

Police repress protest against tuition hikes at UC Riverside

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On January 19, over 800 students at the University of California, Riverside were met by 200 police as they demonstrated outside a regents meeting. The university officials were discussing plans for another hike in tuition in response to cuts imposed by Democratic Party Governor Jerry Brown.

Students chanted “peaceful protest” while confronted by campus police officers in riot gear and with batons. Students and workers attempted to participate in a sit-down demonstration like those who were brutally attacked at UC Davis on November 18th. (Video of the conflict at UC Riverside can be seen here).

Towards the end of the video one can hear the sound of projectiles being fired, which participants said were paint-filled pellets. An image of one person’s injuries can be seen here.

Two people were arrested in the protests and charged with assaulting a police officer, one by using a handheld sign.

Administration and authorities alike sought to justify the police action by noting the entry of 18 protesters into the meeting room. Participants engaged in a nonviolent sit-in as they attempted to hold their own assembly. Eventually the regents were escorted out of the room into another one and were later spirited from the meeting under police escort.

Initially local media attempted to conceal the events, remarking on the supposed absence of violence and the general “peacefulness” of the day’s events. Hours later, however, various stations had to issue articles that briefly acknowledged the use of force by local law enforcement. In these instances media reports attempted to frame the students and workers as the provocateurs of the conflict.

Numerous officials of the UC system attempted to pay lip service to the students. President Mark Yudof

attempted to quell discontent by stating that the regents would actually take into consideration the proposal by students to eliminate student fees and replace it instead with a 20-year, 5 percent income repayment plan by graduates of the university. While some student groups hail this as a “radical” alternative, it would not alleviate the financial burden for students.

Yudof did not acknowledge his own role in the increase of student fees. He has collaborated closely with Governor Jerry Brown to push forward a budget for next year that hinges upon the passing of a sales tax hike, which would predominantly affect working people.

If this tax is not passed, Brown’s budget calls for “emergency” cuts to education, including \$2.6 billion in K-12 funding as well as \$200 million to both the UC and Cal State university systems.

Yudof’s own salary is \$900,000 per year. As the economic recession continues to cripple students and workers alike, Yudof has consistently called for, validated and defended raises for himself and his fellow administrators, including Linda Katehi, chancellor of UC Davis, the location of the now-infamous pepper-spraying incident.



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