

CSUEU Division Council Notes

June 2005

CSUEU held its Division Council meeting this past weekend in Burlingame. Kathryn Plunkett and I attended, representing the Bakersfield chapter. Following is a summary of the meeting's major events.

President Pat Gantt reported that a proposal to restructure CSEA's leadership format is under consideration: if adopted, three elected officers at large plus three officers from each of the four affiliates (including CSUEU) would lead the organization. This may be voted on at the General Council meeting this fall.

Our agreement with CSEA for Central Services is in flux and constantly undergoing scrutiny and evaluation.

Lobby Day last month was a great success.

The November ballot initiative regarding usage of Union dues is specifically targeted to remove public-agency unions out of being able to wield political influence.

SEIU has expressed intent to remove itself from AFL-CIO. If this happens, they will also be out of the CSEA umbrella, which could be detrimental to us and the other two affiliates in terms of political clout and Central Services.

Interim Administrator Virginia Watts reported that an Advanced Steward training workshop will be offered in September. Each chapter will be entitled to send its chief Steward and one other active Steward to the session.

The rally at CSU Northridge during the recent bargaining session was attended by at least 150 CSUEU members, who picketed and showed a strong presence.

Bargaining VP Dennis Dillon reported not much progress in contract negotiation, save the 2% General Salary Increase offer of which we were informed last week. The team is continuing to work on improving this and other compensation-related situations.

Finance VP Kathryn Plunkett and her team reported that the average Fee Payer's percentage of dues equals nearly the same amount paid by the average full member. The 75 cent per month difference for the average Fee Payer would return approximately 3000% when compared to cost savings gained on one admission ticket to a theme park under the CSUEU discount program available only to members. Plans to avert financial shortages in the affiliate's account in 2008 are being investigated.

Elections for statewide officers were held. Each will serve a two-year term which began immediately following this weekend's election. The officers are:

President: Pat Gantt
VP Representation: Dennis Dillon

VP Organizing:	Hylah Jacques
VP Finance:	Lori Williams
BUC 2 Chair:	Pam Robertson
BUC 5 Chair:	Sharon Cunningham
BUC 7 Chair:	Annel Martin
BUC 9 Chair:	Rocky Waters

Summary of CSUEU Division Council Meeting
Feb 11-13, Sacramento

The fight to save PERS

CSUEU and other Unions will be mounting a campaign to defend PERS against the Governor's plans to privatize our retirement fund. State Assembly Democrats have vowed to support the cause, and it is expected that the Governor will initiate a ballot measure for a November vote by the general electorate. Given the Governor's popularity with the electorate and the current trend to debase big government and privatize its operations, our battle over the issue is likely to be difficult. An information program aimed at voters will likely be started as part of our strategy in staving off changes to PERS.

The Governor, in an address to the state Republican convention, said of groups which oppose him (including public employees' labor unions such as CSUEU), "They have been fighting all along. This is nothing new. The only thing is that politicians up until now were worried about tackling those kind of problems. That's why they fixed a little here, a little there. But now we're going to the source. We're going right there where all the evil is, and we're going to fix this problem once and for all."

The statewide President of CSUEU, Pat Gantt, spoke of the fight to save PERS as the most important battle of the year and vowed to make it the top priority of the Union.

A recommendation was made to Chapter Presidents to activate local Joint Labor Councils and combine efforts to defend PERS.

Currently, the employee contributes 5% of earnings and the University kicks in 17%. Under the Governor's proposal to eliminate defined benefits and switch to a defined contribution plan, the employee would contribute half of the total (which could be 11% of earnings, but that too could change as the total amount of contribute could be changed).

One piece of slanted information coming out of the Governor's office is that state employees can retire at age 50 with a pension of \$80,000. While it's true that a very few such cases exist, the average employee who retires with 18.67 years service will have a pension of around \$20,000. It's important that voters know the truth of the majority of situations, not the exceptions that enhance the Governor's case for change.

More details to follow as plans and activities develop.

SEIU Local 1000 bid to control central services

The largest of the four CSEA affiliates, SEIU Local 1000 (formerly known as the Civil Service division), with its 88,000 members is evidently attempting to gain control of CSEA's central services. The attempt has sparked an intensely adversarial relationship between CSEA's chief, J.J. Jelencic, and Local 1000 President Jim Hard. Jelencic sees the move as trying to circumvent CSEA's administration of legal representation/advice, communications, administrative support, etc. Hard's position is that his membership deserves the lion's share of support services due to their vast numbers (Jelencic's view is that CSEA still is responsible for administering the services proportionally and that 1000 is demanding unquestioned authority and a disproportionate percentage of services). The struggle is likely to continue for some time and the financial and lobbying power

ramifications for CSUEU could be grave if 1000 is successful or if they divorce themselves entirely from CSEA, as has been speculated by some.

CSU budget

Last year's compact between the Governor and Chancellor Reed apparently will be upheld in the coming state budget, which could be good news for the Universities. A funding increase, as agreed to last year, could lead to the establishment of a compensation pool to be used in part for staff salary increases. But a lot of ifs still are unresolved, and any increase may depend in large degree on bargaining. Also potentially affecting the budget is implementation of Proposition 98.

CSEA communications and archives

Internal communication processes are being upgraded in a program designed to speed dispersion of pertinent news and action notices. The archives of the Union have been re-organized to make research and access easier.

CSUEU Charter

CSEA granted charter status to CSUEU Jan. 1 of this year. A brief ceremony during the Division Council Meeting was the occasion for presentation of an official placard with the proclamation. CSUEU is now also a corporation with leadership, policies, and accounting procedures more in line with other not-for-profit corporations.

Bargaining to reopen

In mid-April bargaining is expected to begin on the next contract, which will cover the period beginning July 1, 2006. Articles 20 (Salary) and 21 (Benefits) are the only articles to be bargained at this time. Of particular interest will be CSUEU's opening bid for a 17.3% General Salary increase. Also noteworthy are petitions for 5% Service Salary and 5% Merit Salary Increases, In-Range Progression, Salary Stipends, Arduous pay, Hazardous pay, License renewal and Professional Association fees, and Bonus plans. The bargaining team is committed to improving our salary situation significantly.

We can support their efforts by going to Board of Trustees meetings in Long Beach in mid-March and May. Plans are underway to organize trips. More details to follow.

Electorate for Division Officers

A move is underway to change who can vote for Division Officers. Input from Chapter members is encouraged (please email Ray Finnell with your ideas). Possible electorate options include: Chapter Presidents only, Chapter Executive Committees only, the entire Membership.

Budget statement and investment policy

CSUEU's budget is healthy and in the black. All anticipated expenses in the coming year should be covered comfortably. A considerable amount of money has been laid away for payment next year to SEIU for past services. The Financial Committee along with our Financial Advisor has undertaken a search to determine the highest-yield and safest investment strategy to get the money to work for us in the interim.

Speech Pathologist classification

Some Speech Pathologists in the system have been working under incorrect position classifications. A search for others is underway with the goal of identifying all such people and being sure they are correctly classified. If you know anyone in this category, please inform Kathryn Plunkett or Ray Finnell.

The next DC will be in June. If I'm elected to continue serving this Chapter, I will provide a report following that meeting.

Thank you for allowing me to attend this Division Conference and to better serve you.

Ray Finnell
President, Chapter 310 CSUEU