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Is UC too big to fail?
I have met recently with several legislators, the legislative analyst, a member of the state auditor’s team, and people from the Brown administration to discuss the audit of the UC system. All of these stakeholders stated that the audit requires follow up, and in fact, UC is required to report in sixty days, six months, and one year on how it is responding to the auditor’s recommendations. In order to ensure that UC does indeed respond in an effective manner, a legislative hearing is being held to ensure UC is responding to the audit in sixty days, six months, and one year on how it is responding to the auditor’s recommendations. In order to ensure that UC does indeed respond in an effective manner, a legislative hearing is being held to ensure UC is responding to the audit in sixty days, six months, and one year.

The two main issues that the state auditor is looking at are how UC spends state funds and how much it costs to educate each additional undergraduate, graduate, and professional student. While UC’s response to the audit was that the process was a waste of taxpayers’ money and that nothing important was found, several legislators do think that UC needs much more transparency in its budget. The biggest concerns include the high cost of medical education and the unequal distribution of funds to the campuses.

Of course, UC can now say that it is making the system more transparent by allowing the campuses to keep all of the revenue they generate, but there is still the question of state funds, which I have shown accounts for most of the inequality of funding among the campuses. This issue of state funding will be discussed at a regents meeting at the end of the year after the committee on “rebenching” finishes its analysis.

As I have stressed, the big tension is between keeping any new funding model “revenue neutral” or moving to a more equitable system. In order to accomplish either of these tasks, UC still has to open up and reveal how it has been distributing state funds to the campuses and what it plans to do in the future. It turns out that the state audit is also looking at these same issues, and so it is possible that the two processes, internal and external, will work together. Yet, it is clear that the wealthier campuses will fight to keep their high levels of funding, and in order to maintain the status quo, the push will be to keep the spending of state funds nontransparent.

Already, we find an indication that the medical centers are being privileged by the Office of the President. In a July letter to President Yudof from the Academic Council, we find the following: “Council advises that the full $650 million reduction in state funds in the 2011-2012 budget year be allocated among the campuses under the methodology applicable to state fund reductions developed in the funding streams proposal of December 21, 2010.” As the letter continues, it clarifies that, “The allocation of budget reductions was based in part on a principle that the proportional allocations to campuses reflect each campus’s relative ability to offset reductions by raising non-resident tuition (NRT) and professional degree supplemental tuition (PDST).” The idea here is that the campuses that have increased their revenue by increasing the number of high-paying nonresident undergraduates and professional students... (continued on page 9)
A coalition of public education unions has begun planning for a series of actions designed to call attention to the plight of public education and to “make banks pay” for the economic damage that they have caused through reckless financial behavior, in a movement called Re-Fund California.

Over a year ago, the Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE) and Service Employees International Union (SEIU) began developing a strategy of holding the banks and financial institutions responsible for the damage created by the housing market collapse and the current recession.

The alliance reached out to the University of California Union Coalition (UCUC) and to the unions that make up the California State University system and the California Community College system. ACCE / SEIU also reached out to the K-12 unions, the California Federation of Teachers (CFT) and California Teachers Association (CTA).

Focus on higher education

The coalition is now organizing thousands of workers, students, teachers, and parents to take to the streets between November 9 and November 17, when board meetings for UC and CSU will take place. The dream of getting an education from pre-K through the university will be at stake as the state decides who will pay for $2.5 billion in “trigger cuts” to public education that are scheduled to go into effect in December.

Workers, students, teachers, and parents in California have paid all we can afford in this economic crisis. There have been massive layoffs, cuts, and tuition hikes. Now, to build and sustain a movement to re-fund public education and essential services in California, we have to go on offense. We have joined with our sister unions in the University of California as well as the CSU and CC systems to come together as Re-Fund California for this purpose.

Practical actions for change

Re-Fund California is building a movement by going on offense in two ways:

1) We are changing the debate by demanding that corporations and the wealthy pay their fair share to re-fund jobs, public education, and essential services for workers and communities that have paid more than our share.

2) We are organizing direct actions on- and off-campus so that the board members and administrators of our schools and universities have to face the crisis we have all paid for.

On September 21, 35 student, worker, and community organizations – including every major statewide higher education union – will launch potential encampments/occupations of public spaces relocate to Long Beach and UCSF Mission Bay.

Mitchell Brown, photo
UC librarians have been in bargaining since last spring over salaries. Our primary goal was to address the 22% by which UC librarians’ pay lagged behind that of comparable librarians at the California state universities.

UC librarians were also paid below the level of community college librarians who work in communities with a UC campus.

Late last June, the university administration issued an ultimatum to the librarian negotiating team: either accept the status quo with no pay increase or the university administration would withhold payment of the merit increase that had been earned by about one third of the librarians in the unit.

**Ultimatum backfires on UC**

Without exception, librarians throughout UC and their many supporters, including some of the managers in the UC libraries, were outraged by this blatant attempt at intimidation, and the ultimatum was rejected out of hand.

Ironically, the university’s attempt at intimidation had exactly the opposite of its intended result. Librarians throughout the UC system and their many supporters signed hundreds of postcards to UC administrators, wrote articles in papers throughout the state, demanded meetings with their university librarians (the title for directors of each of the UC campus libraries) and petitioned and demonstrated in support of paying the merit increases that librarians had earned and in support of the librarians’ demands for comparable pay with CSU librarians.

**Looking at comparable pay**

The university administration agreed to seriously consider the impact of our real labor markets (read CSU and community college libraries) in future salary bargaining.

The librarians were not successful in this round of bargaining in closing the now 19% gap between CSU and UC librarians, but we reopen our entire contract next year and will work to resolve that problem then.

The university administration also refused to agree to remove the clause in the salary article that allows administrators to withhold merit pay when the salary article is open. However, it is now pretty clear that the threat of that provision has lost its sting.

The tentative agreement was ratified by 98% of those librarians voting.
The lecturers’ bargaining unit was nearly unanimous in support of ratification of a new three-year Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

The new contract provides for a 3% salary increase for nearly all lecturers in the unit. Like the increase for non-represented staff and faculty, it is constructed as a one-time supplemental merit program.

In addition, the contract provides for a benefits reopener if the university implements a change to its contribution for part-time employees. It includes a benefits reopener when the university implements its proposed second tier to the UC Retirement Program (UCRP).

A “reopener” means that UC and the union would go back to the table to negotiate any new proposals.

Wins go beyond pay

The university also has to negotiate with the union if it implements a new online program that would affect the terms and conditions of lecturers’ employment.

Signs at a recent Day of Action for Public Education.

But the economic package is not the whole of the story. Significant changes to the previous contract were made in language dealing with grievances, arbitrations, workload disputes, and discipline and dismissal.

These changes provide much better protection for members who have workplace complaints – and for the union that represents them. In addition, a large number of clarifications to many other articles were also negotiated (like, for example, the definition of the word “file”).

The UC-AFT endeavored to make a few changes that were not successful. The two most important of these was a guaranteed annual assessment for all pre-six lecturers and better notice for reductions in time that do not result in total layoff.

The university was also unsuccessful at changing the action of what happens when an excellence review has started and “need” goes away.

Both parties will again take up bargaining on salary, and up to four other articles (two chosen by each side) in February 2012. Stay tuned to these pages, and your email, for updates on which articles each side chooses to reopen – as well as the progress we make.

Alan Karras is a UC-AFT vice president and chief negotiator for lecturers. He teaches International and Area Studies at UC Berkeley.
All too often in the midst of our deep and prolonged economic recession, public employees such as teachers, firefighters, and other public sector employees are cast as the villains.

Most of us who have not been laid off in ongoing budget cuts still have employee health care and pension programs, while such benefits for our brothers and sisters in the private sector are on the decline or have already disappeared. Certainly, our own benefits are threatened.

Historically, public employees have worked for substantially lower pay than equally educated peers in the private sector, but in recent decades have fought for and won better benefit packages than our private sector colleagues. To be very clear, we won these improved benefits because we are more highly organized in labor unions that help us work together so we can be more effective in getting what we need than those who try to defend themselves as isolated individuals.

Who caused the problem?

Now that the U.S. and global economy is in meltdown, unemployment is higher than at any time since the Great Depression of the 1930s, and those who are suffering from unemployment and underemployment are looking for those who have created this disaster.

But this disaster was not caused by public sector employees like teachers or firefighters, who still make less on average than comparable private sector employees. Nor was it caused by undocumented immigrants, who continue to do work in the fields and tourist sector that few Americans would even consider doing. Nor is it a “natural disaster” caused by forces beyond human control or intervention.

This global meltdown was caused primarily by banks, financial institutions, and other large multinational corporations deciding that they needed obscenely higher profits and that their CEOs and top managers needed obscenely higher compensation packages.

Financial malfeasance

They used their economic muscle to elect public officials and pressure governmental regulatory agencies to reduce their taxes, remove environmental and safety regulations and restrictions on highly risky financial transactions, provide them with inconceivably large “bail-outs” because they were “too big to fail,” and to change the rules so it is harder for working people to organize in unions and community organizations to defend themselves against this corporate onslaught.

Perhaps the biggest symbol of how successful they have been in this corporate campaign is the ironically titled “Citizens United” Supreme Court decision, which essentially declared corporations to be people, with all of the political rights our Constitution provides for citizens and other human beings.
other kinds of part-time instructors, we all work in a profession that is essential to the economic success of not only our students, but also the country as a whole. The preparation of the next generation of leaders, innovators, and successful workers in every sphere of the economy is our major responsibility. The creation of the scientific breakthroughs and general knowledge necessary to make our world safer, more productive, and more humane is also a high priority in our work.

We are not rich. None of us is personally affected if we raise taxes on the richest 10% or 20% of Americans, and certainly none of us will be touched by changes in tax loopholes affecting the top 1% of the U.S. Our economic, political, and social interests lie with the 99% of Americans who are excited to see that, finally, Occupy Wall Street and other groups like them around the county are gathering together and speaking out against corporate and financial sector abuse and their illegitimate power and influence over our common civic life.

We certainly have more in common with laid-off construction workers and bus drivers than we do with the corporate elite and their political defenders who brought this economic disaster down on the rest of us. So when the cry goes out — “We are the 99%!" count us in. – by Mike Rotkin

The unfortunate outcome of all of this is that we now see not only reduced take-home pay for virtually all workers, but a complete disinvestment in the very infrastructure that allowed America to be the dominant world economic power over the past century.

Reversing skewed priorities

We are defunding our schools and replacing them with the largest prison system in the world; our transportation infrastructure is literally collapsing; we are drilling or digging for oil, gas, and coal in increasingly environmentally dangerous places; we are falling behind many countries in the provision of adequate health care; and we have one of the least organized workforces in the industrial world.

This is not some inevitable decline of empire, but the result of a set of very bad priorities -- priorities championed by the Republican Party and rarely, weakly, and, certainly unsuccessfully, challenged by the Democrats or any other political party.

As higher education instructors in the Monterey Bay area, the faculty at Cabrillo College, Monterey Peninsula College, Hartnell College, the California State University Monterey Bay, and the University of California, Santa Cruz, see ourselves as part of the 99%.

Whether tenure-track professors, librarians, lecturers, adjunct faculty, or
I spent September 22nd and 23rd in Washington DC, and I got a full dose of a city under attack from the right and high humidity.

On Thursday evening, we had a meeting with congressional members from California, and I was able to speak to Nancy Pelosi. She stressed how things are so bad that Republicans are trying to make the Democrats come up with budget reductions to cover the costs of disaster relief.

Likewise, at the White House, all of President Barack Obama’s top advisors emphasized how difficult the other side is acting and how hard it is to get anything done.

Aid for students, workers

I asked one of the architects of the president’s jobs bill what the administration can do for recent college students and graduates who are facing the triple whammy of skyrocketing tuition costs, giant student loans, and poor employment prospects. I also questioned why the jobs bill did not simply propose a government works program that would directly hire millions of people.

The president’s economic advisor responded that the jobs bill is the best they can accomplish with the Republicans in control of the House. He also said that he agrees with my assessment concerning the sorry plight of college students, but they wanted to put together a package that was responsible and achievable.

I added that since the Republicans will block everything except for the tax cuts, why didn’t the president propose something clear and bold, and then let it get shut down. [We were told by White House officials not to directly quote anything from our meetings.]

I posed similar questions to David Plouffe, the president’s main political advisor, and Bill Daley, the President’s chief of staff. Both of them stressed that the president is being responsible and he is proposing things that the Republicans have supported in the past, so if they reject them now, they are just being cynical.

Several of the president’s senior advisors pointed out how the jobs bill will fund community college infrastructure and also help the states so they do not lay off more teachers. In response to one of my questions about the decreased funding for higher education, White House officials emphasized how hard the president and the Democrats in Congress had to fight to protect Pell grants.

I walked away thinking that the administration is underestimating the horrific nature of our employment situation. After all, as I told several top advisors, there are close to 25 million people who are unemployed or underemployed, and we were told that the jobs bill may create 1.5 to 2 million jobs.

In one of my more aggressive moments, I asked how we can support the president if we do not know what Democrats stand for anymore. After all, the president’s recent jobs bill and deficit reduction program rely on the classic right-wing themes of cutting taxes, reducing the deficit, and reforming entitlement programs. The president’s main
A political advisor got rather testy when I made this claim, and he went on to list everything the president has done. I really think they do not get it, and they refuse to present a clear and consistent set of progressive policies.

Several people in the audience thanked me for my questions and for holding the administration’s feet to the fire. I was later told by people working for the president that my questions were heard, and I should stay in touch. Later, during a meeting with the Department of Labor, I stressed how universities are using the current economic downturn to outsource work, casualize labor, and ignore basic labor laws. I was told that the Republicans are doing everything they can to tie the hands of this administration, and we must continue to highlight the positive things the president has done.

I actually do think that the president has done some very positive things, but we are in a crisis, and we need bold, clear action. While talking to members of Congress and White House Staff, I proposed a government works program that would hire 10 million people and would not rely on tax cuts, subsidies, or corporate hiring. I argued that the administration needs to show that government can work, and the only way we are going to reduce unemployment to the 3-4% range is if the government simply hires people. I suggested that the administration use TARP funds and money from mortgage fraud suits to fund a jobs program without the help of the Congress. I was told that this can’t be done, but they will look into some of my other suggestions.

To discuss how we can push the country in a more progressive direction, I am organizing a meeting for November at UCLA. For more information, you can read my Huffington Post article on an alternative jobs bill <www.huffingtonpost.com/bob-samuels/a-progressive-alternative_b_969584.html> and the need to rethink our current political stalemate. Please let me know what you think by writing <bobsamuels_us@yahoo.com>.

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State response to audit (continued from page 2)

should receive a higher budget reduction.

It turns out that UCOP did not follow this method, and the Academic Council was not notified by this change: “We were surprised to learn only last Friday, July 22, that allocations were likely to be based on the proportions derived from the funding streams proposal provisions for allocating augmentations rather than reductions.” In other words, when it was distributing cuts to the campuses, UCOP did not take into account the different abilities of the campuses to generate their own income to make up for any reductions. Thus, the poorer campuses will get poorer, and the wealthier campuses will get wealthier.

Medical centers shielded while undergraduate education soaked

The Academic Council hints that a major driving force behind UCOP’s decision to protect the wealthier campuses is the high cost of medical education: “The San Francisco situation is far more complex. A new business model to support medical education in a time of diminished state funding is urgently needed. I note, however, that the relative scarcity of tuition income at UCSF means that UCSF’s share of the $500 million cut is a substantially smaller fraction of UCSF’s total state support. The relative scarcity of tuition at UCSF cannot also be used to justify shielding UCSF from the effect of the $150 million cut.”

The Academic Council makes an important argument here, which is that the UC cannot continue to disadvantage the other campuses in order to use state funds to subsidize medical education at UCSF.

Everyone in the UC system should be concerned about how UCOP and the regents decide to distribute state funds. Since the campuses will be able to keep their own revenue, there is an incentive for the wealthier campuses to increase their wealth by increasing their number of nonresident students and decreasing their number of California students.

Moreover, the medical centers will continue to use their enormous resources to fight for more funding, while the smaller campuses will suffer from a lack of new revenue. All of these trends will force continual tuition increases for undergraduates at a time when undergraduate budgets are being downsized. Let us hope that the state audit pushes the UC system to find a more equitable balance.
Axel E. Borg wins James H. Meyer Distinguished Achievement Award

Local 2023 President and UC-AFT Vice President of Legislation, Axel E. Borg, has been awarded the 39th annual James H. Meyer Distinguished Achievement Award. This prestigious award recognizes the distinguished career of a member of UC Davis’s Academic Federation. Consideration for the award is based on the excellent performance of one’s job, in addition to a career’s worth of contributions to the university’s mission, and service to the larger campus community.

Borg is the Wine and Food Science bibliographer at the Robert Mondavi Institute. He’s a specialist in collections development, reference, and bibliographic instruction in the subject areas of viticulture & enology, food science and technology, and nutrition, and he recently added responsibilities in plant science, plant biology, plant pathology, agronomy and general agriculture.

Librarian work and modern libraries
Attracted by Davis’s wine library and the extensive agriculture collections, Borg accepted a position at UC Davis in May of 1988. Shortly after arriving at UCD he was approached by Professor Maynard Amerine to co-author a bibliography on wine. It turned out to be Amerine’s last monograph. Maynard Amerine is considered by many to be the most significant wine scientist in the United States. “Amerine took me under his wing and I began learning about wine, the science of wine and, well, all things wine,” says Borg, “Getting to work with Amerine was a real treat.”

Library work has been changing rapidly in recent years. Advances in technology and the impacts of ever-shrinking budgets have led many to assume that brick and mortar libraries are a thing of the past. Knowing how to find information is a more critical part of a librarian’s work than ever. It turns out that teaching others how to find information is just as important. Axel believes that his work teaching people how to use the library is the best case he can make for the importance of libraries: “I think that the best way to explain the importance of anything, including the modern library, is to demonstrate its capability.”

In an average year, Axel teaches upwards of 700 undergraduates, several dozen graduate students and 40-50 faculty members in formal instructional sessions. In addition to his courses, Axel works with hundreds of people on an individual basis. “If I can show someone how to get something faster, especially something relevant to their needs, then they will see the importance of the library.”

Service, activism and the issues
Axel got involved in the Academic Federation at Davis early on, but dropped out of active participation for about 4 years while he pursued a joint MA/MDiv degree at the Pacific School of Religion. He subsequently renewed his activity in the Academic Federation. Around the same time, UC-AFT was looking for a new local president. “They told me it would be for a short period of time, six months at most,” Borg says of his union recruitment. “Well, I am still here.”

The length of Borg’s tenure with the union corresponds more to his desire to work for positive change than from a lack of colleagues willing to replace him. “I would like to see more change, and I have come to realize that any change, however glacial, is welcome. Also, I am very pleased with how librarians at Davis are getting more involved.”

Axel may actually have himself to thank for increased involvement in the union. His willingness to be the public face for the campaign to focus campus attention on the condition of the library led directly to the 2008 “Library in Crisis” report of the Senate Task Force on the Library, and subsequently to the formation in 2010 of a joint Faculty Senate and Campus Administration Special Task Force on the Future of the University Library.

Axel has noticed increased involvement and growing union membership in recent years. He says he feels blessed to have some extraordinary people both as members and as staff working right beside him to bring the chronic underfunding of the library to light.

Borg remains humble in spite of his receipt of this award. Asked how it feels to be recognized in this way, he replied, “Well, there are many more people that I feel are more deserving of this award. I would like to see this same kind of recognition on the other campuses for the non-Senate academics.”

Four other UC-AFT members have received the James H. Meyer Award in previous years: Gary Goodman, Eric Schroeder, Kevin Roddy, and Judith Kysh.

Special thanks to Daniel Goldstein for his significant contributions to this article.
Albert Einstein, charter member of AFT Local 552, Princeton University, comments in 1938 on why he joined the union.

“I consider it important, indeed, urgently necessary, for intellectual workers to get together, both to protect their own economic status and, also, generally speaking, to secure their influence in the political field.”

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RETENTION: 1 YEAR AFTER INACTIVE . ACCOUNTING OFFICE

Return form to Treasurer, UC-AFT, 11728 Wilshire Blvd., #B1007, Los Angeles, CA 90025
Refund California: support education
(continued from page 3)

education union and student association – joined a Re-Fund coalition meeting to plan how we can apply these two principles with our massive week of action in November.

We are organizing mobilizations on campuses and beyond in 10 major California cities already. Then, on November 16, thousands of students, parents, and workers will ride buses to regional actions at the CSU trustees meeting in Long Beach and the UC regents’ meeting in San Francisco – stopping in those cities’ financial districts along the way.

Reversing the current dynamic

This critical mobilization will help change the debate in a way that strengthens our hand to increase taxes on the wealthy in 2012 and reverses the trend of forcing the rest of us to pay ever more.

Local action groups based around UC and CSU campuses are already beginning to develop local actions in support of the Re-Fund California movement.

We encourage you as lecturers and librarians to become involved at the local level, participate in planning actions, encourage participation by your students and colleagues, and to hold the financial-corporate complex responsible for the damage that they have done to public education by bringing our society to the edge of the financial abyss. More information about Re-Fund California events is at <www.ucaft.org>.