CSUEU E-News: November 17, 2011

Biweekly news digest from the California State University Employees Union

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CSUEU Makes Its Voice Heard at CSU Board of Trustees Meeting

The CSU Board of Trustees meeting in Long Beach on Tuesday and yesterday proved memorable in many ways, not the least of which was CSUEU’s multiple successful techniques to make its voice heard.

On November 15, the first day of the board meeting, CSUEU presented petitions to the CSU management and trustees representing over 5,000 signatures against the CSU parking fee hike proposal. In a dramatic display, members spread the petition across the entire front row of the gallery. See photos in the Photo Gallery section of the CSUEU web site.

During public comments, CSUEU President Pat Gantt eloquently discussed the union’s opposition to the parking proposal, and VP for Representation Russell Kilday-Hicks discussed all the roadblocks in our current contract negotiations.

BU7 Council Vice-Chair John Orr gave a stirring speech during which he soberly laid out the finances of the fee hike, first from the CSU’s perspective, pointing out that the fees raised wouldn’t be high enough to have much significance for the parking units to which they’d be allocated. He then went on to discuss his own finances, making the point that an estimated $40 per month hike in fees on his tight budget could make the difference in being able to treat his kids to a special outing or even putting food on the table. Board members listened intently and seemed to hear him loud and clear.
“CSUEU’s actions were well received,” said CSUEU President Pat Gantt. “We accomplished what we needed to do: make an impact and be heard on important contract negotiation stumbling blocks and beyond.”

That evening, the CSU Labor Council, which is comprised of all the unions representing CSU employees, met for several hours and agreed to chant demands in unison at the next day’s Board of Trustees meeting. The chanting style was inspired by Occupy Wall Street demonstrations.

Yesterday morning, the CSU Board’s Finance Committee voted to raise student fees nine percent next fall, if the state doesn’t provide an equivalent amount of support. During subsequent public comments, Labor Council members, led by CSUEU VP for Member Engagement Joseph Dobzynski, Jr., proceeded to chant their demands in a rousing show of unity. It was a first for the usually staid Board of Trustees meetings! See a video of this attention-getting action in the “Favorites” section of the CSUEU YouTube page.

There was an abrupt ending to the day when a group of student protesters began shouting over the end of their speaking time. The meeting room was cleared by university police, and some confusion resulted. Police used force to remove some people from the building. All CSUEU members were OK and not harmed. However, there were some injuries to police and protestors, along with four arrests. A glass door to the Chancellor’s Office was shattered in the confrontation. Read Joseph Dobzynski’s blog entry, posted this morning, detailing the turn of events.

The board continued its meeting in private, justifying its action by invoking provisions of the Bagley Keene Act regarding disruption of public meetings. Questions remain, however, about the legality of the board’s retreat to a private forum.

“When the Trustees recessed, there was no general announcement or warning that the room was to be cleared or a time frame to accomplish that goal,” explained Gantt. “Some plainclothes police told some people the room was to be cleared, while others told people to find some seats or leave.”

He added, “The frustration over the cutting off of the speaking time, combined with the way the room was cleared, created a tense situation. It would have been more prudent for someone from the Trustees’ or the Chancellor’s staff to address those of us sitting in the public session about clearing the room and about whether or not the meeting would be continued.”

The scuffle at the end of the day received a great deal of media coverage. Here are just a few of the articles covering the events:

Los Angeles Times
San Francisco Chronicle
Sacramento Bee

CSUEU Supports CFA’s Strike Today
CSUEU chapters across the state have supported CFA in picketing last week and a one-day strike today, following the Board of Directors’ November 5 resolution in support of CFA.

Last week, CSULA members tabled and picketed alongside CFA members, holding signs with such slogans as “Caution – Educated Union Member” and “United We Bargain, Divided We Beg”.

Also last week, Cal Poly San Luis Obispo members walked alongside CFA picketers in front of the administration building in a show of solidarity.

**Occupy Long Beach**

*By Toni Kukreja, BU7 Representative, Chapter 315*

When news about Occupy Wall Street first hit the airwaves last October, I stood up and said, “Thank God! It’s about damned time that the people got fed up enough to stand up and take to the streets!”

I connected with Occupy Long Beach in the movement’s second week, when my niece and I joined an “Open Mic” session after a march, telling our stories about how this economy had affected us. It was extremely empowering. My niece has several degrees from the CSU, one being a Masters in Education. She is now a phlebotomist making next to minimum wage and trying to make ends meet. Since that day, I have become an active member, attending meetings and marches, and am now one of the facilitators of the Outreach Committee, which is charged with reaching out to people, communities and organizations in the area. I have drawn in several local unions.

Occupy Long Beach participated in a Candlelight Vigil yesterday evening to support our nurses, who are fighting for safe patient care. I might add that this is a group which my chapter’s beloved former LRR, Gerry Daley, organized and got me in touch with. Occupy Long Beach is also working with several unions from the Port of Long Beach, the independent truck drivers (who are a resilient group), and Occupy Los Angeles on a joint committee for a massive action, yet to be announced. I have learned how important it is for all unions to stand united. If Ohio can do it, imagine what can be done in California if all labor were to join forces.

While in Sacramento for the recent joint Legislative, Organizing and Communications Committee meeting, several of us participated in Occupy Sacramento’s march on the Capitol. It was exhilarating, but even more enlightening was joining forces with the students of Occupy CSU Long Beach for their recent teach-in, part of a nationwide action called by Occupy Colleges. We continue to work closely with the students of Occupy CSU Long Beach. They’re fired up, and they provide much of the backbone for Occupy Long Beach.

I am blessed to be a part of the movement and to witness these energized youth. Some day in the not-too-distant future, we’ll look back and know they were instrumental in the change that is about to come.

**CSU San Bernardino Chapter Presidents Honored**
On September 19, CSU San Bernardino Chapter 320 President Dee Bowen and past President Rob Garcia were honored for outstanding service to the university.

During his annual Convocation, campus President Albert Karnig honored Bowen and 19 of her colleagues with the $2,000 Team Award. The group was recognized for its development of the Learn System, an online platform that automates the process for employees to register for training courses that are either sponsored or co-sponsored by the university’s HR office.

President Karnig presented Garcia with the $1,000 President’s Outstanding Employee Award, annually presented to an employee who demonstrates excellence in job performance and exceptional willingness to assist others. Garcia was recognized in particular for his work as technical coordinator for the construction of the campus’ new social and behavioral science and education buildings. He won a special plaque, a reserved parking space, and season tickets to theatre and sporting events.

The honors didn’t stop there. Chapter Vice-President and Organizing Chair Carmen Carswell was the recipient of the $500 Distinguished Service Award for her work in Academic Computing and Media.

Congratulations Dee, Rob and Carmen!

**New Lavender Caucus**

The Lavender Caucus is the newly formed Lesbian/Gay/Bisexual/Transgender/Queer/Intersex (LGBTQI) Caucus of the CSUEU. Its first meeting will be held in San Diego over the weekend of March 9-11, the next Board of Directors meeting. The group’s purpose is to facilitate open and respectful communication between the LGBTQI community and the labor movement by:

- Educating CSUEU members, staff and leadership about LGBTQI issues.
- Educating the LGBTQI community about labor issues and workers’ rights.
- Increasing the visibility of LGBTQI activists, officers and staff members in their workplaces.
- Creating a visible CSUEU presence within the LGBTQI community.
- Working with the SEIU Lavender Caucus and other state LGBTQI organizations.
- Networking with labor and community groups to build a strong coalition of LGBTQI activists.
- Organizing against all discrimination, specifically including discrimination based on sex, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, perceived orientation and/or marital status.
- Promoting and facilitating LGBTQI participation and leadership through union democracy and rank-and-file development.

“We know that roughly 10 percent of our members are part of the LGBTQI community, but we haven’t had a focal point to come together until now,” said Legislative Committee Chair and CSU Monterey Bay Chapter 322 President Andrew Coile. “Some members continue to experience discrimination--some overt, some hidden--and it’s important for us to network,
provide mutual support, and compare notes about how LGBTIQ represented employees are treated on different campuses.”

Added VP for Member Engagement Joseph Dobzynski, Jr., “The caucus represents a long-overdue addition to our union. It provides an opportunity to explore LGBTQI issues in the workplace and communities. It also provides a forum for anyone interested in LGBTQI issues to get involved and to make change to protect our members from both subtle and overt discrimination.”

**CSUEU Board of Directors Meeting**

The CSUEU Board of Directors met in Sacramento over three days, November 4-6, to discuss budget, policy and administrative issues.

The board approved a resolution to support CFA in its one-day strike today.

Discussion topics included CSUEU’s long-term financial outlook in the face of changes at CSEA, which provides many services to the union.

The next BOD meeting is set for March 9-11 in San Diego.

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Ideas, news articles, photos? All are welcome!

Contact John Watson, (916) 319-4800 x. 109

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