

In this issue:

Austerity Funding for FE

TPS Pension Ballot

IfL Latest

Keep FE Public

Manifesto for ESOL

Austerity Funding for FE More trouble ahead!

Unfortunately if we thought this first year of cutbacks were bad enough, colleges are to face even more in the coming funding round. Colleges have just received indications of their funding for 2012/13. While the impact will vary from college to college the overall cut to college budgets for adult students will be at least 12% this year. If you want further information contact your branch officers who have been given more detailed briefing notes and will be reporting back on the local impact to help us continue our national campaigning.

The allocations of funding for 16 -18 have yet to be finalised however we are predicting more bleak news. Funding will be based on student numbers this year and according to an Association of Colleges (AoC) survey we have seen a 49% cut already. The key factor here of course has been the draconian removal of EMA provision. Although UCU was successful in restoring some element of support for young people, this has dropped from £600,000 spent on EMAs to 180,000 a year on bursaries.

If this was not bad enough, further (even bigger) cuts are planned for 2013/14 and to add to the uncertainty yet again a new funding methodology is to be introduced.

All of this is likely to mean many local employers seeing further job cuts. Employers have legal obligations to consult with UCU with a view to avoid or mitigate compulsory redundancies and should also abide by a national agreement which recommends the earliest possible discussions and to consider the whole range of alternatives to compulsory job losses. UCU will continue to provide any branch with all the necessary support in fighting compulsory redundancies. Our experience to date is clear – where branches stand up and campaign and if necessary take industrial action - compulsory redundancies are largely avoided.

As many members will be all too aware however the funding squeeze and ever more pressure on colleges to operate within a competitive environment is also leading to colleges seeking to squeeze more work out of hard pressed staff. We are witnessing a growing trend of local employers seeking changes to staff contracts and working practices such as increased contact hours, fewer holidays and restrictions on the amount to be taken over the summer. This is being exacerbated in many colleges by a tightening up of policies covering such as sickness absence and of course attempts to introduce overbearing and punitive classroom observation procedures.

Continued...

Again just as UCU has been successful in preventing many compulsory job cuts over the last two years our record on preventing or at least mitigating these attacks stands up well where our members show strong support for their reps and branches. All branches have recently been given revised national guidance on lesson observation policies and procedures including campaigning and negotiating advice. Similar material will follow on sickness absence procedures.

Although times are tough – a strong union membership has never more important. Urge your colleagues to join and actively support your reps. UCU can and does make a difference and we will make sure that you hear about examples of this in your local area or region.

TPS Pension Ballot Have you voted yet?

Remember you have until 5 pm 13 March to cast your vote on whether UCU should take further strike action on the government proposals on your pension. The National Executive is urging members to reject the proposals and to take further action starting on 28 March. For more details go to the campaign page <http://tps.web.ucu.org.uk/>

IFL Latest

Members will be aware that the independent review of IFL is now underway and UCU have put forward a submission that makes clear that UCU fundamentally oppose the current model of the IfL because of:

- the mandatory nature of IfL membership
- the charging of a fee for membership

- the nature and quality of service provided by the IfL in its current format
- the undemocratic way in which the IfL is run.

If an organisation is to exist we argued that it should promote the profession and is capable of holding employers to account over providing high quality CPD

You can find the full submission and more details here <http://www.ucu.org.uk/iflfee>

We anticipate that the review will be completed around Easter but meanwhile it is vital that members continue to boycott the payment of membership fees. If you encounter any difficulty contact your branch officers in the first instance.

Keep FE Public

Last week the government announced that the Office of National Statistics had now taken the decision that FE colleges are to be classified as part of central government and argued, with the support of the AoC and the 157 Group of Colleges that “The Government is committed to cutting red tape so that further education colleges have the freedom they need to make their own judgments on how to manage their affairs for the benefit of learners, employers and wider communities.”

The decision is largely technical but goes alongside changes that are being introduced in April removing a range of controls on further education and sixth form college corporations, putting them on a similar footing to charities operating within the independent/private sector.

Continued...

Originally the government intended to remove all current regulations concerning FE governing bodies including the necessity for student and staff governors. Quick lobbying action by UCU was successful in getting a U turn on this.

UCU believes that the government have used the original ONS decision as a peg to hang their stated intention to encourage restructures of colleges and unleash market forces in learning and skills development with very few constraints from government.

UCU considers that colleges remain in the public sector despite the ONS decision. They are a public good with assets and reputations built up over many years. They are not the playthings for a few to dispose of or plunder for profit.

UCU will remain vigilant that any structural changes contemplated by colleges do not depart from their mission of meeting the learning needs of the communities they have always served. We are keeping a very close watch on developments under the guise of shared services for example which involve the establishment of separate companies, strategies for outsourcing and injection of more private capital.

UCU is committed to fighting any attempts to privatise colleges and developments that will have adverse effect on staff conditions of service or access for students.

Manifesto for ESOL

The Action for ESOL Campaign is launching an ESOL Manifesto on 3 March. This was largely written by ESOL teachers active in the campaign and sets out a set of principles and demands around teaching ESOL:

- That the opportunity to learn the common language of the community in which you live and work is a human right.
- That ESOL provision should be accessible, comprehensive and integrated. It should reach out into the community and provide well-constructed but flexible routes onto academic and vocational
- That ESOL teachers have both a right and a responsibility to engage with the political and policy issues that affect language students, and in particular to challenge discriminatory practices and policies at the local and the national level

The Manifesto is available on the Campaign Web site <http://actionforesol.org> and on the UCU web site http://www.ucu.org.uk/media/pdf/g/d/ESOL_Manifesto.pdf