

# IYSSE leads opposition against anti-democratic policies at Los Angeles City College

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The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at Los Angeles City College (LACC) is prosecuting a struggle in defense of students' democratic rights against the college's anti-democratic policies, which are absurd and unnecessary.

All club events and meetings must have a faculty advisor or other district employee physically present, or club status is lost. All clubs must also have a minimum of eight current students who have paid the associated student fee and can present receipts showing that these dues have been paid.

Clubs can post no more than five promotional posters per event, and posters lacking the stamp of the Associated Student Government (ASG) are taken down. Room and facility requests for club activities must be submitted at least 15 days in advance, even though most rooms and facilities are unused. All unused rooms are locked from student use throughout the day, preventing informal meetings. Students can campaign and distributing literature only in certain "free speech" zones marked by signs, and only with a time-limited permit from the Office of Student Life.

These rules and restrictions serve no purpose but to block the free speech of students on campus of this public college who have the right to hold meetings, organize clubs and engage in discussions independent of faculty monitoring and administrative persecution.

The IYSSE brought these concerns before LACC's Associated Student Government (ASG) on March 2 during the public forum segment of the agenda. Three other clubs—Biology Club, Literature Society and Fit For Life—sent representatives to the ASG Senate meeting to express their support for the IYSSE's campaign.

The ASG denied requests to discuss the letter at the Senate meeting. Instead, the ASG invited an IYSSE representative and the president of Fit For Life to a private discussion with a leading member of the ASG and the dean of Student Life. The administration made minor concessions which leave the anti-democratic policies intact.

In the event that a faculty advisor finds him/herself unable to directly observe a club activity due to scheduling conflicts, the school said another district employee can be sent in their place. The ASG claims that this is a district-wide regulation, authored by the LACCD Board of Trustees—"for insurance purposes"—and as such, cannot be repealed. The IYSSE has requested a copy of the LACCD regulations, which the ASG has yet to produce.

The ASG refused to rescind the "five poster per event policy." The Office of Student Life took no responsibility for restrictions on event posters and claimed only the Club Council and the ASG can change, amend or drop this rule.

The 15-day notice requirement for event requests will also not be changed. The ASG suggested that clubs, on shorter notice, could request use of the a single special room from the Office of Student Life. The ASG also suggested that clubs could book on the same day one of three study rooms, which cannot hold more than a handful of people. Lastly, the ASG suggested that clubs can submit complete member rosters to the Financial Office instead of purchased associated student fee receipts.

It may be that the school and student council feel tied by school regulations set by bureaucrats with whom they have little or no communication, but this does not

excuse the ASG's decision refusing the IYSSE the right to publicly present its challenge at the student senate forum and then attempting to placate IYSSE leaders with promises of empty concessions.

Ishie, the president of Fit for Life, sent the IYSSE a public statement of support. "I am in agreement with your effort to bring about a few policy changes at LACC, as I do believe that the mission of the school is to provide a supportive environment that empowers students to meet the challenges of higher learning. Easy access to all supportive services and resources is vital to academic success. In my effort to establish a fitness club that promotes physical activities, I find that the school is very reluctant to facilitate access to available resources."

Yan, a student at LACC, said he read an IYSSE statement to the fellow members of the student club Spectrum Alliance. "There was overwhelming agreement with the issues you raised. I personally give you full support. The ASG is supposed to be the students' government—however, it doesn't represent us, our rights. The regulations on this campus are quite restrictive: time-caps limit our ability to carry out our work even in the so-called 'free-speech area'. Also, the proposal by the dean of Student Life that a district employee must be present during students' meetings in lieu of a faculty advisor if unavailable raises more issues than it settles."

Yan explained that, due to a dispute between Spectrum Alliance members and their faculty advisor, the advisor rescinded her sponsorship, placing the club's charter status in jeopardy. "I had my disagreements with some of the positions that were put forth by club members. However, I don't think it's right that the club can be completely shut down just because our faculty advisor didn't agree with them."

The IYSSE is no stranger to political censorship. The policies at LACC are only yet another expression of an international trend to restrict the political independence of students and youth. In Australia, the IYSSE at the University of Melbourne won club status in October last year, after a two-and-a-half year struggle against administrative maneuvers to block the IYSSE from establishing a chapter. At New York University, the IYSSE has been repeatedly blocked from establishing a chapter (as with 90 percent of all new club applicants) on the grounds that the corporate-dominated university

has no resources, and that the IYSSE is "too similar" to other existing clubs on campus.

In the midst of rising social opposition to the anti-democratic assaults waged by the Trump Administration to immigrant workers and youth, the policies at LACC serve to gag the campus's largely working class, immigrant student population. The problems confronting all students and youth cannot be resolved within the confines of the LACC campus alone. The defense of basic social rights is bound up with the struggle for the socialist transformation of society.



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