

SUCU General Meeting Minutes 14 May 2014

Chair: Mick Ashman – SUCU President

1. Welcome and introductions

Mick Ashman welcomed all members to the meeting and introduced Marianne Quick, UCU Regional Support Official.

2. Review of the Pay Dispute - UCU Regional Support Official

2.1 Marianne Quick spoke to members and led a discussion. UCU members in Higher Education have accepted the 2% pay offer and the marking boycott has been cancelled and the pay dispute is now resolved.

There needs to be a discussion about the learning points. The membership both locally and nationally has increased as a result of the dispute, and it has demonstrated that we can effectively organise action with our sister trade unions.

2.2 We will need this increased and strengthened membership to face future challenges in particular the University's plans for "Reward and Recognition" – which links pay and performance.

Comments and questions from the floor included:

- There seems to have been a lack of leadership from National UCU. Why was there no recommendation on the 2% offer?

NEC took a vote on whether the 2% should be recommended to members but the result was split 50/50.

Towards the end of the ballot period SUCU Committee made a recommendation to reject the offer. Where local Branches did recommend rejecting the offer this did not seem to significantly affect the breakdown of the vote.

- Our ability to shut down the University has had a significant impact on Management as it has implications for the University's reputation and student recruitment. It has built our strength in local negotiations.
- Last year Congress decided to have a strategy of escalating industrial action which did not happen. This will be debated at this year's Congress.
- People voted to accept the offer for many reasons which are locally specific and mostly not because they felt the offer was fair. For example members teaching on modular courses would have largely completed their marking before the proposed start of the marking boycott. In the future we need to devise diverse and locally specific strategies that can be co-ordinated – eg look at key events and how assessments and marking are organised.

3. UCU Annual Congress May 29 – 30

3.1 Pablo Stern, Charles Fox and Craig Brandist will attend on behalf of the Branch. The agenda and motions will be circulated to members for comment.

4. Reward and Recognition

4.1 This is an emerging and important issue. Under current terms and conditions staff are paid and not "rewarded" for their work and the only performance related pay is the promotions system which is reasonably open and challengeable.

4.2 Research shows that performance related pay does not improve performance, yet University management wish to introduce measures to control pay, linked to performance. This will increase management control, divide staff, and ultimately reduce the wages bill. SUCU are opposed to performance related pay, but have to discuss Management's proposals. However, Management have indicated they want to discuss automatic incremental increases within the pay scales. National UCU's robust position is that normal automatic incremental progression is part of the national pay deal and is not negotiable. This has been communicated to Management. SUCU's view (along with our sister campus unions) is that the University is trying to impose measures that are detrimental to the organisation, students and staff. If management insist on challenging automatic increments the local Branch may need to go into dispute with the Employer.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- Does the University really want more national negative publicity – in addition to VC pay increase?
- If all measures are agreed the new system will be similar to that of Professorial pay – no transparency.
- This proposal opens the way for corruption and bullying.

5. Institute of Lifelong Learning (TILL) update

5.1 The University have set out proposals to change and restructure TILL. SUCU Committee members Jane Simm, Gill Brown and Kaye Carl are representing colleagues in the Institute of Lifelong Learning with the support of Regional Support Official Marianne Quick.

5.2 Two months ago the University gave its first proposal for change to the campus unions but their plans did not comply with University Change Management Procedures. After a threat of dispute from the campus unions the University agreed to comply with policy, and to a schedule of consultation meetings with staff and trade unions. At the first meeting SUCU asked for:

- A meeting between University management and hourly paid workers at TILL (previously not contacted).
- A meeting with TILL staff at which an alternative proposal will be submitted to Management.

5.3 SUCU are also concerned that the University is proposing to remove an important part of its endeavour in engaging local communities. A large group of people in South Yorkshire will no longer have access to TILL courses.

5.4 The proposals were stated by management to have been agreed by Senate although a vote was not taken - despite being requested by Senators. Concerns about University governance will be raised separately.

5.5 SUCU are working closely with the Students Union team who are campaigning with local MPs and staff against the proposals.

Questions and comments from the floor included:

- If Senate decisions are based on 'consensus' this cannot be demonstrated without a vote.
- There are 400 students who currently study at TILL.
- Members are encouraged to sign and circulate the student petition and e-petition on the Sheffield City Council website.

6. AOB

Members are encouraged to volunteer for Committee membership. Each year Committee becomes stronger thanks to members wishing to get more involved in their union.