Activists elect new officers, take action to bolster our anti-racism and social justice mission

CFA delegates welcomed in new faculty leaders, including President Elect Charles Toombs, this weekend at CFA’s 89th Assembly in Los Angeles.

The three-day meeting included the election of officers, board members, and council, caucus, and committee chairs, as well as the passage of resolutions and renaming a council to reflect our social justice unionism.

Assembly delegates elected the following officers: Charles Toombs (President), Kevin Wehr (Vice President), Diane Blair (Secretary), Susan Green (Treasurer), Margarita Berta-Ávila (AVP North), Darel Engen (AVP South), Meghan O’Donnell (AVP Lecturers – North), Leslie Bryan (AVP Lecturers – South), Chris Cox (AVP Racial & Social Justice – North), and Sharon Elise (AVP Racial & Social Justice – South).

Faculty also paid tribute to outgoing CFA President Jennifer Eagan, who was elected to serve as chair of CFA’s Political Action/Legislation Committee. Toombs, who currently serves as Vice President of CFA, said Jen’s leadership was integral to our recent successes, from our Fight for Five contract campaign to increases in state funding for the CSU.

“Jen has long been a fearless advocate for faculty, and while at the helm of our union, has led us through a fierce contract fight, and helped secure huge gains for faculty,” Toombs said. “I have learned a lot from Jen over the years, and in my tenure as president, I plan to continue the great work that we’ve started with our anti-racism and social justice transformation. We are truly a mighty union, and my fellow officers and I will work tirelessly to secure wins for faculty and wins for our students.”

Congratulations to all of those elected to new posts within our union! A list of election results is available here.
Delegates also passed a handful of resolutions intended to strengthen the union and our mission to uphold anti-racist and social justice values, as well as support key issues in the CSU and among our labor allies.

Specifically, resolutions were passed in support of a bargaining model that empowers faculty, urging the Academic Senate support of a CSU Ethnic Studies requirement, and calling on CalPERS to divest from private prisons.

Resolutions also were passed to support student climate action, mobilize support for a May 22 action for public education, and to endorse the “Pay Up Ross!” campaign led by the Garment Worker Center in Los Angeles. Delegates also passed a resolution by the Indigenous Peoples Caucus calling on the Chancellor and Board of Trustees to include land acknowledgements and recognition.

The weekend also included a unique transformation. Delegates voted to change the name of the Council for Affirmative Action to the Council for Racial and Social Justice, a change to the bylaws that immediately went into effect.

“The Council for Affirmative Action has been actively discussing a name change at our meetings throughout the last semester. This issue was first brought up a couple of years ago from the floor at one of our meetings, but we did not engage in a serious discussion of it until this past semester,” said Sharon Elise, CFA’s Associate VP of Racial & Social Justice South. “At that time, members felt that our work has grown beyond ‘affirmative action’ especially given our turn to ‘social justice unionism’ and emphasis on anti-racism and social justice.”

A poet and a panel — Special presentations inspire CFA Assembly

CFA’s 89th Assembly also included dynamic presentations by award-winning poet Richard Blanco and a panel discussion on academic freedom by CSU faculty.

Richard Blanco, selected by President Barack Obama as the fifth inaugural poet in U.S. history, read several of his moving poems, including “One Today,” which he read at the inauguration in 2013. Delegates took back to campus copies of his latest book How to Love a Country.

Faculty also heard from colleagues Xuan Santos, Blanca Misse, and Hank Reichman during a panel discussion led by Sharon Elise on the importance of academic freedom for faculty and students.

Though faculty discourse and academic debate is protected speech, panelists spoke about an uptick in recent years of faculty harassment nationally as well as in the CSU. They shared personal examples of experiencing their research, teaching, and extramural speech being targeted by right wing groups, being surveilled at work, and feeling increasingly unsafe on campus.

Across the country, women and Black faculty, and those teaching in the social sciences and humanities are targeted at higher rates.
“We are here to defend public higher education of quality and that is tied to academic freedom. If we suppress academic freedom, we do not have quality,” said Blanca Misse, an Assistant Professor of Modern Languages at San Francisco State. “This is not just the marketplace of ideas, it’s how do we achieve true academic freedom, and strengthen our union and keep fighting together.”

To defend against attacks to academic freedom, all speakers emphasized the importance of the union and of faculty being in solidarity with each other. Tenured professors, in particular, have a responsibility to lead, since Lecturer and probationary faculty are much more vulnerable.

It is critical that faculty help one another when it comes to instances of harassment, especially when it is against faculty scholars of color, said Xuan Santos, Associate Professor of Sociology at CSU San Marcos. Santos has experienced harassment first-hand and has had work targeted repeatedly by campus police.

“We talk about microaggressions, but we also need to create cultures of microliberation, where colleagues stand with you against injustice,” he said.

To read more on academic freedom, see this week’s Faculty Rights Tip.

The Unity Campaign: Coming to a CSU campus near you!

Faculty at CSU campuses across the state will be kicking off a CFA Unity Campaign April 22 to May 3.

The statewide campaign, led jointly by Lecturer and tenure track faculty, is focused around activities that highlight commonalities between all faculty groups, and specifically demonstrate how issues facing Lecturers and professors are interconnected.

The Unity Campaign will advance the shared interests and combined power of all faculty, raise the consciousness of faculty and students about social justice issues facing CSU faculty, build membership and faculty power, and encourage non-members to join CFA and further strengthen the union.

At Fresno State, a number of creative actions are planned, including raffling off three Lecturer Survival Kits. These "rolling offices," contained in a rolling laptop case, include markers, dry erasers, note pads, pens, Red Bull, granola bars, coffee, Lecturer Handbooks, CFA swag and more!

The Chico State CFA Chapter is planning a two-part effort. On April 23 and 24, members will be hall-walking to build greater unity between Lecturers and tenure track faculty and discussing how to address issues like workload and campus safety.
On May 10, Chico State activists will host an unemployment workshop, where Lecturers can learn about their right to collect unemployment benefits during the summer months.

Other chapters also are planning a myriad of events, including forums, hall walking, bargaining focus group discussions, workshops, and socials.

To get involved, please contact your local CFA chapter!

**Faculty Rights Tip: Free speech for faculty in the CSU**

The right to free speech is guaranteed in the First Amendment to the US Constitution. It’s also guaranteed in Article 1 of the California Constitution. Moreover, faculty enjoy Academic Freedom to express ourselves in our work both on and off campus.

Our CFA Affiliate, AAUP, is the leading authority on the topic and passed the must-read 1940 State of Academic Freedom. For further reading, we recommend the AAUP’s article on Academic Freedom and the First Amendment.

The CSU Statewide Academic Senate published a resolution on Academic Freedom and Free Speech.

If you have questions or concerns about free speech on your campus, please get in touch with your CFA chapter.

- Browse the faculty contract.
- See an archive of Faculty Rights Tips.
- If you have questions about a faculty rights tip or would like to suggest a tip, please write us with the subject line “Faculty Rights Tip.”

**In Other News…**

**JUSTICE FOR JOSIAH:** It has been two years since Humboldt State student David Josiah Lawson was killed at a party near campus in 2017. On Monday, a candlelight vigil was held to honor Lawson, and once again urge resolution in his murder, which remains unsolved.

The Arcata vigil was attended by more than 100 people, including Lawson’s family, as well as faculty and students.

In February, a grand jury failed to issue indictments in the case. Since then, one of the grand jurors has come forward expressing frustration with the case. Click here to watch a news report, which includes a transcript of the interview. Click here to read coverage of the vigil.

To listen to a special CFA podcast featuring Charmaine Lawson, click here.
TAKE ACTION!: Faculty activists and students will be heading to the Capitol to advocate for increased state funding for the CSU and CFA-sponsored legislation during our April 29-30 Lobby Day event.

CFA members will speak to legislators about the need to increase the number of tenure-track faculty in the CSU, improve student enrollment, and improve mental health counseling ratios.

There is still time to get involved! Click here contact us and take legislative action!

Links of the Week

Faced with high costs, crowding and confusion, college students struggle to earn a degree in four years
San Diego Union-Tribune
"How many years should it take to earn a bachelor’s degree?
Four? Five? Six?
At Cal State San Marcos, students say four. But few of the roughly 4,100 people who'll receive their baccalaureate next month did it that quickly. The school's data indicates it'll be less than 20 percent."

Student perspective: Don’t blame Sacramento teachers. The district isn’t interested in our needs
The Sacramento Bee
As the Sacramento City Teachers Association strikes against what it alleges are unfair labor practices, students are frustrated by a school district that has seemingly lost interest in student needs.

Georgetown Students Vote to Pay Reparations
Inside Higher Education
"As the debate over reparations heats up, Georgetown University students voted Thursday by a large margin to impose a fee on themselves to pay reparations for the university’s ties to slavery.
The student election commission announced the results early this morning. The measure attracted just under two-thirds of voters and passed, 2,541 to 1,304."

Open Forum: California should increase taxes on Big Businesses
San Francisco Chronicle
As Californians sit down to complete their tax returns by today’s deadline, hundreds of thousands of middle-class households are realizing that the Trump tax cut was no tax cut at all. In fact, it was a huge tax increase.

Twice as many companies paying zero taxes under Trump tax plan
NBC News
Taxpayers are scrambling to make last-minute payments due to the Internal Revenue Service in just four days, but many of the country's largest publicly-held corporations are doing better: They’ve reported they owe absolutely nothing on the billions of dollars in profits they earned last year.

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