The UF Seeks (Paid) Student Interns

Our UF PAC Internship Program employs six students every semester under all sorts of political activities: meeting with legislators and district trustees; informational tabling on our campuses; voter registration; grassroots organizing; working with other student groups; and lots of interesting opportunities for training and growth. Our interns earn some extra money while learning to advocate for their own issues and priorities. We do not set their agenda or ask them to promote faculty goals, because we believe that students advocating for themselves strengthens faculty advocacy as well. Many of our interns have built on their experiences in our program to continue in social work and politics. One intern, Gary Walker-Roberts, has even become a District Trustee!

If you have students who might be interested in a position with the UF, just have them send an email to our Intern Coordinator, Aminta Mickles at amickles@contra costa.edu.

UF Writing Letters as AB 1651 Heads for the Senate Floor

AB 1651 (Reyes), which passed this year in the CA Assembly with broad bipartisan support, is a bill sponsored by the California Community College Independents (CCCI) and the Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC) to strengthen due-process rights for faculty accused of misconduct. The bill was approved by the CA Senate’s Higher Education Committee, and will head to the floor for a vote of the full Senate sometime in the next week or two. If it passes, the last stop will be the Governor’s desk for his signature or veto.

The issue is quite similar to the one the UF has advanced through our unfair-labor-practice complaint with the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB), which had its formal hearing this past Monday. In our PERB case, we allege an existing legal right for the union to have access to complaint details in order to fulfill our legal obligation of fair representation. We can’t represent our members, we argue, if we don’t understand the charges against them. AB 1651 would amend existing law to clarify that each faculty member has the right to be informed about any formal complaint before the District can interview the member or place the member on administrative leave. The bill allows for many exceptions to protect students and faculty if there is any reasonable reason to withhold information during an investigation. But the Community College League, representing boards of trustees and chief administrators, has continued to oppose the bill (despite the author having accepted several amendments proposed by the League).

In anticipation of the coming Senate vote, UF have joined faculty organizations around the state in writing letters to our state senators letting them know that faculty strongly support the bill. (AB 1651 is being supported not only by CCCI and FACCC but also by the California Federation of Teachers [CFT] and the California Teachers’ Association [CTA], the California Part-Time Faculty Association [CPFA], University Professional and Technical Employees [UPTET], the United Brotherhood of Teamsters, and many others.) FACCC has added a link for faculty to express support for AB 1651 on their website, using their “point-and-click” advocacy tool, and CPFA has put a support link with talking points on the front page of their website. In short, faculty associations across CA are doing everything they can to encourage faculty to email or call their senators this week to support AB 1651.

For more information about AB 1651 or any other bill of interest to faculty, or if you would like to get more involved with our PAC activities, please email Jeff Michels at ufjfmichels@gmail.com.

One of the great challenges in representing any constituency is that members don’t always agree. Our United Faculty, for example, represents about 1500 professors (full-time and part-time), and I’m guessing that all of them would agree on almost nothing, including this statement. This fact informs the current challenge to “agency fee” that we expect to see reach the United States Supreme Court this year. Collective bargaining agents like ours have long argued successfully that since we negotiate for all employees in our group (in our case, faculty), all employees should be required to support the bargaining agent financially, even if they don’t want to be official “members” of the union. This means that non-members can be required to pay an “agency fee” equal to regular member dues, even if they choose not to join. But some who are opposed to unions argue that asking employees to pay an “agency fee” violates their first-amendment right to free speech. Since union leaders may speak publicly with financial support from their organizations, forcing anyone to support that organization essentially requires them to support speech they may actually oppose, or so the argument goes.

Of course, unions use our separate political speech from collective bargaining and other speech related to wages and working conditions. We support political activities with “PAC contributions” that only members make. But even so, and even though our UF leadership unambiguously supports fair-share agency fees, it is undeniable that no matter what we say or do, some of our members are likely to disagree from time to time. And this is challenging and sometimes frustrating because we strive to speak for everyone and represent all our members equally.

That said, and knowing there are no perfect words to sum up all how our faculty are feeling, I want to clarify the following on behalf of the UF:

We believe that the university community, like any one of diversity and inclusion; education and critical thinking are the antidote to bigotry. We passionately support free speech, but just as passionately, we oppose hate-speech. We oppose ignorance and prejudice (which are linked), and we are professors preparing our students that learning means exploring multiple perspectives and bringing new ideas to the test of oneself, sometimes in challenging ways. We believe that intellectual exploration and growth are gifts for individuals and for society, that learning is an end unto itself, and that public education is a civil right. College professors dispel myths and teach tolerance every day in the way we approach our subjects and students and in the ways we challenge our students to approach their studies and one another. We reject any boundary that would debar anyone from this sort of creative and intellectual journey: financial and social boundaries, spatial boundaries, national, ethnic or linguistic boundaries. Our job as faculty is to help our students break down walls and cross boundaries. This is why you work so hard. And schools are the edifices that most deserve public investment.

The UF Seeks (Paid) Student Interns

One of the great challenges in representing any constituency is that members don’t always agree. Our United Faculty, for example, represents about 1500 professors (full-time and part-time), and I’m guessing that all of them would agree on almost nothing, including this statement. This fact informs the current challenge to “agency fee” that we expect to see reach the United States Supreme Court this year. Collective bargaining agents like ours have long argued successfully that since we negotiate for all employees in our group (in our case, faculty), all employees should be required to support the bargaining agent financially, even if they don’t want to be official “members” of the union. This means that non-members can be required to pay an “agency fee” equal to regular member dues, even if they choose not to join. But some who are opposed to unions argue that asking employees to pay an “agency fee” violates their first-amendment right to free speech. Since union leaders may speak publicly with financial support from their organizations, forcing anyone to support that organization essentially requires them to support speech they may actually oppose, or so the argument goes.

Of course, unions use our separate political speech from collective bargaining and other speech related to wages and working conditions. We support political activities with “PAC contributions” that only members make. But even so, and even though our UF leadership unambiguously supports fair-share agency fees, it is undeniable that no matter what we say or do, some of our members are likely to disagree from time to time. And this is challenging and sometimes frustrating because we strive to speak for everyone and represent all our members equally.

That said, and knowing there are no perfect words to sum up all how our faculty are feeling, I want to clarify the following on behalf of the UF:

We believe that the university community, like any one of diversity and inclusion; education and critical thinking are the antidote to bigotry. We passionately support free speech, but just as passionately, we oppose hate-speech. We oppose ignorance and prejudice (which are linked), and we are professors preparing our students that learning means exploring multiple perspectives and bringing new ideas to the test of oneself, sometimes in challenging ways. We believe that intellectual exploration and growth are gifts for individuals and for society, that learning is an end unto itself, and that public education is a civil right. College professors dispel myths and teach tolerance every day in the way we approach our subjects and students and in the ways we challenge our students to approach their studies and one another. We reject any boundary that would debar anyone from this sort of creative and intellectual journey: financial and social boundaries, spatial boundaries, national, ethnic or linguistic boundaries. Our job as faculty is to help our students break down walls and cross boundaries. This is why you work so hard. And schools are the edifices that most deserve public investment.
remain in force while we are negotiating this fall, and the UF and District have agreed to a side letter affirming this, just so that there will be no anxiety or misunderstanding connected to the expired contract. We expect that any agreement we reach this fall will include a new three-year contract extending to June of 2020, with each side able to reopen articles for negotiations every year, as we have done in the past.

We will share more details related to collective bargaining soon. Last May’s issue of Table Talk (still available on the UF website at www.uf4cd.org) included a complete roundup of all issues on the table, and except for some progress crunching numbers this summer that have led us to feel optimistic heading into September talks, not much has changed since then.

Hot Topics

Public Employee Relations Board Hears UF Case

This past Monday, the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) began hearing two linked “Unfair Labor Practice” complaints filed by the UF last year. Both complaints concern the District’s unwillingness to provide the UF with details related to claims alleging misconduct on the part of faculty members. The UF believes we have a legal right to review complaints before district investigators question our members, so that we can adequately advise and represent faculty at those meetings. The District has refused to provide details of complaints, so we are taking our case to PERB and an administrative law judge. Similar complaints have been filed recently by several other Bay Area districts (and in the case of Foothill/De Anza, PERB ruled in favor of the Faculty Association, but because their district did not appeal, the case did not set precedent). PERB should rule on the UF case later this year.

Negotiations Update

Summer Progress Leads to September Bargaining

The UF and District Compensation Committee met several times over the summer and reviewed not only the District budget but also compensation comparisons looking at salaries and benefits throughout Northern California. We should have a complete summary of that work ready for the next edition of Table Talk. In the meantime, negotiations for 2017/2018 are set to resume September 8, with a second full day scheduled for September 15, and the UF team is hoping that may be enough to reach a Tentative Agreement. Our current contract expired on June 30, 2017, but all articles and protections included a complete roundup of all issues on the table, and except for some progress crunching numbers this summer that have led us to feel optimistic heading into September talks, not much has changed since then.

Hot Topics

Public Employee Relations Board Hears UF Case

This past Monday, the Public Employee Relations Board (PERB) began hearing two linked “Unfair Labor Practice” complaints filed by the UF last year. Both complaints concern the District’s unwillingness to provide the UF with details related to claims alleging misconduct on the part of faculty members. The UF believes we have a legal right to review complaints before district investigators question our members, so that we can adequately advise and represent faculty at those meetings. The District has refused to provide details of complaints, so we are taking our case to PERB and an administrative law judge. Similar complaints have been filed recently by several other Bay Area districts (and in the case of Foothill/De Anza, PERB ruled in favor of the Faculty Association, but because their district did not appeal, the case did not set precedent). PERB should rule on the UF case later this year.

Negotiations Update

Summer Progress Leads to September Bargaining

The UF and District Compensation Committee met several times over the summer and reviewed not only the District budget but also compensation comparisons looking at salaries and benefits throughout Northern California. We should have a complete summary of that work ready for the next edition of Table Talk. In the meantime, negotiations for 2017/2018 are set to resume September 8, with a second full day scheduled for September 15, and the UF team is hoping that may be enough to reach a Tentative Agreement. Our current contract expired on June 30, 2017, but all articles and protections...