

Cal State faculty votes to authorize strike

by Sherry Saavedra

Faculty at the largest public university system in America on Wednesday voted to strike over a bitter salary standoff that has professors blasting recent executive pay hikes while bemoaning instructor compensation that they contend is too meager. California State University plans to begin rolling two-day strikes next month which will start on each campus on different dates. No specific dates have been scheduled.

Ninety-four percent of voting faculty on 23 campuses authorized a strike unless a settlement is reached, union officials announced Wednesday. It is the first time CSU faculty members have called for a strike.

CSU, Fullerton "I'm taking this stand because I think future generations of California public school students will be negatively impacted for many years if we don't stop the erosion of quality of the CSU," said Janet McDaniel, professor of education at CSU San Marcos, who says she's nearing retirement and may not fully benefit from a settlement. "I'm not worried about myself. I'm worried about those who will replace me and whether we'll attract someone who wants to be in the CSU. I have my doubts."

CSU officials say they've made a fair offer - a 24.87 percent pay raise over three years. But the union representing 24,000 faculty, counselors, coaches and librarians argues that only about 15 percent over four years is certain.

Since 2002, faculties have received one pay raise of 3.5 percent in late 2005. At that time, CSU trustees also approved an average raise of 13.7 percent for university presidents and some executives. The board then approved another 4 percent pay boost for top administrators in January, despite objections from faculty who have been fuming over transition pay, special assignments and perks granted to a series of departing executives in recent years.

A CSU spokesman said no union in the system has ever gone on strike.

The CSU administration has gone to great lengths to reach a settlement and will continue to do so, according to a press release from the Chancellor's Office.

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