From the California Faculty Association

CFA HEADLINES
January 30, 2019 · Weekly news digest from CFA

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CFA to Trustees: Seek Justice for Josiah, better protect students of color

Faculty leaders again urged CSU Trustees to use their influence to help solve the murder of Humboldt State student David Josiah Lawson and make efforts to better protect students of color from harm at all CSU campuses.

Lawson was just 19 when he was killed at a party near campus in Humboldt, where he was studying Criminology & Justice Studies. It’s been two years and his murder remains unsolved, which according to a retired FBI special agent who worked on the case for several months, is “absurd.”

The case should have been solved in a couple of weeks but the police department botched the case, Tom Parker told CSU Trustees during the Board meeting on January 23.

The mostly white, rural community and attitude toward students of color in Humboldt is deeply troubling, he said, and “students were not prepared for the environment they were walking into,” he said.

“As a result of that and the crime problems that existed in the city, when (Lawson was murdered), everybody was unprepared for the community uproar that happened.”

The vitriol Lawson experienced the night he was murdered is what people of color and CSU students in general experience every day at Humboldt State, said James Thomas, a Cal State LA Professor.
Given the CSU’s redirecting of students due to impaction, the CSU administration must adequately inform parents and students about the risk associated with living in Humboldt County, which is also known as “Murder Mountain,” Thomas told Trustees.

“…We who stand before you also believe the CSU needs to make a genuine commitment to student safety, in particular the safety of students of color, when you redirect them from their homes to unfamiliar places like Humboldt State,” Thomas said.

CFA is calling for safety plans at CSU campuses that articulate what each campus should do to keep students of color safe, said Cecil Canton, CFA’s Associate VP of Affirmative Action.

“If you recruit students to go to Humboldt, you need to be honest about the environment and prepare them for where they are going,” Canton said.

“We need to solve this murder. And we need to understand and adopt policy to keep this from happening to more of our students.”

Click here to learn more about CFA’s efforts to seek justice for Josiah, including a ‘Radio Free CSU’ podcast featuring Josiah’s mother, Charmaine Lawson, and a video highlighting the case.

Oakland teachers preparing for potential strike

Oakland K-12 teachers are holding a strike authorization vote Jan. 29-Feb. 1 following actions and prep work that are building toward a potential strike.

Oakland Education Association members have been working without a contract since July 2017, and teachers there are demanding smaller class sizes and salary increases, which would help attract and retain faculty. The contract fight is for racial and educational justice.

It is a fight “for the heart and soul of public education,” OEA President Keith Brown said in a video on OEA’s Facebook page. “We are fighting for our students.”

CFA members throughout the Bay Area participated in OEA rallies and an Art Build this month, and faculty are encouraged to continue to support our Oakland colleagues, who were among our supporters when we were preparing to strike in 2016.

“CFA members can support our strike by sending member delegations to school sites, attending our city wide actions— there’s one on Feb 5 at the Oakland City Council—and donating to our member assistance fund. We are grateful for all the help our CFA family has given so far and sincerely appreciate your continued support,” said Kampala Taiz-Rancifer, an Oakland teacher and OEA’s Member Engagement Committee leader.

Click here to follow OEA on Facebook, and to learn more about their contract fight.
Faculty meet with key legislators to discuss state funding for the CSU

Faculty discussed CFA’s position on how some of the proposed state funding for the CSU could be used to improve access for students and workload for faculty during meetings with key legislators at the Capitol on Tuesday.

CFA officers and members met with members of the Assembly and Senate budget subcommittees to discuss the union’s budget requests for the 2019-20 fiscal year, which include increasing student enrollment, more money for tenure track hiring, and funding to boost mental health counselor-to-student ratios at all CSU campuses.

Gov. Gavin Newsom has proposed a $562 million increase to the CSU’s budget. Of that, $300 million would be new, ongoing funding, while the remaining $262 million would be one-time funding for programs. He also is proposing a tuition freeze for the CSU.

The unprecedented 8 percent proposed increase to the CSU’s yearly budget follows years of work by CFA and Students for Quality Education. For years, we fought for much-needed funding increases for the CSU. Now that the tide is beginning to turn, we must continue to advocate for that funding to be used in ways that truly will improve the People’s University and our ability to provide high-quality, affordable education to California’s students.

“It’s really important for lawmakers to talk to faculty about the issues that we are seeing every day on our campuses,” said Nicki Mehta, a Sacramento State Lecturer and CFA’s Membership & Organizing Chair. “These conversations make a difference when it’s time for legislators to make decisions about how much money the CSU should receive and how it should be allocated.

“Our political work is absolutely critical, and the Governor’s proposed budget this year proves that when we make our voices heard, we can make a difference.”

Click here to get involved with your chapter and our political action work today.

Faculty Rights Tip of the Week: What the W? What is “WTU” and what does it mean for “Workload”?

WTU stands for Weighted Teaching Unit. WTUs represent the effort and value assigned to instructional faculty work. (Coaches, Counselors, and Librarians work in 40-hour or less workweeks without reference to WTUs to measure their work.)

Often WTUs correspond to the number of units students get for a course. But because WTUs are weighted, they might differ from the units students receive. The number of WTUs assigned to a course takes into account the mode of instruction, number of students, contact hours, preparation, and other factors set out in Article 20 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement.
WTUs are also used for measuring non-instructional work like compensated creative and scholarly work, committee work, release time for projects, union work, etc.

In the CSU, full-time, instructional faculty are assigned 15 WTUs of work each term, and the approach to measuring work in this way predates collective bargaining and most of our start dates in the CSU.

In rough terms, 3 WTUs equal 20% of a full-time position. Doing basic math, dividing assigned WTUs by 15, one can see that 6 WTUs = 40% of a full-time load; 9 WTUs = 60%; and so on.

If you believe you have been assigned an excessive or unreasonable workload, that the WTUs you are receiving are not appropriate for your effort/labor, it is in the interest of our students, institutions, communities, and our profession to address your questions and correct any problems. Contact your local CFA faculty rights representative right away.

Want to learn more? Become active with your local CFA chapter faculty rights team. Find your representative here.

If you have questions about a faculty rights tip or would like to suggest a tip, please write us at cfa@calfac.org with the subject line “Faculty Rights Tip.”

Check out more Faculty Rights Tips here.

In Other News…

STRENGTH & SOLIDARITY: Dozens of faculty, students, and community allies showed up at the LA County Courthouse last week to support for CFA Activist Melina Abdullah, who is being targeted for holding police accountable for their actions.

Dr. Abdullah was arrested on suspicion of battery on a police officer and resisting arrest during a police commission hearing. The aunt of Wakeisha Wilson was arrested during the meeting after allegedly having thrown ashes at the police chief. Wilson died in police custody in 2016.

Abdullah, who is a Black Lives Matter Los Angeles leader, routinely attends police commission meetings to speak and engage in civic activism.

The court date was continued until February 7.

CFA activists are encouraged to call LA City Attorney Mike Feuer at (213) 978-8100 and insist that charges against Abdullah be dropped.

To watch A Good Day LA television interview with Abdullah, click here.
Links of the Week

‘Higher Ed’s Most Important Watchdog’?
Inside Higher Ed
At least two newly elected Democratic governors have vowed to highlight and strengthen the role of coordinating boards, saying they are essential to keeping state higher education systems running equitably and efficiently.

State Sen. Bill Dodd introduces bill to make CalFresh paperwork easier for college students facing food insecurity
The Press Democrat
College students navigate through plenty of paperwork, between taking exams, writing academic papers, filling out financial aid forms and applying for scholarships. But for students seeking food benefits, the paperwork may soon be a tad easier.

Who Wants to Be a College President? Probably not many qualified candidates
The Atlantic
Carol Folt had to make a decision, and none of the options was great. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill chancellor was caught between a conservative Board of Governors that seemed to favor returning a monument of a Confederate soldier, known as Silent Sam, to the pedestal from which it had been yanked last fall and a student body that heavily favored its permanent removal. The stakes—her job, but also the security of UNC’s campus—were high.

Bee sues Sacramento sheriff for refusing to release deputy records under new state law
The Sacramento Bee
In a legal test of a new state law requiring the release of police records in shootings and other cases, The Sacramento Bee and the Los Angeles Times jointly sued the Sacramento Sheriff’s Department Friday, charging that the department is refusing to follow the statute that requires the release of records on deputies who fired their weapons or engaged in misconduct on duty.
[*CFA co-sponsored AB 1421, the legislation covered in this news article*]