

UCSC - Faculty and Staff

Local



State union withdraws from UCSC election

By JOHN McNICHOLAS
Sentinel Staff Writer

SANTA CRUZ — Citing a lack of interest on the part of UC employees, the California State Employees' Association has pulled out of the upcoming elections to determine if a union — and which union — will represent workers in the UC system in collective bargaining.

"Apparently the employees feel the university has treated them well enough," said the association president, Leo T. Mayer, in a letter to employees dated March 17 explaining the "painful and difficult decision."

The employees' feelings are largely due, he said, to an "intensive and expensive anti-bargaining campaign" by the administration, which he called "subtle persuasion and intimidation."

University spokeswoman Lubbe Levin in Berkeley last week denied the campaign is anti-union or anti-bargaining. The program is to "make sure the employees are well informed when they vote," she said.

A memo from the UCSC personnel office in a supervisors' packet on collective bargaining states the university "is not anti-union," but the "administration believes that collective bargaining is not in the best interests of the university and urges its employees to vote for 'no representation.'"

That same packet tells supervisors they may tell employees "The University neither wants nor needs the intervention of an exclusive bargaining representative. . .," they may talk "about the disadvantages of belonging to a union. . ." and "that if they strike there is no law which presently gives them an absolute right to get their job back."

The union still in the running is the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, an AFL-CIO affiliate. The president of the UCSC local, Nadia Bledsoe, disagrees with CSEA's estimation.

"People are interested in being represented by a union," she says. "We are encouraging those who were part of CSEA or other organizations in the past to put aside whatever differences there have been and vote for AFSCME."

The 1978 passage of the Higher Education Employer-Employees Relations Act gives UC and California state university employees the right to engage in collective bargaining.

UCSC professors recently elected their own group, the Santa Cruz Faculty Association, to represent them in bargaining. They are the first faculty group systemwide to vote for representation.

The 60,000 non-faculty employees in the UC system have been divided into 15 bargaining units according to their occupation, said Keith Hearn, CSEA communications director in Sacramento.

In an election tentatively scheduled for May by the Public Employment Relations Board, the units will vote for representation or no representation.

AFSCME will be the only union on the ballot for nearly all the employees, says Bledsoe. Some craft unions in the Bay Area may be represented, but the Service Employees International Union, which has been a part of the organizing effort on the campuses, has also withdrawn from the election except for some patient-care units at the university's teaching hospitals.

CSEA — not to be confused with the California School Employees Association — has some 3,500

members, Hearn said, with 153 at UCSC. The association also represents 130,000 state civil service employees.

AFSCME has some 3,000 members, according to Bledsoe, with some 100 at the UCSC campus.

The relatively small membership is not a measure of interest in collective bargaining or representation, she says, nor can it be used to predict the election's outcome; employees can vote for representation whether or not they are union members, she says.

Hearn gave CSEA's reasons for withdrawing.

"We found in general from talking to employees they aren't interested in collective bargaining on a statewide basis," he said. "On some campuses, some units have strong interest in collective bargaining, but since the election is on a statewide basis, the overall lack of interest determines our course of action."

"Essentially, they feel the administration treats them well enough, and they don't see the need for a union," he said. "Part of this is due to the university's anti-union tactics in the last three years."

He says the university has kept raises and benefits on par with other state employees to remove the impetus for organization. If employees vote for no union, he expects to see the university "lose its generosity toward its employees."

Hearn laughed at the administration's statements it is not anti-union.

"As part of their campaign, they were training supervisors and managers in anti-union tactics. One of the textbooks they used was called 'Managing Without Interference,'" he said. "Another document prepared by university attorneys was

called 'Preserving a Non-union Environment: Strategies and Costs,' and the (Board of) Regents last December voted \$157,000 for a campaign to educate employees why the Regents feel collective bargaining isn't good for them or the university."

Lubbe Levin, the director of academic and staff employee relations in the systemwide administration in Berkeley, said the administration is not "opposed to collective bargaining as a concept, but simply because we don't feel it's the most effective way of managing the university."

Our primary motivation is to give the employees all the benefits other state employees are receiving, with or without collective bargaining.

Levin said the documents cited by Hearn were never adopted or approved for use, and she said they had never been used.

Hearn said documents from the U.S. General Accounting Office showed 1,200 copies of "Managing without Interference" were purchased at \$12 apiece for use at Lawrence Livermore Laboratory, and he stated the other memo was also circulated.

Hearn said some employees and longtime members of CESEA felt the association was abandoning them, but it was a "management decision," he said, "a judgement call — we think they will not vote for representation. We may be surprised. They may vote for a union in some of the units."

But Bledsoe responded, "I wouldn't be surprised at all if people voted for representation."

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