

California State University student fees jump 33 percent

A WSWWS reporting team
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Students at California's universities returned to class last week amid increases in fees and mass layoffs of faculty and staff. The state of California has cut \$3 billion in spending to its 110 community colleges, the 10-campus University of California (UC) system and the 23-campus California State University (CSU) system.

The UC system raised its fees by 9 percent after taking \$300 million in cuts. But the State University system has been affected even more dramatically. The system took a \$600 million funding cut, and universities raised fees by a third to compensate.

San Diego State University (SDSU), the third largest university in the California state system, has been hit by a \$55 million budget cut, most of which is likely to be permanent. Student fees have increased by a third in four months, and the university has laid off 700 employees, including lecturers whose appointments were not renewed.

More than 500 courses have been cancelled at SDSU, dramatically swelling class sizes. The university usually receives about 80,000 enrollment letters, but this year it received fewer than 60,000, at least partially due to the tuition increases.

SDSU has denied admittance to more than 1,800 qualified students this fall semester due to the budget cuts. The CSU system as a whole is in the process of cutting its enrollment by approximately 40,000 students.

The state of California is facing a budget deficit of more than \$42 billion, and the state has made drastic cuts to all social programs, including not only university education but public schools, medical care, and other key social services.

The cuts have not been confined to public universities, with Stanford University announcing that

it would lay off 400 employees, with more to come. These included librarians, sports coaches and accountants.

State University employees, along with other state workers, are being told to take two unpaid furlough days per month, an effective 10 percent pay cut. The California Faculty Association, which represents 23,000 employees at California State universities, has already accepted these cuts.

With a significantly smaller student population this year, SDSU has closed down an entire dormitory that was traditionally used to house incoming freshman. The 11-story building, which can house up to 550 students, will remain vacant throughout the academic year.

The cuts have fueled widespread opposition among the student body. Hundreds of students, faculty and staff held a demonstration at SDSU on August 28, the first day of classes to call for an end to the austerity measures. The event, organized by the university leadership and the California Faculty Association, was aimed at pressuring the governor and Democratic politicians. Attendees were encouraged to "make their voices heard" by various means, such as sending letters to representatives, signing a protest banner that would be sent to the governor, or recording video messages to be sent to lawmakers.

A representative of the California Faculty Association spoke at the rally, claiming that the pay cuts were necessary to avoid further job losses. No one on the speakers' list made any mention of the huge government bailout of the banks, and none of the speakers called for opposition to the Obama administration.

Victor, a grounds worker, said he was opposed to the cuts. "I'm living paycheck to paycheck. Prices keep

rising, but my pay keeps falling. And these new furloughs will make things even worse.” When asked about the Obama administration, Victor answered, “Change? I haven’t seen anything different.”

Emma Steele, a senior at SDSU, said she is taking additional credits this semester to graduate early. “Since fees have gone up, I can’t afford to stick around for too long.”

Evan Youngstrom, a SDSU junior, said, “Classes are being cut, class sizes are bigger, and costs are growing. We’re paying more for less of an education. This is bad for students and for society.”

“This is the first semester I have to work,” he added. “The money I had set aside for my education isn’t enough.”

The International Students for Social Equality intervened at the rally, handing out leaflets and speaking to those present. ISSE members blamed the Obama administration for the cuts, which are taking place while Wall Street receives trillions of dollars in bailouts.

Ricardo Ruiz, a senior at SDSU and an ISSE member, said, “The cuts are an indication of the class nature of American politics. It’s not a lack of resources, the money is there.

“This is a brutal attack on social services and education, on the basic necessities of working people. It’s outrageous that at the same time that they’re cutting social services, they’re allowing the Wall Street executives to collectively make billions of dollars at public expense. It’s absurd.”



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