



California State University Employees Union (CSUEU), SEIU 2579/CSEA

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State Audit Slams CSU for Putting Student and Employees at Health and Safety Risk

The CSU "Has Not Provided Adequate Oversight of the Safety of Employees and Students Who Work With Hazardous Materials."

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SACRAMENTO - While focusing on four California State University campuses, a state audit released today cites unsafe deficiencies ignored for nearly two decades by the CSU, directing accountability right to the top: the Chancellor's Office "has not taken the steps necessary to hold the campuses accountable."

"The Chancellor's Office has not provided effective leadership to ensure that its campuses address health and safety concerns related to the presence of hazardous materials," according to the report.

Audit Highlights

- The CSU does not have adequate policies and processes to protect the health and safety of employees and students who work with or near hazardous materials.
- The CSU was made aware of many of these problems but repeatedly ignored recommendations, and failed to address deficiencies, cited by its own auditor.
- Some campuses also increased the risks of significant health effects to employees and students by failing to post required warning signs on rooms that contained asbestos.

"The problem is not from lack of funds. The CSU is currently holding at least \$2 billion dollars in outside accounts which could have been used to protect the health and safety of employees and students," said Neil Jacklin, CSU Employees Union President. "People were being harmed and we just couldn't get anyone from the CSU to listen to us. The state needs to hold the CSU accountable for its disregard of the health and safety of employees and students, and to enact statutes that provide meaningful state oversight and accountability of the CSU's operations and budget."

The audit – requested by the CSUEU and authored by Assemblymember Jim Wood (D-Santa Rosa) – was unanimously approved last year by the Joint Legislative Audit Committee.

“Last June, I requested an audit to investigate the health and safety compliance of the California State University,” said Assemblymember Wood, a member of the Legislature’s Joint Legislative Audit Committee. “My request was driven by some extremely concerning events reported to me that involved worker exposure to hazardous and unsafe conditions. Unfortunately, the audit results validated my concerns and I will be anxiously anticipating CSU’s actions to ensure that CSU employees are working in a safe environment and that students are assured a safe learning environment.”

CSU’s internal auditor “has repeatedly recommended that the Chancellor’s Office increase its oversight of the campuses’ health and safety programs,” the report said. “Despite the fact that many of these deficiencies have remained unresolved for nearly two decades, the Chancellor’s Office has not taken the steps necessary to hold the campuses accountable.”

The four CSU campuses covered by the audit were: Channel Islands, Sacramento, San Diego and Sonoma.

“By not ensuring that their employees are adequately trained, the four campuses have placed their employees and students at risk of injury from mismanagement of hazardous materials,” said the report.

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CSUEU represents nearly 16,000 employees who support and oversee the academics and operations of the California State University, including information technology, healthcare, clerical, administrative and academic support, campus operations, grounds and custodial.