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September 2008

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## Chapters engage budget battle with support for the ‘Alliance for the CSU’

By Luana Conley, Monterey Bay

Once again California is facing a multi-billion dollar deficit ranging between \$14–\$20 billion. In January, Gov. Schwarzenegger proposed a 10 percent across-the-board reduction in spending, threatening to renege on his “compact” with the CSU and threatening to cut nearly \$300 million in this fiscal year’s CSU budget. Yet the governor claimed that there is no crisis in our economy, stating, “Indeed, we remain a diverse and dynamic economic powerhouse that will continue to grow and lead the world in innovation.”

The dynamic powerhouse of which

he speaks is fueled by the CSU educational system, which provides an educated workforce in such fields as business, nursing, agriculture, communications, engineering, and science—industries vital to the state’s healthy future.

To battle further cuts to the CSU system, which is still reeling from \$500 million in cuts in 2002–2003 and cuts in the early 1990s, an unprecedented coalition of students, alumni, faculty, staff, administrators,

parents of students, business leaders, church, and union members has formed—the Alliance for the CSU.

*CSUEU President Pat Gantt urged all chapter presidents to engage in the Alliance.*

CSUEU President Pat Gantt has urged all chapter presidents to engage their members in the Alliance on their campuses. As he puts it, “Alliance efforts must continue into the next year. In fact, we all must push for increased base funding for the CSU for several years in a row. This is needed in order for the CSU to

recover from previous budget cuts and help the CSU to continue to meet its educational mission.”

CSUEU chapters have vigorously taken up the challenge in recognition of the potential consequences of a slashed budget, including threats to job security, the possibilities of an increased workload, and challenges to the conditions of our employee contracts.

The message is simple: The CSU is the Solution! CSUEU chapters have activated their members, turning out to represent our union at rallies across the state. All 23 cam-

See “Alliance ...” on page 2

## Chief of Staff Coonley is on task

By Ray Finnell, CSU Bakersfield

Phillip Coonley has a characteristic that catches your attention immediately: energy. Lots of it. Seemingly boundless energy. Even after long days of sitting in meetings and facing the hundreds of minute-by-minute trials that come his way and demand his full attention, not to mention the dozens of people who need answers right now, and correct ones at that. No excuses, no attitude, no hesitancy. He’s up to the task and ready for more, day after day.

Coonley is CSUEU’s Chief of Staff (a.k.a. Administrator), and, he says, the year since starting his job have been a lifetime in some ways and just a flash in other ways. The engaging San Francisco native, who now resides in Sacramento, took over for Virginia Watts following her retirement late last summer. The step up was somewhat awkward at first, since he now has supervisory responsibility over his former peers, the other LRRs.

A recent project was helping to create and shape a temporary, trial position of Lead Labor Relations Representative in the Southern California area, which was assigned to LRR Brian Young. Another important task was recruiting and selecting a Communications Specialist, hired in May, along with replacing SLRR Jorge Salinas with Lois Kugelmass and replacing admin technology Malia Plummer with Alex Velasco. He helped oversee the recent move of CSUEU’s headquarters. He supervises 18 employees, including three office staff, two Senior Labor Relations Representatives, and 10 LRRs. Additionally, he serves as liaison to CSEA, ensuring that its services meet CSUEU’s needs. He was instrumental in designing and implementing the IRP campaign. On his to-do list is a visit to every campus.

In short, Coonley is the focal point for CSUEU’s day-to-day operations as well as a key coordinator for long-term planning.

In conversation and in public addresses, Coonley can sometimes seem to fire off more words in a minute than an auctioneer, but he listens just as intently. It’s a skill he’s continued to hone since graduating from University of the Pacific’s McGeorge School of Law in Sacramento. It should come as no surprise that he passed the bar on the first attempt.

A short stint as a social worker with the County of Sacramento upon graduation in sociology from CSU Sacramento got him involved as a union activist. Three hundred fifty employees—including Coonley—of the 1400 represented by the United Public



New Chief of Staff Phillip Coonley (center) makes a point at the SF State Chapter Executive Board meeting

Employees Local 1 shut down a meeting of the Sacramento County Board of Supervisors during a contract dispute. The Board approved a decent contract for them soon thereafter.

He learned how to organize a contract campaign and how to bargain a contract. One of his early bosses taught him the importance of having the union speak with one voice and the value of organizing. He

also found out early on the importance of having good LRR service at the worksite.

Coonley subsequently applied to McGeorge to pursue a career based more on

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From the desk of CSUEU President Pat Gantt

## Do we have a budget deal yet?

As of this writing in early September, the state budget question remains to be resolved, breaking all records for budget delays. A joint conference committee proposal is now under consideration, containing some highly problematic clauses, including:

- A “rainy day fund” that would, in fact, serve as a de facto budget cap, limiting the legislature’s authority to make such decisions as restoring funds to the CSU.
- Deep program cuts that would have devastating effects on services to children, families, and seniors.
- Borrowing schemes that, in the past, have contributed to the state’s current problems.
- A temporary sales tax increase, a short-term measure that doesn’t address the long-term needs of the state.
- Granting the governor the authority to make mid-year cuts.

The budget is important as our raises and the funding for our contract are in play within the budget process. All of the CSU contracts are built upon the CSU getting increased funding for growth under what was the Compact with the Governor. The Governor suspended the Compact last January when he proposed all his budget cuts.

One of the twists in the budget this



year was the governor’s August revise, detailed at <http://gov.ca.gov/issue/state-budget>. The governor did make some changes since his May revise, but those changes fail to solve the problem.

One of the biggest problems is the two-thirds vote requirement to pass the state budget. California is only one of these states to still have this requirement, and this rule creates budget gridlock year after year. Maybe the most lasting reform needed is to eliminate that requirement?

The CSU and CSUEU need a budget that allows for some growth to fund the needs of the CSU system, particularly to meet increasing workload demands on the campuses as well as competitive compensation. The details will be important, as the CSU is not in a protected

part of the budget. Tax increases would certainly increase the state’s revenue, but here’s the rub: a full 40 percent of any new revenues will go to K–12 education, due to Prop 98.

In this crucial election year, our sister union, the California Faculty Association, has started a campaign to push out several Republican candidates across the state from what would otherwise seem to be safe seats. They have started a Flunking Republicans website to highlight some of the key issues and their impacts on education. The goal is to stop Republicans who seem determined to slash our public education system and to burn our economic future.

Please take the time to contact your legislators through the CSUEU E-Advocacy website, available from the CSUEU home page, [www.csueu.org](http://www.csueu.org).

We will keep you posted as things develop on the budget. You can visit the website for relevant news and follow our updates every other week in the CSUEU E-News (also found on our website).

In union, Pat Gantt

For the latest on the budget, visit the CSUEU website <[www.csueu.org](http://www.csueu.org)>. Also see: [www.sacbee.com/static/weblogs/capitolalertlatest/BudgetProposal.pdf](http://www.sacbee.com/static/weblogs/capitolalertlatest/BudgetProposal.pdf) and <http://gov.ca.gov/issue/state-budget>.



## Chapters support the Alliance for the CSU ...

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pusers participated in initial rallies this spring, including:

**Cal Poly Pomona Chapter 319**—Hundreds of students, faculty, and staff gathered at noon on April 8 for an Alliance Budget Fight Back event, held on the university quad. Cal Poly President Michael Ortiz, a featured speaker, said the cuts would result in “1,200 fewer students than we have this year.” Ortiz reminded attendees that their engaged students also provide countless hours of volunteer service to benefit their local communities. CSU trustee Lou Monville told the audience that the proposed CSU cuts equal “a billion-dollar cut to our economy.” Chapter 319 members were pictured in their black “2,5,7,9” sweatshirts in local press coverage.

“Three years after barely recuperating from major cuts to the CSU budget, we are once again wrestling with a proposal that will cut deep into the fiber of each of our lives,” said CSUEU Chapter President Deborah Campbell. “We cannot sustain additional cuts, further staff reduction, or attempts to undermine our valuable, trained staff.”

**CSU Stanislaus Chapter 308**—A CSU Stanislaus protest was held on March 1, and the gathering was termed “monumental” by the Modesto Bee, quoting chapter President Frank Borrelli saying that the participating groups of faculty, staff, and administration have never before united in such an easy alliance. Attendees overflowed from the conference room in the Mary Stuart Rogers building into the hallway. Presentations were made by organizers of the suggested course of action: e-mailing and faxing the state Capitol en masse. “Until we get out there and send those faxes and e-mails, nothing will happen,” said campus President Hamid Shirvani. Although the campus accepted an additional 414 students this year, a strategic committee is considering cutting 80 courses next year.

**CSU Monterey Bay Chapter 322**—At the CSU Monterey Bay, held in the campus’ World Theater rally on April 4, campus President Dianne Harrison ensured high attendance by urging faculty to bring their students and by allowing employees to take their lunch following the meeting. Present were about 50 guests and presenters from every campus agency. The event, featuring a capacity crowd

of 450, was the lead story on local television news that night and was front page news the next day. For-

*“We cannot sustain additional cuts, further staff reduction, or attempts to undermine our valuable, trained staff.”*

—Chapter 319 President Deborah Campbell

mer Chapter 322 President Steven Rubin presented a dynamic “One Voice” message to the gathering of administrators, faculty, staff, and students. He particularly recognized the contribution CSUMB makes to the agricultural segment of the economy here, in what is known as America’s Salad Bowl. When he asked chapter members to make their presence known, the spirited response was impressive. Rubin reviewed vital action items, including engaging neighbors and students’ parents in the campaign.

Students organized a May Day event to complement the “CSU is the Solution” campaign and to recognize the contributions of all workers. They benefited from advice from CSUEU and local labor council members.

**CSUEU Bakersfield Chapter 310**—Bakersfield’s meeting, held on April 3, attracted about 300 attendees. Chapter President Ray Finnell cited the services provided by union employees in areas such as health, custodial, library, IT, lab, and public safety. He said, “Our employees are often the first people students encounter when enrolling at CSUB and the last ones they receive assistance from following graduation.” Finnell asked the audience where they could expect to find tomorrow’s teachers, nurses, and judges: among CSU graduates.

Finnell inventoried the campus’ positive impact on the local community. CSUB offers research and management information services to a broad spectrum of local enterprises, from the technology and petroleum industries to wildlife

conservationists and environmentalists.

One fearless student asked Bakersfield’s campus president how he could justify new construction and his own \$25,000 raise last year.

**S.F. State Chapter 305**—On March 17, S.F. State held a large rally spearheaded by chapter President Russell Kilday-Hicks, who opened the event with a passionate plea for changing the state’s priorities by closing prisons and opening universities. Attendees filled the large theater and the overflow room, which provided live video to an estimated crowd of over 1,200 students, staff, faculty, and administrators. Speakers included campus President Robert Corrigan, State Senator Leeland Yee (who is an alum), CFA chapter President Ramon Castellblanch, a student government representative, and Roberta Actenberg, chair of the CSU Board of Trustees. Since the event, the local Alliance group has met almost weekly to plan and execute many activities, such as a rally on the steps of S.F. City Hall to support County Supervisor Tom Amiano’s resolution to fully fund higher education, a “Fax Arnold Day,” and coordinated visits to legislators’ local offices throughout the summer. Kilday-Hicks has also spoken at student rallies and in classrooms to help push the Alliance on campus.

CSUEU has a unique, in-the-trenches perspective on the impact of the proposed budget cuts to our students. Our members know all too well the detrimental effect these cuts would have on our 23 local communities, the state economy, and the security of our own jobs. We are answering the Alliance for the CSU call to action with passion and dedication, but the battle is far from over.

To participate via e-mails and FAXes to legislators, go to the CSUEU website <www.csueu.org> and click on the CapWiz program link, the big button on the right of the page labeled: “Contact Your Legislators! GO!” The CapWiz program has been instrumental in providing our friends in the legislature valuable information on our needs and has been a thorn in the side of not-so-friendly legislators who are only too willing to sell California short.

enter into working with others; be kind; and respect people. Along with all that energy Coonley has an enthusiasm that doesn’t quit. It’s contagious and, he’s on our side. A perfect combination.

## HQ finally makes ‘the move’

After years of speculation and planning, the CSUEU office in Sacramento has finally made the move from 10th St. to the fifth floor of the CSEA O St. building—offices made available when our sister union, SEIU Local 1000, moved out.

This move will save money and has the added benefit of better access to the CSEA employees who offer support services to our staff, including computer support and membership.

The new address is:  
1108 O St., 5th Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95814

CSEA/CSUEU  
1108 “O” Street  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
866-763-1452

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## Proud to be a state employee!

Take a moment to consider the current state of the state of our nation and California: a systemic budget crisis that promises to be ongoing for at least the next few years. Every year we go through the painful process of once again having to cut social programs, as if we aren’t doing enough. As if we didn’t have huge problems in our society: millions with no or wholly inadequate health insurance; millions unemployed and underemployed; a crumbling infrastructure; hunger in a wealthy land; universities turning away students; the young joining the military for “opportunity.” Working people are struggling like it was the 1890s.

For me, the most demoralizing aspect of all this is the disrespect afforded state employees. Follow the online paper in the state’s capital (the *Sacramento Bee*). Read any political story and then read the public discussion by the readers in the “Comments” space. Inevitably more than a few go off against us “lazy, privileged, pampered, etc.” state employees. We are the problem, don’t you know. Oh, and don’t forget their lousy (all too powerful) unions. I only wish we had a quarter of the power proscribed to us. Sort of like the way the Democrats are described in the media as “controlling” the state legislature. (Everyone knows that money is power. The Dems may have a majority but in this state it takes two thirds to control the money, so who has the power? Oh, and why don’t we have a budget yet?)

We can examine why the need for a scapegoat. After all, it’s an easy way out of seemingly intractable problems. But why state employees? There’s no doubt that some state employees are next to worthless, going along to get along and taking advantage of us all. But is it fair to characterize us all this way? Hardly. Every sector has its freeloaders, but there is this concept in economics called “socially necessary labor” in determining the value of something and along with that comes the idea that it all evens out in the end. In other words, for every bum on the dole there are type A’s like me carrying their weight—and some.

In this case, the scapegoating of state employees is done because it works as a way of getting what you want while avoiding a real discussion of means and ends, values and priorities. Throw the bums out, they say, and while you are at it, bring in the business leaders who really know how to run things to follow the “free” market and make it more “efficient.”

One problem with this is it just isn’t true. There is a strong empirical case to be made that state employees are very efficient. Look at just two pieces of evidence. Arnold made a campaign promise to root out and terminate waste in California government. Only his commission, The California Performance Review <<http://cpr.ca.gov/report>>, didn’t find much in the way of corruption or excessive waste. (Oh, they do make many viable suggestions to save the state 32 billion dollars over the next five years but the gov’ seems to have little interest in making these changes come about. Election time is over, I guess, but didn’t I hear something about a budget crisis?) Plus, when you compare just the number of state employees to population, California has one of the better ratios in the country, not to mention our high level of services that most states can’t even begin to approach. Despite it’s strength, this evidence will not convince. People are not going to give up their easy out, and there are powerful interests that benefit

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from the promotion of these distortions.

Besides, there are plenty of examples of historic precedent. Look at the attack on labor post the New Deal. There were the reactionary legislative attacks with Taft-Hartley and the Smith acts—damaging sure, but those were just the nails in the coffin. What built the coffin was an attack on the *people* of labor. Equating labor leaders with the so-called world communist conspiracy was a stroke of genius. Along with the entertainment industry, labor was purged of anyone with the slightest hint of progressive values. Labor still struggles with that damaging legacy.

I could give some advice to today’s reactionaries who worship the “free” market, who would have us return to the heyday of American Federalism (their idea of democracy: one that limits empowerment to a few) when Negroes were three fifths of a human, if that, and women were in their place—barefoot and pregnant and certainly not in the voting booth let alone elected office. The advice is this: Don’t attack the Social Security Insurance program itself if you want to dismantle it, attack the “bums” who live off it. Attack those who didn’t “work hard enough” or didn’t “invest” in some miracle stock to ensure their easy retirement. It’s their own fault they are not rich. (It goes without saying, shouldn’t everyone be?) Attacks on a program that works, that keeps many elderly out of retirement poverty just aren’t going to be as effective. (Not to mention the other aspects of the program that pool risk and provide benefits way beyond retirement.)

So we arrive at today. We are public employees at a great public institution. And that’s the problem. Haven’t you heard? Since the Ray-gun Revolution everything run publicly is suspect: inefficient, downright un-American. When the University of Phoenix attacks public higher education there’s charges of “unfair competition.” When it wants to lower all higher education standards so that they can increase their profit margin with more widgets produced (a.k.a. graduates) who gains really? These attacks have traction because of the groundwork laid—after all, they are public institutions staffed by *state employees* (need I say more?).

There was great vision and sacrifice (bi-partisan, I might add) to create the higher education system that has without doubt fed California’s world leadership. Now our problems seem daunting because we seem to live in an eternal present. Investment in the future? Who’s going to pay for that? God forbid we should even look to the future, let alone invest in it for someone else’s benefit (like our children and their children and their children, etc.).

I’m fond of telling people that I’m a very lucky man, doubly blessed. As a labor leader and employee in the CSU, not only do I get to daily defend workers rights to be full Americans in the workplace (you know, with rights such as free speech and assembly that workers in the “more efficient” private sector leave at the door), I’m a public employee both working at and defending a public institution that added greatly to the richness of my life (more quality but some quantity too) and to that of an already rich state and country.

To condense my point: I’m a proud state employee. And if you work for the state, you should be too.

—Russell Kilday-Hicks  
*UE editor, SF State chapter president*

## New Chief of Staff hard at work in Sacramento ...

*Continued from page 1*

logic than intuition. What did he learn? As he puts it, how to analyze a goal and the steps to achieve that goal. Along the way, he learned to care deeply about the union cause and to support the individuals who are the union.

In 1996, he jumped to CSEA as an LRR in the Civil Service Division (as SEIU Local 1000 was known then). Why? “They had better resources and the job was more challenging,” he says. In 2001, he moved over to the CSU Division (now CSUEU) in Sacramento, advocating for us at the Chico, Maritime Academy, Sonoma, and San Jose campuses.

An ironic turn for a student who wasn’t really interested in school until he started college—his first alma mater was Sacramento City College, where he earned an A.A. in general studies. He’s held about 20 jobs and has lived in about 30 different abodes. Itinerant? Well, he and his family have lived in their current house for around six years—a long time for Coonley.

Coonley keeps sane by running, biking, and being inter-

*Don’t allow outside influences or personal opinions enter into working with others; be kind; and respect people.*

ested in the natural world—and by devoting free time to his family. Coonley met his wife, an attorney, in law school, and their 11-year-old son, Max, has just entered the sixth grade. His oldest daughter, Lauren, just received a B.A. in business from CSU Sacramento and is still seeking her calling, while daughter Sarah is beginning her junior year at UC Berkeley.

How does Coonley mediate problems? By trying to adhere to a solid set of principles: find common ground; remember that we are all in this for the same thing—to improve the working lives of our members; don’t allow outside influences or personal opinions