

**SUCU General Meeting Thurs 20th Oct 2016, 1pm**

**Council Chamber, Octagon Centre**

**Chair: Craig Brandist, Branch President**

**Minutes: Jane Rodger, Branch Administrator**

1. Welcome and introductions

Jane Simm, Branch Vice President briefly took the chair to welcome all to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes from the Extraordinary Meeting held 7<sup>th</sup> September 2016 were accepted as a true record. One grammatical correction was noted for the motion on the national impact of the EU referendum result.

3. Brief round- up of news

Craig Brandist took the chair to introduce the brief roundup of news.

3.1. Branch Officers continue to talk to management about the University Strategy Delivery Group (SDG), which is a two year project. SUCU committee do not share management's view on University finances. We have identified patterns that appear to show that the deficit is linked to capital expenditure. Examples of attacks on staff conditions in other institutions were given including Leicester, London Metropolitan, and Coventry. London Met UCU Branch's request to initiate 'greylisting' of London Metropolitan University until union demands are met was unanimously agreed by UCU's HEC (Higher Education Committee) meeting on Friday 14 Oct 2016.

3.2. The Higher Education Bill is into its third reading and if unchanged will pave the way for privatisation.

3.3. The third Convention for Higher Education met last weekend to discuss how to mobilise action around the Higher Education Bill. We will circulate a Convention report to members.

3.4. Our local Students Union have launched their "Sheff better than TEF" campaign. SUCU Committee will look for ways to work with the Students Union on the campaign.

3.5. University management consider the newly outsourced Occupational Health Service a success although we believe staff going through the process have not been asked for feedback. One concern from casework is that reports about individual staff members have been sent to managers first - before the staff member has seen their own report.

3.6. Negotiations have been ongoing for a year between the campus unions and management following concerns raised regarding the use of the capability processes and

Performance Improvement Plans (PIPs). We had seen increasing requests for help from members subject to a PIP, particularly members with a disability. With the help of Ann Jarvis from our Regional Office significant improvements have been negotiated including clear guidelines regarding health issues, the objectives must meet SMART criteria, and the performance shortfall must be specified. The unions will also press for existing PIPs to be reviewed and brought into line with the new Improvement Support Plans. More detail will be circulated in Branch News.

#### 4. National pay campaign

UCU held regional pay briefings for Branches during September and this Branch was represented at a meeting in Manchester. UCU's Higher Education Committee met last week and decided to consult members on the question of whether they wish to accept UCEA's offer to continue with the joint work on casualisation and the gender pay gap or whether they wish to take further sustained industrial action with the aim of improving the offer. A consultative ballot will be sent from UCU to members soon.

#### 5. Local campaigns

Our SUCU Action Group that meets monthly and is open to all members is building two local campaigns linked to the national pay campaign. The Anti-casualisation campaign will be launched at the Action Group scheduled on 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1-2pm. Our local Equal Pay campaign was the subject of the Action Group on 5<sup>th</sup> October from which a number of questions regarding equality data and a joint event were suggested. These will be put to University management.

#### 6. Academic metrics (including Branch Motion)

Craig Brandist proposed, and Sarah Staniland seconded the following motion.

##### **SUCU Branch Motion - academic metrics**

The branch notes:

1. Communications have been sent around departments advising on the use of metrics directly to measure academic outputs 'to inform discussion about development, performance and, if appropriate, promotion cases';
2. Metrics will record research applications data, awards data, commercial income, number of PGR students, number of publications, citations;
3. The system is maintained and managed at faculty level and 'assigns a traffic light coding system and ranks individuals alongside peers';
4. A recent report to HEFCE, 'The Metric Tide' notes 'considerable scepticism among researchers, universities, representative bodies and learned societies about the broader use of metrics in research assessment and management' and notes that 'there is a legitimate concern that some indicators can be misused';

5. TUoS is not a signatory to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment, which seeks to halt the practice of correlating the journal impact factor to the merits of a specific academic's contributions, which creates biases and inaccuracies when appraising research. DORA also states that the impact factor is not to be used as a substitute "measure of the quality of individual research articles, or in hiring, promotion, or funding decisions". HEFCE has signed, and TUoS has failed to explain why it has not done so.
6. Casework reveals numerous cases in which performance management has targeted people with disabilities, health problems and personal problems
7. Introduction of metrics has not been preceded by consultation or negotiation with SUCU;

The branch believes:

1. Use of metrics is a blunt instrument that may yield misleading data, and which is open to potential abuse by unscrupulous managers;
2. Ranking academics against each other according to metrics and the 'traffic light' system is divisive, corrosive of collegial relations, and may lead members ranked in the 'bottom decentile' to be placed under considerable stress, or to become demoralised and/or target for victimisation;
3. Use of citation metrics for performance management purposes may be unlawful;
4. Protocols on the use of metrics as proposed should be negotiated with SUCU to minimise the potential for 'misuse' and implementation should be delayed until robust guidelines and safeguards have been agreed;

The branch resolves:

1. To make management aware of staff concerns regarding the introduction of metric-based rankings and to call for negotiations on the issue;
2. To press for a delay in implementing such rankings until consultations have taken place and to campaign against any imposition;
3. To represent members who are placed under performance improvement measures arising from use of metrics or who suffer detriment from their application.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- An amendment was suggested to include a fourth resolution to renew our call for the University to sign up to the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment.
- Managers could abuse the use of metrics.

- Ranking within Departments is no way to set objectives and could be unlawful, as your actions are judged against the actions of others, and not yourself.
- We know of examples of casework where a PIP objective has been to publish in a five star journals.
- We need to clarify how the use of metrics fits with equality data.

A vote was taken and the motion, as amended, was passed nem con.

#### 7. University Strategy Delivery Group

University management had informed the campus unions verbally last week about the Staff Release Scheme (SLS), which was announced to staff today. It has not been negotiated with the trade unions. The release scheme is one of the different options looked at by the Strategy Delivery Group. The SDG is also looking at “work streams” the first of which will be a review of research support. Research and Innovation will be benchmarked against Engineering. The unions are pressurising for more transparency. Members are encouraged to read communications from Shearer West regarding context and background, and to make use of the open door invitations to staff.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- It is important that no one is pressured to volunteer for the release scheme.
- We have formally requested that a union representative sits on the SDG.
- Communications about the SLS are contradictory. The language used is also of concern.

Ans. We will go back to management about this.

- If colleagues are “released” it is important that remaining colleagues’ workloads do not increase.

#### 8. National recruitment week w/c 21.11.16

UCU is holding three national recruitment weeks the first of which will start on 21<sup>st</sup> November. It’s more important now than ever to bolster the strength of the union. The local Branch will be increasing our visibility around the campus that week, including holding a recruitment stall. More details will be circulated soon.

#### 9. AOB

None.