Save UC from Yudof’s mismanagement
Techs and researchers to strike on September 24, faculty and students plan walkout on same day

outraged at President Mark Yudof’s budget policies and concerned for the future of UC, organizing among a broad coalition of staff, faculty and students has proceeded quickly since the regents’ mid-July meeting, at which hundreds demonstrated. At that meeting, the regents ignored the many viable alternatives put forth by a coalition of unions, faculty, and students, instead granting Yudof unprecedented “emergency powers” and approving his plan to furlough staff and faculty. Quietly, behind the scenes, the regents also approved raises for dozens of top executives.

Meanwhile, UC is withholding $11.5 million in grant-funded raises for the 8,500 researchers and techs who are not on state funds, monies that cannot legally be used to offset the state budget shortfall. “Research staff are already paid 20% to 30% under market rates, and are the ‘collateral damage’ in Yudof’s budget plan,” said UPTE’s president, Jelger Kalmijn.

A systemwide walkout, with widespread faculty participation, is planned for Thursday, September 24, the first day of classes at many campuses. UPTE-represented technical (TX) and research (RX) workers will hold a one-day unfair labor practice strike that day to pressure UC to abandon furloughs, release the money in grants for raises, and improve health and safety.

After 18 months of bargaining, UC has withdrawn its wage proposals and unilaterally changed benefit and transportation costs. A strike will put pressure on UC to obey the law and bargain a contract.

UC’s direct dealing
UPTE members voted overwhelmingly in late July to approve a strike, to be called by union leadership at an appropriate time with reasonable notice. UC has acted illegally by sidestepping the bargaining process and instead negotiating directly with UPTE-represented employees on the furlough plan.

“At all campuses, Yudof and other managers have sent emails, letters and videos trying to convince UPTE’s members to accept the austerity plan, or to ask them to participate in straw polls or discussions about furloughs,” said Kalmijn. “That is called ‘direct dealing’ and is a flagrant violation of labor law,” Kalmijn said. “UPTE is the legal representative for all researchers and techs – UC can’t simply bypass the collective bargaining process. The union has filed an unfair labor practice charge with the state’s labor board over this behavior. Neither can UC unilaterally implement holiday closures or furloughs for UPTE members with collective bargaining rights – which includes all workers in the TX and RX units as well as health care professionals (HX unit).

Faculty, students to walk out systemwide
As of Update press time, hundreds of faculty members have pledged to walk out on the same day.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Ninety-six percent of voters among staff, faculty and students have “no confidence” in Yudof’s leadership

Employees across the UC system turned out in record numbers to overwhelmingly reject the leadership of UC president Mark Yudof in an historic vote of “no confidence,” held from August 26 to September 2.

Ninety-six percent of voters selected “no confidence” on their ballots. Even though the poll took place during the summer break when most faculty and students were away, some 10,000 voters, including faculty, custodians, nurses, techs, researchers, professionals and clericals formed long lines at polling places across the state in the historic and unprecedented vote.

“I voted ‘no confidence’ in Yudof because enough is enough,” said Carolan Buckmaster, a staff research associate and UPTE’s San Diego president. “Our campus community knows that President Yudof’s policies are misguided,” she added.

“He chooses to implement tuition hikes and devastating cuts to teaching, research, patient care and other vital services, all while propping up UC executives with lavish bonuses and pay raises.”

A broad referendum
The UC Union Coalition, which includes UPTE-CWA and 6 other unions representing UC employees, organized the statewide vote. It invited all staff and faculty, represented or not, to cast a ballot. On campuses where school was in session, students were encouraged to vote as well.

Yudof created the plan that will require most employees to take 4% to 10% cuts in pay, in the form of work furloughs, amounting to $184 million in cost savings. At the same time, Yudof and the regents approved dozens of executive raises and created several new, highly paid positions, and borrowed $200 million for construction projects (see stories on page 3).

“We cannot stand by and watch our magnificent public university destroyed by bad management and privatization,” said Phil Johnston, a computer resource specialist at UC Santa Cruz and UPTE’s local president there. “With this vote, we’re signaling to the regents that they’ll have a fight on their hands from all sectors of the UC community if they continue on this irresponsible course that is gutting the university’s core educational purpose,” Johnston said.
Six funding sources to cover the state shortfall that don’t damage UC*

- **$500** million, the decrease in UC’s state funding
- **$7.2** billion in unrestricted cash reserves
- **$1.6** billion in fundraising, could be redirected to current needs
- **$570** million in research funds added from federal stimulus
- **$350** million in bonuses of those earning over $200,000
- **$230** million in medical center profits
- **$200** million from a 25% pay cut to UC’s top 3,000 executives

*while these funds have multiple uses, each could contribute to a solution to the state funding shortfall.

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**RX/TX strike and faculty/student walkout on September 24**

(Continued from page 1)

(The statement can be found at <ucfaculty-walkout.wordpress.com>.)

Their demands include no furloughs or pay cuts for employees making less than $40,000; full disclosure of the UC budget; and respect for the tradition of shared governance between faculty and UC administrators.

Faculty members are particularly angry that management ignored a decision by the systemwide Academic Council (made up of all the campuses’ Academic Senates) to allow faculty to take their furloughs on instructional days.

“The administration seeks to evade public accountability for the manner in which it has managed the budget crisis,” the authors of the faculty letter wrote. “The Office of the President has failed to arrive at a plan that would protect the interests of both students and workers. It wishes to disguise the harm this failure has done to the University’s mission.

Furloughs on instructional days, faculty note, “pressure the state to cease defunding the UC system, and they pressure the Office of the President to confront the fact that its overall approach to budget reform is unsustainable and unjust.

The American Association of University Professors, representing faculty nationwide, has endorsed the walkout.

**Teach-in by students at Berkeley**

Student groups of several campuses are also organizing to oppose the cuts. At UC Berkeley, the Student Worker Action Team, which includes both students and employees, held a teach-in this summer and plans to support the September 24 walkout.

The UC Student Association passed a resolution in late August pledging to act in solidarity with UC unions, and noting the many ways in which students are directly affected by Yudof’s policies, including major cuts to enrollment, declines in student services, lack of student support staff, larger class sizes, and fewer course offerings.

**Opposition to cuts among administrative professionals**

Employees without collective bargaining, such as UPTE’s administrative professional (AP) members, unfortunately do not have the same contractual protections.

Still, APs have been quite active in opposing Yudof’s plans. They have turned out in droves to vote on the “no confidence” motion that was presented for the consideration of all UC employees, union-represented or not. Many are meeting with co-workers about the issues and becoming involved in campus-based coalitions to save UC.

“Now is the time to organize to protect our future, and protect the UC that we have worked so hard to build over the years,” said Joan Lichterman, an editor at UC Berkeley and UPTE’s health and safety director.

Lichterman urged all APs to sign an UPTE “commitment card” in support of collective bargaining rights for administrative professionals. “Union protections will be needed even more as we head into the future,” she says. The card is available on the web at <www.upte.org/99/ap-card.html>.

**UC won’t listen to alternatives**

UPTE and its coalition allies continue to hold the position that furloughs and layoffs are unnecessary and detrimental to the educational and research missions of the university, and that viable alternatives exist to cover the state’s budget shortfall.

“We will continue to work with other unions, students, faculty groups and legislators towards the one solution that does not harm the university: UC tapping into its vast array of resources to temporarily cover the decrease in state funds,” said Lichterman.

For an outline of some of these possibilities, please see the sidebar at left.
Execs still get raises as UC cuts staffing and pay was the front-page headline in the San Francisco Chronicle on August 7. As the regents voted for furloughs at their July meeting, behind the scenes they also quietly approved scores of executive pay increases and perks for top executives and administrators.

Several executives were appointed at salaries from 11% to 59% higher than their predecessors. The regents also voted to give “administrative stipends” ranging from $24,000 to $58,625 to several employees, without any extra duties, and added several new highly paid executive positions.

“These are outrageous actions, taken at the same time as UC has been pleading poverty,” said Barbara, UC president Mark Yudof’s furlough plan, it would take the pay cuts of more than 10,000 average lowest-paid “tier 1” workers just to offset the extra $11.5 million for new executives making over $100,000 at UCOP.

Want to put faces on some of those exorbitant executive pay figures? Check out a fun set of reprintable executive pay posters from an UPTE activist at UCSB: a crisis in priorities.

Regents vote raises for execs, furloughs for staff

The Chronicle’s article drew heavily on investigative work done by a team of UPTE members at UC Berkeley and UCLA. Minutes from the July 16 regents’ meeting show the total number of compensation increases, added. “Despite the regents’ claim in January that UC’s highly-paid executives spent layoffs and cutbacks. "These are outrageous actions, taken at the same time as UC has been pleading poverty,” said Barbara, UC president Mark Yudof’s furlough plan, it would take the pay cuts of more than 10,000 average lowest-paid “tier 1” workers just to offset the extra $11.5 million for new executives making over $100,000 at UCOP.

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Legislature reins in UC, CSU exec pay

California’s Assembly and Senate both overwhelmingly approved legislation in early September to prohibit executive pay raises during bad budget years at the University of California and the California State University.

“The UC and CSU seem committed to going down the same egregious path as AIG and other Wall Street corporations by providing for their top executives and ignoring everyone else,” according to the bill’s author, Senator Leland Yee (D-San Francisco/San Mateo), who is also an alumnus of both UC and CSU.

“SB 86 will ensure that top execs are not living high on the hog while the students are suffering,” said Yee in a press statement.

An earlier version of the bill was killed after lobbying by UC and CSU administrators. After a public outcry, legislators finally passed the revised measure.

In 2009 alone, the UC regents have already approved approximately $9 million in executive compensation increases, about $2 million of that at their last meeting in July. That is in addition to other forms of compensation including generous pension plans, travel allowances, housing, and access to low-interest loans.

UC president Mark Yudof receives $828,000 in salary – more than twice that of the president of the United States.

Since 2002, top administrators at CSU have also received raises in excess of 23 percent.

“There is absolutely no justification for these bloated salaries,” said Yee. “The UC and CSU administrations continuously violate the public trust by catering to the university’s elite rather than serving the students and workers they are appointed to represent. The public deserves better.”

The bill now awaits the governor’s signature or veto.

The real “death panels”

Health insurers deny 22% of claims

Nearly a fourth of medical claims for insured patients, even when recommended by a patient’s physician, are rejected by California’s largest private insurers. That amounts to what the California Nurses Association/National Nurses Organizing Committee (CNA/NNOC) calls “very real death panels in practice daily in the nation’s biggest state,” according to data released in early September.

CNA/NNOC researchers looked at data reported by the insurers to the California Department of Managed Care. From 2002 through June 30, 2009, six of the largest insurers operating in California rejected 47.7 million claims for care – 22 percent of all claims.

“With all the dishonest claims made by some politicians about alleged ‘death panels’ in proposed national legislation, the reality for patients today is a daily, cold-hearted rejection of desperately needed medical care by the nation’s biggest and wealthiest insurance companies simply because they don’t want to pay for it,” said Deborah Burger, an RN and CNA/NNOC’s co-president.

“For the first half of 2009, as the national debate over health care reform was escalating, the California rejection rates are even more striking: PacifiCare (39.6%), Cigna (32.7%), HealthNet (30%), Kaiser Permanente (28.3%), Blue Cross (27.9%) and Aetna (6.4%).

Contributing to the debate, UPTE’s AP members start weekly news service

A s staff, faculty and students brainstorm about ways to defend the state’s jewel of higher education, the University of California, a group of administrative professionals organizing for UPTE representation saw the need for a news service to help inform the dialogue, one that would be delivered to activists’ email inboxes each week as they pondered their next moves.

So they started the Monday Memo, published at the start of each week, to help the UC community stay up-to-date with news and research on the budget issues, and the activities of those who are fighting to preserve the health of the university.

“It’s a short, readable email with links to further reading that we hope will encourage discussion, coalition-building and action among the UC community,” one of the commit-tee members told the Update. “Many of us write and edit for a living, so we felt this was a contribution we could easily make to help provide context for the debate about strategy that is taking place across the state.”

Anyone may subscribe the Monday Memo. Just send an email to subscriptions_mondaymemo@upte-cwa.org. Back issues are at <www.upte.org/publication-mm>. News tips, either anonymous or credited, are welcome at <subscription_mondaymemo@upte-cwa.org>.

Saving money by cutting care

“Every claim that is denied represents a real patient enduring pain and suffering. Every denial has real, sometimes fatal consequences,” said Burger.

PacifiCare, for example, denied a special procedure for treatment of bone cancer for Nick Colombo, a 17-year-old teen from Placentia, California. After protests organized by Nick’s family and friends, and health care activists, PacifiCare reversed its decision. But the delay resulted in critical time lost, and Nick ultimately died.

Cigna gained notoriety two years ago for denying a liver transplant to 17-year-old Natalie Sarkisyian of Northridge, Calif. and then reversing itself, tragically too late to save her life.

Rejection of care is a very lucrative business for the insurance giants. The top 18 insurance giants raked up $15.9 billion in profits last year.

“The routine denial of care by private insurers is like the elephant in the room no one wants to talk about,” Burger said. “The US remains the only country in the industrialized world where human lives are sacrificed for private profit, a national disgrace,” she said.

Many health care reform activists support a single payer system to cover all Americans, a plan similar to what exists in other nations.

A recent report by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development found that among 30 industrial nations, the US ranks dead last in life expectancy at birth for men, and 24th for women.

To keep up-to-date on the health care debate and make your voice heard, log onto the AFL-CIO’s health care page at <www.aflcio.org/issues/healthcare>.

CWA safety and health conference

A key issue in this year’s bargaining for UC researchers and techs is improving health and safety protections.

Join UPTE’s national union, the Communications Workers of America, for a health and safety conference in San Diego in October, where experts will help you tackle the flu, ergonomics, toxic materials and other hazards workers face on the job.

The conference happens October 3-5 in San Diego. Seminars will cover record-keeping, leadership skills and what the Obama administration is doing to protect workers and overturn anti-worker rules from the Bush administration.