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UCB staff, faculty and students voice opposition to service cuts and reorganizations

A massive reorganization of UC Berkeley's library system has been stopped dead in its tracks by a petition signed by 110 faculty, and outpourings of opposition campus-

wide from students and staff. The story broke in the *San Francisco Chronicle* this summer. UCB's library management had already drawn up consolidation plans for the library's diverse and far-flung branches.

Then, almost as an afterthought, they surveyed faculty, saying staff losses required the cuts, and asking if faculty "preferred to close 16 of the 24-campus libraries or just 10," but with fewer staff, wrote the *Chronicle*.

The response was loud and clear. Faculty objected to having only two choices, "horrible or terrible," noting "There are no first-rate universities in the world without a first-rate library."

The plan is off the table for now, and Berkeley's chancellor has convened a special task force to

look at the issue.

A second heavy-handed "shared services" reorganization that would negatively affect some 400 Berkeley employees – many of them in information technology, administrative and research support – is also in the works.

A coalition of UC union members voiced their opposition to it at UCB's "Staff Appreciation Day." Union members from UPTE-CWA, CUE and UC-AFT also raised questions about how much the multi-million dollar plan would – or would not – save.

"Shared services" is the latest buzzword in Berkeley's so-called "Operational Excellence" plans, which will likely lead to layoffs, reduced resources and heavier workloads. They plans are simi-

lar to others across the UC system and the nation (see story below).

These attempts to cut services come as California's public universities have won the distinction of having the fastest rising tuition in the nation, according to a just-published U.S. Department of Education ranking. Seven UC and three Cal State campuses are among the top 5% of public institutions with the fastest-rising tuition.

"UC campuses at Berkeley, Los Angeles, Merced, Riverside, Santa Cruz, San Diego and Irvine as well as the CSU campuses at Long Beach and Chico all experienced a tuition increase of at least 40 percent between those years," noted Berkeley's *Daily Californian*.

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UCB administrative professionals on after an organizing discussion.

The shared services disaster

BY JAMES CERSONSKY

At research universities in California, New York, Michigan, Georgia, Iowa, Texas and beyond, consulting firms have found a new foothold for restructuring academic labor along corporate lines. Under the aegis of "shared services," clerical and technical workers are being pulled from their departments and offices and replanted in centers where their work is combined and rearranged for greater efficiency. IT or financial staff from, say, economics could find themselves sitting next to colleagues from anthropology. HR employees from student health services and public safety could be on the same call-line.

Despite its benign connotations, sharing is the new fiscal ideology – one that relies on sacrifice as much as brotherhood – with a language foreign to most academics. According to a white paper at the University of Pennsylvania, the shared service model, which arose in the private sector in the 1980s, "consolidates administrative functions into a structure that considers the groups that use the center 'customers.' It is performance and market-driven." In a franker rendering, one book written by former managers at the Dow Chemical Company and Levi Strauss is titled *Shared Services: Mining for Corporate Gold*.

As ideology beyond mere bottom-lining, shared services are the prefigurative politics of the managerial elite who run universities. By centralizing their control over the academy's legworkers, administrators erode allegiances between academic and non-academic employees and reduce the possibility of informal networking and united pushback among them. This strategy of division and containerization – purported to cushion universities from the unpredictability of endowments and state budgets – amounts to an academic disaster with dubious fiscal promise.

Bain's excellent adventure

In 2009, UC Berkeley relocated some 400 employees under "Research Enterprise Services." RES consolidated the research support units of a number of small departments, museums, and centers, forcing non-managerial employees who already did support work to reapply for their jobs. A subset of RES employees – administrative professionals – have worked longer hours with no overtime pay.

"RES employees are less likely to have close ties with departments that they serve, so they are more likely to be out of touch with department-specific needs or programs," said Tanya Smith, president of UPTE Local 1 in Berkeley. This configuration, she said, "contribute[s] to longer hours

and more work to achieve what previously was completed by someone more familiar with the department's programs."

Under "Operational Excellence," a broad restructuring initiative that has already cost Berkeley \$9 million in consulting fees from Bain & Company, the university will have a new center, Campus Shared Services, for employees doing work in finance, HR, IT, and research administration in a facility 2.5 miles off campus. While staff won't have to reapply for their jobs, those who don't want to move have been encouraged by the administration to "apply for another role on campus or outside the university."

"In this isolated place, each staff member will do a more routinized job all day, every day, away from faculty, students, and being part of – even central to – department cultures," Thorne said. "It's a kind of de-skilling. It's hyper-skilling in the sense of specialization, but it's removing the artisanal serving of departments."

Staff relocation compounds cuts and requirements already in effect under Operational Excellence. Without adequate staffing to channel resources to students, faculty and visitors, knowledge workers of all stripes – from the front-line employees who remain to graduate instructors and faculty – have been dumped



UPTE's table at UCB's Staff Appreciation Day, where people signed a petition against plans to move 600 staff to an off-campus site in Berkeley's 4th Street shopping district.

Early adopters are set for January.

As Barrie Thorne, a professor of Sociology and Gender and Women's Studies, sees it, the upshot of shared services is alienation.

with extra work that they may not be able to carry out for want of time or ingrained clerical expertise.

"There's no finer way to ap-

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Organizing for fairness

At right, UPTE members attending a workshop in Oakland on how to handle arbitration cases. The class included the participation of a practicing arbitrator, who gave participants a thorough understanding of how to defend their coworkers' cases using labor law and UPTE's negotiated contractual protections. The union offers workshops several times a year – please contact your local for more information.

UC is holding bargaining hostage

Can UC be any clearer that its strategy is divide and conquer?

Its bargaining team insists that UPTE's technical employees (TX unit) and researchers (RX unit) bargain separately. These two contracts are 99% identical, having been negotiated together. "There is no justification for this other than a strategy to break us up and impose UC's desired 2-tier pension retirement system," said Jelger Kalmijn, UPTE's president and a researcher at UCSD.

UC also wants to split RX and TX workers from their colleagues in UPTE's health care professionals (HX) unit. And UC has fought to keep AF-SCME's 2 units – service workers and patient care technical workers – from bargaining together.

UC bargainers have explicitly stated that they have a directive to settle no agreements without getting the unions' agreement on the 2-tier pension system. UPTE members have been clear: they will not forfeit their rights to bargain about the retirement changes.



Nino Maida, photo

Regents settle lab worker death case, UCLA professor still faces charges

In a plea deal on July 27, the Los Angeles County District Attorney dropped felony charges against the UC regents related to the 2009 death of 23-year-old UCLA research assistant and UPTE member Sheri Sangji.

The regents agreed to follow comprehensive safety measures throughout the university and endow a \$500,000 scholarship in environmental law in Sangji's name at UC Berkeley's School of Law, where she had been accepted. Charges are still pending against Sangji's supervisor, chemistry professor Patrick Harran, who will appear in court again on September 5.

The settlement reflects the "Regents' good faith acceptance of responsibility for conditions under which the laboratory was operated on December 29, 2008," when Sangji was fatally injured, and "commitment to maintain a comprehensive laboratory safety program" that fully complies with the California Labor Code and state regulations governing employee health and safety in the workplace.

It applies to chemistry and biochemistry departments throughout the UC system for four years – not just to UCLA. However, it does not apply to all labs where hazardous and potentially lethal substances are used, to UC medical centers, or to the three partly UC-managed national labs.

New safety rules

Here are the settlement's main features:

- Principal Investigators (PIs) in chemistry and biochemistry must complete safety training before operating labs or supervising anyone.
- All chemistry/biochemistry laboratory facilities must comply with California requirements to establish standard operating procedures (SOPs) for "working with hazardous chemical agents," which are to "be written by laboratory personnel having the most experience and knowledge," signed by principal investigators (PIs) and "all personnel responsible for performing the procedures," and reviewed by "qualified

personnel."

- SOPs need to be "amended and subject to additional review and approval by [PIs]" under a number of conditions specified in the agreement, and authors of SOPs must consider the manufacturers' "usage and handling recommendations." A list of chemicals requiring SOPs is attached to the settlement. In addition, all relevant SOPs must be maintained in each lab's Laboratory Safety Manual and be "readily accessible to all laboratory personnel."

- Personal protective equipment (PPE), including fire-resistant lab coats and gloves, must be appropriate for the substance used, and lab workers must wear full-length pants and closed-toed shoes. Lab coats must be worn "while working on, or adjacent to, all hazardous chemicals, biological or unsealed radiological materials." Departments are to cover the costs and keep records "verifying the date of issuance and type of PPE issued." Also, cotton (or non-synthetic) clothing must be worn when working with flammable liquids.

- Researchers (including PIs) shall follow "procedures for safe use of pyrophoric liquid reagents" and "shall not work alone" when handling these reagents.

- UC's Environmental Health & Safety (EH&S) departments are to "conduct comprehensive chemical safety inspections" and immediately notify responsible lab personnel "of any [imminently dangerous] Critical Deficiency noted during an inspection," which must be corrected immediately. EH&S has been given new authority to stop any activity immediately.

New lab safety manager

As a result of the settlement, UC has added a new position for a laboratory safety manager as part of the Office of the President to help implement the agreement.

The settlement also provides for enhanced Cal/OSHA reporting requirements and inspections.

Links to the full agreement and articles

UC says pay for many is "significantly below market"

UC's annual systemwide report on compensation is out. According to UC, pay for many UC employees is "significantly below market," while salary increases for non-union employees – among them, administrative professionals – have been minimal or non-existent since 2008.

You can read the report at compensation.universityofcalifornia.edu/pay-roll2011.

The "Pass/Fail" education blog of public radio station KPCC reported that this parallels a similar study in 2009. Said UC spokesperson Diane Klein, "If you don't pay people what they're worth, they're going to go somewhere else, and then we all suffer." (UPTE's members have been saying that all along!)

Executive pay continues to rise

Related to the UC report, the *Sacramento Bee* has published the 2011 searchable salary database for UC, covering gross pay for all UC employees. The university's payroll grew by 6 percent last year, from \$10 billion to \$10.6 billion, which UC attributed to a combination of factors that included restoration of furlough reductions. About one-third of the funding for salaries in 2011 came from hospital fees.

At least 22 UC employees made more than \$1 million, most of them coaches and doctors. In 2010, the database showed 4237 members of UC's \$200,000 Club – that is, employees with gross pay over that amount. The \$200,000 Club grew by 15% to 4889 in 2011.

You can access the database here: ucannualwage.ucop.edu/wage.

are included in UPTE's *Monday Memo* of July 30 www.upte.org/publication-mm/2012-07-30.html. – Joan Lichterman, UPTE's Health & Safety Director

UPTE's health care professionals demonstrate against UC's proposed two-tier pension plan in Los Angeles.

Aaron Rosenfield, photo



Do shuffling and sharing actually increase efficiency? CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

preciate what staff does for you than to have them fired or furloughed or demoralized,” said Michael Cohen, a lecturer in American and African-American Studies. Recently, African-American Studies, Ethnic Studies, and Gender and Women’s Studies were put under a single office manager.

For Claudette Begin, a member of the Coalition of University Employees who has worked at Berkeley’s School of Public Health since 2006, the ensuing demoralization has been manifold. Begin cited “the fear of layoffs, the volume of work, the anxiety of not being able to do your work, which affects your performance, the stress that this creates in relations between workers. We had somebody collapse on their knees one day. It affects people’s health.”

“Many of the members are looking for work elsewhere,” Smith added. “They didn’t come to the university to work in a cubicle. They liked working with the people. They liked the area that they’re in.”

Inefficient management

The logic behind gutting departments lies in the UC system’s positive ratio of senior administrators to faculty members.

UC Santa Barbara English professor Christopher Newfield contends that shared services replace departmental and employee autonomy with a bureaucratic, command-and-control form of management that is *inefficient* in a university setting. According to administrative theory, employees aren’t sufficiently measured, assessed or controlled. Newfield argues this view belies the specialized division of labor in organizations as massive and multifarious as research universities.

What’s more, it comes with additional costs for measuring and controlling. Operational Excellence “cuts back on front-line staff that work with students and faculty,” Newfield says, “meaning it reduces services at the educational interface, and has done nothing to reduce administrative bloat at the upper-middle ranks.”

Mark Champagne, the recently retired business manager of UC Davis’ Association of Students, speaks from experience. Champagne oversaw an \$11 million budget covering the bulk of student services at Davis, including food and transportation. After Davis took up consulting firm Scott Madden’s recommendation to open a shared services center and demanded \$600,000 in labor costs from the Association of Students, Champagne wrote an op-ed arguing that this would require cutting some 200 positions and the services that come with them. Within a week, Davis retracted its demand.

“You’ve got to show that centralization is good not just because it’s centralization, but because it actually saves money,” Champagne said. “What’s going on right now, it’s random. It’s the randomness that bothers me, as opposed to doing something that’s more systematic.”

Voices of (silent) dissent

Since 2009, the UC Board of Regents and President Mark Yudof have responded to state retrenchment by taking the axe to their campuses – cutting hundreds of millions of dollars from UC’s budget, raising tuition 32% and more recently proposing another tuition hike of 81% over the next four years. The response has been rallies, direct actions, and widespread protest among faculty, staff and students.

While many of these actions have called for an end to Operational Excellence, movements for greater democracy in university governance face a variety of obstacles. At UC, knowledge workers are divided among an alphabet soup of bargaining units, each covering campuses across the state: the UAW (grad teachers), CUE (clerical workers), UPTE (technical workers), AFSCME (service and maintenance), the AFT (lecturers and other staff), and then undergrads and tenure-track faculty, who don’t have formal bargaining power. As Smith put it, “There are coalitions that have been built that are working, it’s just that there’s a lot coming at us. We have to be continually regrouping, moving forward.”

Meanwhile, dissident university staff face threats to their already insecure jobs. “I have spoken to next to no individual staff who welcome the idea of shared services, but nobody will speak out,” said one employee, who has worked in managerial and sub-managerial capacities and wished to be kept anonymous. “People are mostly doing like I am doing, counting the years to retirement and hoping to stick it out.”

Some schools, like Cornell, don’t have a union representing administrative employees. Whereas UNITE HERE Local 34 has had a voice in the development of shared services at Yale, divisional mergers and the consolidation of clerical work at Cornell incorporate little formalized staff input.

An empty academic future?

As university departments are ripped at the seams and knowledge production continues its downward spiral into the hands of corporate managers and consultants, academia risks becoming an empty shell.

As Thorne described her administration’s rhetoric, “‘We will do our best to infuse Berkeley culture into shared services.’ How are you going to do that, off campus? What are you going to do, just get a serum and shoot them with Berkeley culture?”

The fate of Gender and Women’s Studies at Berkeley rests on the availability of its single full-time staffer. “Visitors come, foreign visitors, global feminist people,” she said. “Part of our mission is to welcome people and have a space for intellectual discussions. Are we going to reach a point where there’s no there there?”

APs organizing for job security, fair pay and respect

If you work in a lab or hospital, you may not be aware that UC’s 16,000 administrative professionals (AP) are in the midst of a statewide organizing campaign to obtain UPTE representation. These employees contribute their knowledge and skills to UC in a wide variety of job titles – from computer programming and budget preparation to counseling, health outreach and library services.



Danielle Castro, a community mobilization specialist at UCSF

But of all the classifications at the university, AP jobs remain the most at risk of being affected by UC’s budget problems, since they are without the protection of a union contract. The issue’s Q&A is with **Danielle Castro**, who is a community mobilization specialist at UCSF’s Center of Excellence for Transgender Health, working in the areas of HIV prevention and health care access for trans people. She’s working to collect UPTE “authorization cards” from her colleagues in support of union representation. If you are an AP and have not yet signed one, you can download the card here: www.apsforupte.org/card.pdf.

Q. What’s the most important issue for UC’s administrative professionals right now?

A. Job security and fair compensation are at the forefront of my concerns. It’s an insecure economic time on a global scale, and with all the job cutbacks at UC, I’m feeling very insecure and vulnerable. I do important work for my community through UC, but I don’t get the compensation I’m worth, and don’t feel supported by university because of their lack of wage increases. With budget cuts coming down, it doesn’t feel like there is much job security. I work on grant-driven projects, which adds to my insecurity, but others in my workplace working under grant-driven projects here have union representation. They’re safe because they have a bargaining unit that will fight for their rights, but I’m not. I’ve also seen the UC executives get bonuses, but we (frontline staff) don’t get anything. The one 3-4% raise we got – after years of no raises – just doesn’t keep up with the cost of living in San Francisco.

Q. How did you get involved in organizing your AP colleagues at UCSF?

A. Initially, I was hesitant to participate in the union because of past experiences I’d had with other unions. But then I went to a meeting with Jolie Pearl [a former UCSF AP now working as an UPTE organizer] and I asked questions and realized that union representation was something we really need. Sitting next to someone that had been at UC ten years and hadn’t had but one salary increase, I got worked up and realized that we need to do something about this together. It appears that UC doesn’t care enough to support us as professionals. We are driven to do what we do, and we are worth the investment.

Q. How has UC’s “Operational Excellence” plan affected people at your campus?

A. People are getting laid off and transferred to different departments. People are getting displaced. I’m not sure what it all means, but I’ve noticed that our benefits are waning – retirement, pay, job security isn’t what it should be. People who have been here for years and are very valuable are moving to other departments. Not sure why UC has to spend less money on our work – if they are going to cut, why not take it out of the executives pay increases? UCSF executives get big bonuses every year, but all management gave us was a chocolate. It was insulting. I think that it is time for APs to step up and take some time to get authorization cards from our co-workers, so we’ll have a chance to be recognized by the university as a unit they have to negotiate with.

UPTE member Nino Maida joined hundreds of others at a CWA rally in San Francisco to “Bring Jobs Home.” US Secretary of Labor Hilda Solis and CWA President Larry Cohen were among the speakers.



Lisa Kermish, photo

Email James Cersonsky at jcersonsky@gmail.com or follow him on Twitter @cersonsky.

A longer version of this article originally appeared in *In These Times* at inthesetimes.com/work-ing/entry/13584/the_shared_services_disaster. Reprinted with permission.

Vote NO!

Proposition 32 would be Citizens United on steroids

Conservative activists in California are promoting a deceptive ballot proposition that would increase the ability of business groups and billionaires to dominate state elections.

The measure, Proposition 32, claims to be an even-handed effort at campaign finance reform – but nothing could be further from the truth. Prop. 32 (or “Stop Special Interest Money Now,” as its big money supporters prefer to call it) would cripple the ability of unions to participate in politics, but have little or no impact on unlimited spending by corporate executives and other wealthy individuals.

Data compiled by the non-partisan Center for Investigative Reporting demonstrates that the business interests who would benefit most from Prop. 32 already dominate California election spending.

Between 2001-2011, business interests spent over \$700 million on initiatives, candidates, and parties, while labor unions contributed well under half that amount – just over \$284 million. Wealthy individuals bankrolled a further \$231 million. Under Prop. 32 neither the spending by business interests nor wealthy individuals would face meaningful limitations – indeed, it would likely explode – while that of unions would be all but eliminated.

The biggest corporate spenders include Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America of Washington, DC, with over \$71 million, PG&E, with over \$66 million, Chevron Corp.,

with over \$50 million, and the tobacco giants Virginia-based Philip Morris and North Carolina-based R.J. Reynolds, with a combined total of \$65 million. Most of this spending was on initiatives that provide special breaks for corporations. Prop. 32 would not fix that – its many exemptions mean that corporations could still spend big on campaigns and super PACs.

Where union money goes

Unions are also major players in California politics. The two largest players, the California Teachers Association and the State Council of the Service Employees International Union, together account for \$168 million of spending, well over half of labor’s total spending.

The biggest single contributor, the teachers union, has spent heavily to protect funding for K-12 public education and limit class sizes for California students, not for corporate tax breaks or to block health warnings on tobacco and other carcinogens. Prop. 32’s restrictions against spending through payroll deductions – which is how unions raise money for political campaigns – would virtually eliminate this public interest spending.



Lisa Kermish, photo

The outcome would be to slash spending in support of funding for public education, health and safety, or to protect working Californians, but encourage massive spending by tobacco, pharmaceutical and real estate giants. And we would soon see an avalanche of ballot measures designed to weaken labor standards, targeting wage and hour laws, paid sick leave, health and safety provisions and other essential protections.

Buying the election

Prop. 32 would also have no impact on spending by billionaires, the 0.1% of the electorate who are currently bankrolling federal super PACs. Over the past decade the top fifty wealthy individuals have spent over \$231 million on California elections. Two of the top three billionaire spenders in California – Jerry Perenchio and Charles Munger, who together have spent over \$30 million – are major contributors to the Prop. 32 campaign. The last thing California needs is a measure that would increase the ability of billionaires to dominate and distort our politics.

These wealthy individuals are seeking to silence the voices of schoolteachers, firefighters and nurses, but are actively involved in buying elections. This shows the deep cynicism behind Prop. 32. Its principal backer, the right-wing Lincoln Club of Orange County, was a key player in the Supreme Court’s Citizens United decision, which has led to a massive increase in billionaire-funded super PAC spending. The Lincoln Club welcomed Citizens United as a victory for free speech, but now wants voters to believe it supports even-handed campaign finance reform.

Prop. 32 is a “billionaires’ bill of rights,” not an imperfect but well-intentioned effort to tackle special interest spending. If it were to pass, businesses and billionaires who have spent almost a billion over the past decade would dominate California elections even more than they do today, while ordinary Californians would be stripped of an effective voice. It is no wonder that the nation’s leading good governance groups unanimously and unequivocally oppose this effort at deception.

Prop. 32 is the polar opposite of even-handed campaign finance reform. It would turn California elections into Citizens United on steroids. – *John Logan, director of Labor and Employment Studies at San Francisco State University.*



Sara Steffens, graphic

RESTORE PUBLIC EDUCATION: TAX THE WEALTHY

Vote YES on Prop 30

Every day, we help educate tomorrow’s leaders, support the world’s top researchers and scholars, and enrich lives with our libraries, museums, performing arts and outreach programs. But California’s budget crisis places the university’s missions at risk.

The University of California is our employer, but we come to work seeking more than just a paycheck.

Many of us choose UC employment because we believe in the university’s core missions of teaching, research and public service.

UPTE members have been working to secure stable, long-term funding for UC.

We register people to vote. We help turn out the vote to elect legislators who understand the importance of investing in the university. We lobby to protect vital UC services and programs. And this year, we are supporting a “yes” vote on the governor’s Schools and Public Safety Protection Act (Proposition 30) that would raise billions of dollars annually for public services, including higher education.

If Proposition 30 does not pass, UC faces devastating cuts to programs and jobs, and massive increases to student fees. UPTE is building a stronger union for professional and technical workers at UC. Let’s also build a community of students, educators, parents, legislators and the UC regents focused on political solutions to re-fund public education.

Together, we can make a difference for UC by voting YES on Proposition 30.

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UC students have been lobbying for increased funding through the University of California Students Association. Learn more at <www.ucsa.org>.