

ICUCU Newsletter No 4

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Welcome to the latest newsletter for Imperial College UCU members.

Introducing your Branch Committee

Cristina Romano



Cristina joined Imperial in 2001 and is now working as EU Project Manager in Chemical Engineering. After having received UCU support, she followed in her mother's

footsteps (a Union rep in her native Italy) and contributes actively to the UCU Committee, currently as the Membership and Recruitment Secretary.

Passionate about mental health wellbeing particularly in the workplace, Cristina has trained as a Mental Health first aider in one of the first cohorts of the ICL\A-sponsored course. She is a strong supporter of the Springboard Programme and encourages all women in IC to attend the course - she believes it was one of the most useful courses for her own professional development and a great way to network. "You will be sure to make new friends across college. I found it inspirational. It's given me the right motivation and tools to pursue the changes I wanted to see happening in my life", she says.

UCU Campaign Update

Annual Pay Negotiations

At a meeting on 7 July members of UCU, Unite and Unison unanimously rejected the latest pay offer from Imperial College management, the main part of which was, '*a tapered rise of 1.2% for all pay up to £61,000 and 0.5% on the balance of earnings above this figure*'. This offer was

considered divisive and represents a pay cut in real terms for staff and fails to address the additional costs of living and working in London. Management subsequently rejected our request to re-open negotiations on pay. Consequently on 18 July UCU Unite and UNISON began balloting their members on whether they accept the pay offer and, if not, would they agree to a ballot on industrial action. It is particularly galling that management are so intransigent about making a decent pay offer despite being fully aware of the decline in earnings of staff over the past decade and knowing that Imperial continues to record high annual surpluses with this year's £143.5 million, its largest ever.

USS Pensions

Members will be aware that the USS pension scheme has been radically changed. In order to keep UCU members abreast of these changes, UCU has set up a web page www.ucu.org.uk/uss which contains further information. This site includes recent editions of "Pensions News", which describes the changes and the responses of UCU to these.

Importantly, this site contains links to the main USS web site, <https://forthefuture.uss.co.uk>, where further detailed information is available. The first phase of the changes was implemented in April 2016; the next change happens in October 2016 - the introduction of the new defined contribution section, the USS Investment Builder. If you are unsure of the details of the pension reforms, the USS web pages provide considerable detail and many FAQs and answers.

UCU Annual Congress summary highlights

By Roddy Slorach, Congress delegate

The main congress decisions were as follows:

- To support regional and national initiatives including higher public funding for further, adult, offender, and higher education and research and to provide a clear vision of how such provision can benefit society and the economy;
- To approach the Labour shadow education team for a full discussion on how a non-competitive and planned higher, further and adult education sector could be created;
- To instruct the NEC to devise a joint F&HE national campaigning strategy to defend both sectors;
- To support all colleges and universities that take action against rationalisation and privatisation;
- To hold a national demonstration and lobby of parliament to oppose the HE White paper;
- To hold a solidarity national demonstration over job losses and victimised reps at London Met Uni;
- HE Sector voted for action over the summer, with further action short of strike and rolling strikes in autumn, to win our pay claim to end the gender pay gap and casualization (NB: Imperial College is excluded from the pay campaign because College management withdrew from national pay bargaining);
- FE Sector voted to oppose Area Reviews and for a national ballot if their pay claim is not met for an extra £1 per hour, ending the gender pay gap and casualisation, and for the Living Wage;
- To hold a joint UCU/NUS Saturday demonstration to 'Save our futures';
- To support the Convoy to Calais and Stand up to Racism National Conference in October;
- To campaign against the proposed Counter Extremism Bill, working with other trade unions, NUS and civil society groups to bring an end to the Prevent legislation and allowing individuals to pledge to 'Prevent Prevent';

- To support a national demonstration at Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham.

UCU Imperial News

'Brexit' and Imperial College

Great uncertainty has been created by the vote to leave the EU throughout the country and also here at Imperial. To give some idea of the possible consequences of 'Brexit' for Imperial here are a few facts: Imperial currently has around 2000 non-UK EU Staff (about 25% of the total); some 20% of students are non-UK EU; and Imperial receives more than 12% of its research funding from the EU. UCU is campaigning to protect the position of staff, particularly non-UK EU staff here at Imperial and at universities throughout the UK. Recently UCU General Secretary Sally Hunt demanded that politicians give a commitment that EU nationals already here now can stay. In addition they should ensure that there will be enough public funding for universities to compensate for the potential loss of research, social fund and student fee income arising from Brexit and that they should drop the now irrelevant higher education bill. <https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/8381/Campaign-update-15-July-2016>.

If you have any thoughts or comments on the impact of Brexit on Imperial please contact us at: ucu-office@imperial.ac.uk

UCU Services to members

Financial Advice



UCU has appointed Lighthouse Group plc to provide members with financial advice which is practical, affordable and professional. UCU members are entitled to a no obligation, complimentary consultation with an adviser at home, at work, or elsewhere. So if you want independent advice on a range of topics including mortgages or accessing your pension call Lighthouse on 08000 85 85 90 or email appointments@lighthousefa.co.uk to arrange an appointment with one of their advisers.