating 'the magnificent occupations, rallies, marches and other protests by students, school students and staff' over the previous day.

This followed the success of the 10 November demonstration in which over 50,000 protesters gathered in central London for the jointly organised UCU-NUS demonstration against the proposed cuts and reforms of further and higher education.

Further joint campaigning UCU-NUS activities are planned for this week, as the government seeks to force its planned increase in the tuition fee cap to £9,000 through the House of Commons. Protests at higher education institutions across the country will be held on Wednesday 8 December (the day before the vote). There will then be a mass lobby of MPs on Thursday, followed by a rally in Westminster at 3pm and an Embankment 'candlelit' vigil beginning at 4.30pm.

For details of rally on Thursday 9 December see:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=5148>

Also see campaigns update:

<http://www.ucu.org.uk/index.cfm?articleid=1701>

Membership Records

We would like to thank all branches/LAs and Head Office and regional staff who have co-operated in updating our

membership records over the last few months. Your assistance is critical in ensuring the smooth running of our communications, democratic structures and ability to run industrial action ballots.

Any branches/LAs which have not done so already need to send amendments to their membership department contact as a matter of the utmost urgency.

UCU Fighting Fund

Although taking strike action is a last resort, sometimes it is necessary to do so in order to combat intransigent managements. It's always tough to lose a day's pay, and so UCU has set up a fighting fund to support members facing difficulties as a consequence of supporting the union's actions.

HOW TO DONATE

Make a direct bank transfer, or set up a regular standing order, to:

Account name: UCU Fighting Fund
Sort code: 08-60-01
Account no: 20179432
Reference: 'Fighting Fund 2010'

or send a cheque (payable to 'University and College Union') to:

Fighting Fund 2010
Finance Dept
University and College Union
Carlow Street
London NW1 7LH