

CSU faculties plan labor lessons

Some students wary
of teach-in tactic over
stalled contract talks

By Tanya Schevitz
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Frustrated by an impasse in contract negotiations with administrators, California State University faculty members will stage teach-ins this week on campuses across the state.

Talks between university officials and the California Faculty Association (CFA), which represents approximately 20,000 faculty members in the 23-campus system, broke down in July and a mediator was called in.

One major issue is salary. But faculty representatives also said that the system is not prepared for the upsurge in student enrollment and is plagued by overcrowded classrooms, a heavy faculty workload and a shortage of required classes.

In addition, they are angered over a growing reliance on part-time lecturers. Systemwide, less than half — 45 percent — of the faculty were tenure-track in 2000-2001, while the majority were part time or full time but temporary. Five years before, the faculty makeup was the reverse — with 55 percent of faculty tenure-track.

Dan Fendel, tenure-track vice

president of the San Francisco State University chapter of CFA, said the issues affect students.

"We are not trying to disrupt the university. It is not a strike. It is an educational enterprise," Fendel said.

But some students say the faculty should put their energies into teaching class, not into teach-ins. And they worry that the professors, who have control over grades, could penalize students who do not support their cause.

"We are paying to be taught here," said Humboldt State University senior Melissa Ortiz, 20, campus representative of the California State Student Association. "It is not our war to fight."

However, at San Francisco State, the student government passed a resolution in support of the teach-ins.

"We support our faculty. After all, they are the ones giving us our education," said graduate student Bruce Wolfe, 41, who sponsored the resolution.

Sam Strafati, CSU assistant vice chancellor for human resources, said the teach-ins are an attempt to build support for unrealistic contract demands.

The union says it wants a 3 percent raise. But CSU administrators said the union is really asking for a 6.3 percent increase, because it wants step increases in addition to health insurance for temporary lecturers. CSU has of-

Cal State teach-ins

In the Bay Area, teach-ins will be held tomorrow at San Francisco State and San Jose State universities and at California State University at Hayward. Other campuses around the state will hold their own events during the next two weeks.

Specific information about events at each campus can be found at www.calfac.org.

fered the \$21.6 million, or 2 percent, total increase that was funded by the state.

Strafati said that the raise the union wants would cost an additional \$47 million.

In order to meet union demands, Strafati said the university would have to shift funds from enrollment growth, technology upgrades and year-round operations, all which are needed to expand and improve services for students.

However, faculty members said that system administrators have other places they could trim.

"I believe they have the money. Whether they choose to spend it on faculty salaries or administrative raises, that is the problem," Fendel said.

Strafati acknowledged that the trend of relying on part-time, temporary workers needs to be

reversed. However, he said, the system cannot afford to dramatically increase tenure-track hires and give job security to the current temporary workers, as the union demands.

The decline of tenured full-time faculty positions exploits the temporary workers and harms the institution, said Susan Meisenholder, president of the CFA and an English professor at California State University at San Bernardino.

Temporary lecturers have little job security and often have to juggle positions at several campuses to make ends meet, Meisenholder said. That leaves them no time for office hours or other campus activities.

"Also, as dedicated as the part-time and temporary faculty are, we do worry about the continuity in programs and the continuity of the educational experience," Meisenholder said.

A national report, "Marching Toward Equity: Curbing the Exploitation and Overuse of Part-time and Non-Tenured Faculty," to be released this month by the American Federation of Teachers, said the problem is widespread. It is echoed in California's community colleges, where two-thirds of the faculty are part time, according to the report.

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