

An Argument to Delay Workload Changes

Fellow colleagues and union members, by now you should know that the Union has won a key contract improvement for UCB Lecturers who teach writing courses and courses in the Languages. Going forward, such Lecturers should teach no more than five courses in the course of their full-time employment. Before, six courses (6 IWC) each called “33%” were required for a full-time Lecturer.

While this represents a positive change, it comes at a difficult time, as Berkeley is undergoing a budget crisis. So, the campus has asked for an extension in the implementation of the changes.

The campus is not trying to back out of the contract. However, Berkeley does want to implement the changes at the start of Academic Year 2017-18 instead of this year.

I’m writing to convince you to vote in favor of allowing a one-year delay in the workload changes that we won in our most recent contract.

To start, let me explain why Berkeley Administration wants the delay. *First, they weren’t paying attention during negotiations, and didn’t realize that the change was being negotiated, and therefore, they didn’t plan for it at all.* They only knew about the change when most of you did. If you remember how nervous Lecturers at Berkeley were about the possible change, you can imagine how nervous Management was.

Second, the change is a cost item. Today, the minimum salary for a Lecturer is \$49,012, which equals \$8,169 per class. After the 6.2% salary increase we won (hooray), the minimum will be \$52,098, which will equal \$8,683 per class. However, if the annual salary is divided by 5, the cost per class becomes about \$10,420. That is a real difference. At the very minimum, each 5-unit class in the languages will cost at least \$2,251 more when the new workload language is implemented than it costs today.

Third, Berkeley is concerned about how the workload will be implemented. What classes will count? They would like time to figure things out right, and they want to avoid confusion, strife, and grievances.

It makes some sense that we would not want to delay. After all, an extra salary increase is always a good thing. Likewise, for full-time Lecturers, teaching five difficult classes is easier than teaching six difficult classes.

However, there are reasons that delaying would be good for Berkeley Lecturers.

First, in return for the delay, **Berkeley has offered Lecturers a seat at the table.** You will be able to influence the campus before decisions are made, instead of grieving, or just complaining about them after the fact. This offer is pretty unprecedented in our history with the UC. I don’t know another time that a campus has offered Lecturers the

opportunity to shape decisions in a real way. You can take this opportunity, whether you are liked, ignored, or disliked by your Department Chair.

Second, helping Berkeley implement the workload is especially important because **when administrators are under pressure, they make bad decisions**. For example, they might decide that three-unit and four-unit courses don't count in the new implementation, but five-unit courses do. Or, they might decide to simply cancel every sixth course in the program. If they have a year to think, plan, and adjust, Department Chairs would have a chance to make intelligent choices. This delay would help even if you weren't able to influence them, but you will be able to, as I just pointed out.

Third, **delaying will give the campus time to adjust to the new reality, and budget for the change**. Honestly, I would expect pre-six Lecturers to be in trouble because of the budget crisis, and they will be in greater jeopardy if the workload changes are implemented immediately.

Fourth, **a delay will let Lecturers plan for their futures**. Keeping a status quo for one year means that you won't be surprised by any changes, and you will be able to see the new direction of your departments. And, pre-six Lecturers might catch a break, and we all know they deserve one. While its tempting for long-serving, full-time Lecturers to look forward to a workload reduction, I urge you to also consider the vulnerable. Cuts will come, but cuts this year will be deeper if the workload changes are quickly (and badly) implemented.

Finally, and most importantly, **a year delay gives you a year to ORGANIZE**. More employed Lecturers means more energy, more advocacy, and more effort into changing the course of Berkeley budgeting. We cannot stop Berkeley Administration's insanity over the summer, but we might, through vigorous, sustained, active organizing, slow it down over the next year.

Just know, whatever you decide, the Union will stand with you. We will help Berkeley Lecturers organize in response to the absurd budgeting mistakes of Berkeley's administration, work for equitable working conditions for all academics and Lecturers in particular, and fight back against creeping academic neo-liberalism. Your local Presidents, Kurt Spreyer; the UC-AFT President, Bob Samuels, your current and future Vice Presidents of Organizing, Crystal Gray and Mia McIver; your current and future Vice Presidents of Grievances, Sandra Baringer and I; and the entire UC-AFT organization are on your side.

I hope you agree to defer implementation by one year. If you chose to do so, you will participate in major decisions, help guide your departments to make good choices, help defend the most vulnerable Lecturers in your programs, and gain time to organize.

Benjamin Harder