

**SUCU General Meeting Wed 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017, 1pm**

**Council Room, Firth Court**

**Chair: Jon Benson, SUCU Branch Secretary**

**Minutes: Jane Rodger, SUCU Branch Administrator**

1. Welcome and introductions

Jon welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Minutes of the last meeting

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

3. Brief round-up of news

- 3.1. Pay negotiations: The Employers made an opening offer of 1.2% for this year's round of pay negotiations, which has now been increased to 1.5%. Inflation is currently 2.2%. Locally, we do not want to negotiate on pay. However, want management to comment on the differentials between the highest and lowest paid at this University.
- 3.2. Pensions: The draft valuation of the USS pension fund is expected soon. This will be based on data from the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017. The University has produced a statement which is the result of a working group that SUCU colleagues have participated in.
- 3.3. University reviews: SUCU representatives will do their best to cover the many reviews taking place across the University. The trade unions will formerly get involved when the outcome of the reviews are announced. There will be a 90 day consultation period should the outcome of a review be a proposed restructure. Members were encouraged to consider helping the Branch by becoming a member of SUCU Committee.
- 3.4. Anti-casualisation and gender pay claims: We have attended the first meeting following the submission of the anti-casualisation claim which went well. The terms of reference for the negotiations are being agreed. Negotiations are expected to run from May to December 2017. We are also working with University management following our gender pay claim by participating in a working group. We are asking for meaningful data, input into the equal pay report, and meaningful actions arising from it.
- 3.5. National Student Survey boycott: So far the required threshold for the survey responses has not been reached, and most people do not expect it to be. This has been a successful campaign. We understand that IPSOS Mori are cold calling students urging them to complete the survey.

- 3.6. UCU Congress: This year's Congress will be held in Brighton from 27<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> May. Four Branch delegates will be attending.
- 3.7. SUCU AGM: Members are encouraged to put their names forward for Branch Officer positions and as Ordinary Committee members. The deadline for nominations is the 11<sup>th</sup> May.

#### 4. Pay negotiations

The University Employers (UCEA) negotiate with the joint trade unions each year over pay. The negotiations are comprised of a series of three meetings, the last of which will be held at the end of April. The current offer on the table is 1.5%. The Employers' response to the casualization and equal pay parts of the claim is to offer further joint working. We hope to circulate more information in Branch News.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- The increasing inequality between University top earners ( pay is negotiated locally) and the rest of staff (pay is subject to national negotiation) has been highlighted to University management at the Joint Union Consultative Committee (JUCC). SUCU believes that this massive difference in pay should be considered when the University tries to apply pressure to keep wages low.
- UCU is asking for volunteers to act as national pay negotiators.

#### 5. Support for non UK EU citizens

Since Article 50 was declared we have not heard yet of Government plans to negotiate the status of EU citizens in the UK, or UK citizens in the EU. Locally there are problems with getting residency permits especially for partners of EU citizens, and people without health insurance. University management have confirmed they will help staff applying for residency permits; however they will not pay for family members, or for post graduate students.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- What help does the University offer to non EU citizens living in the UK?  
Ans. At the moment they will not tackle any other immigration issues.
- Other Universities are doing more. We need to take the issue of immigration issues for other international staff to the next meeting with University management (JUCC).

#### 6. Branch motion – attacks on academic freedom in Hungary

The Hungarian Government proposed an amendment to the Higher Education Bill which had the effect of targeting the Central European University (CEU) – tightening rules that would prevent CEU from functioning.

Rita Hordosy proposed the following motion that calls on the government of Hungary to drop the Higher Education Bill, and calling on the University to send support to CEU. The University of York and other institutions have already sent messages of support. Sam Marsh seconded the motion.

## **SUCU Branch Motion - in support of the Central European University, Budapest, 13<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

This branch strongly condemns the amendment of the National Higher Education Act 2011 passed by the Hungarian Parliament (4th of April) and signed into law by the Hungarian President (11th of April), that threatens the existence of the highly prestigious Central European University (CEU) in Budapest. We urge the Government to reverse this detrimental legislation, which is considered unconstitutional, and amounts to an attack on academic freedom, the rule of law and legal certainty.

The amendment of the National Higher Education Act 2011 rushed through the legislative process within a week without any consultation with those affected, creates high level of uncertainty for staff and students alike. Moreover, despite the government's attempts to claim that the amendment is a mere technicality to create 'equal opportunities', it is clearly formulated such that out of nearly thirty international institutions only CEU's existence is under threat.

In this motion this branch:

- Expresses their support to President Michael Ignatieff as well as the staff, students and alumni of the Central European University.
- Calls on the University of Sheffield to add its name to Sheffield UCU Branch's expression of support.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- What is the Hungarian Governments track record?

Ans. The government describes itself as "illiberal". The CEU is the bastion of liberalism.

A vote was taken and the motion was passed nem con. Member are encouraged to sign the petition and add messages of support to the CEU website.

### 7. AOB

A question was asked from the floor about the academic promotion process, in particular the form used.

Ans. The principles behind promotion were agreed in the Framework Agreement. However, the changes referred to relate to the use of academic metrics – a separate issue which will be discussed with management.