

California Faculty Association

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Dear Colleagues,

As we approach the New Year, the faculty of the California State University are faced with a new challenge. It is possible that during the coming term the CSU faculty may be called upon to participate in strike actions.

It is likely that each of us will be called upon to take a stand not only for our own livelihoods and the support of our families, but also for the quality of education provided to our students and the future of the university itself.

After 20 months of bargaining with the CSU administration for a new collective bargaining agreement including salary increases, we have reached the final statutory stage known as fact-finding. On December 15, the previous statutory step, mediation, ended without progress having been made on the critical issue of faculty compensation. Furthermore, the administration bargaining team attempted in mediation to back out of tentative agreements that already had been reached. This is a serious violation of trust and threatens the integrity of the bargaining process.

We anticipate that fact-finding will begin mid-January. A neutral “fact-finder along with one person from each of the CFA and CSU administration bargaining teams will examine arguments and evidence from each side and issue a report.

It is possible that both sides will agree with the report, in which case we will have a settlement. It is more likely that one side or the other will not support the report. The decision of the neutral fact-finder is not binding.

While we always remain hopeful that the statutory process will be successful, we cannot be optimistic.

When fact-finding ends the statutory process is over. At that point, faculty members will have the legal right to engage in concerted actions, including a strike.

It is possible that the Chancellor will take the extreme step of imposing terms and conditions of employment consistent with their “last best offer.” Labor organizations like CFA consider imposition to be among the most offensive actions an employer can take in the bargaining process. It is an insult to the faculty, their union and the bargaining process.

As fact-finding unfolds, we must continue to build our power as well as our capacity to act together. We must be prepared to act if an agreement is not reached.

When more than 1000 faculty members marched on the Trustees meeting on Nov. 15, our message was clear: The faculty are angry, well organized, and ready to fight for ourselves, our students and our university. We must reinforce this message in the new year.

Pressure is being applied to convince the Chancellor of the seriousness of our convictions that a fair contract and better management to fulfill our instructional mission is needed.

- **Media Relations:** We continue to work with the media, encouraging them to examine the system's misplaced priorities. This is crucial work to ensure the public understands the real instructional conditions that we face on the campuses, and the impact this has on students.
- **Labor and Community Outreach:** CFA has built relationships with Central Labor Councils (CLC) up and down the state. They indicate they will support us.
- **"Charlie Watch":** An intrepid team continues to make sure that whatever public event the Chancellor attends, CFA will be there too, letting people know what kind of damage he and his policies are doing to the California State University. His public messages almost always contradict his actual record at the CSU.

And we persist with other areas of work that likewise address the larger context in which our bargaining is one manifestation.

- **Budget Action:** So long as the Trustees do not ask the legislature for enough state funding to meet the real needs of the CSU, there will be pressure on workload, salaries, class size and offerings. The Academic Senate took the courageous position this year to push for funding for more tenure-track hiring in the administration's budget request. Although the Trustees voted it down, CFA fully supports this request.
- **Legal Action:** CFA continues to pursue lawsuits on executive perks and parachutes as well as our challenge to the hiring of Barry Munitz as a "Trustee Professor."
- **Legislative Action:** CFA representatives are meeting with statewide elected officials and members of the state legislature to garner their support. Many of them share our concern about the mismanagement of the CSU, of which our bargaining troubles are only one example.

You have the opportunity to participate in any of this work. But, should fact-finding fail to reach a settlement, you will need to act further.

In the end, this Chancellor and his administration will only respond if he comes to understand that the faculty of the CSU will not be acquiescent. That is why the CFA Board of Directors, if necessary, will ask the CFA membership to vote during the coming term to authorize CFA's Board to call a series of two-day rolling strikes.

We will not take this action lightly or without thorough preparation.

CFA members must understand what this vote would mean. A no vote indicates acceptance of the Chancellor's offer. A yes vote indicates the intention to escalate our fight for a fair contract.

(As in the case of most unions, only CFA members have the right to vote to strike. If you not a CFA member, we urge to join. You can do so online at www.calfac.org by clicking on "Join CFA.")

In the meantime, to prepare for what lies ahead, CFA's Board of Directors has asked all 23 CFA campus chapters to begin the next term with informational picketing. This will be a time to distribute information and talk with the campus community about our bargaining situation and the larger context of disrespect and mismanagement that is leading to a strike.

Our message to the CSU administration and Trustees: *"We don't want to strike but we will."*

We also must explain to our students why we feel this kind of action may be necessary. The damage incurred to the university's mission by allowing things to go on as they have unchallenged is far greater than the short-term disruption of a strike. Enclosed is a message that you can include with your syllabus at the beginning of class. There are readings to select from to give CFA's actions a larger context in the CFA Research Center at <http://www.calfac.org/research.html#readings>

Our message to our students: *"Faculty working conditions are Student learning conditions."*

CFA's Board also has asked the CFA campus chapters to hold strike meetings where you and our colleagues will have the opportunity to discuss the plans. Statewide CFA officers and members of the CFA bargaining team will be at these meetings to answer your questions about bargaining or future actions.

The officers of CFA strongly urge you to stay informed, participate in the informational pickets, and find other ways to educate our campus communities in preparation for a strike.

As a last word, it may be self-evident but the unity of the faculty over the coming months will be decisive. Along with our students and the staff, we are all in the CSU boat together, no matter our rank, appointment status, discipline, or seniority. Each of us must

make an individual choice, but victory will depend on how we act together once we have made that choice.

That is why our message to ourselves must be: “*Unite to Win.*”

In union,

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