

NATIONAL RECRUITMENT WEEK SUCCESSSES!



Harper Adams University "Walking Signposts"



Luis' Cakebake sale at Harper Adams University

National Recruitment Week (NRW) this year was split into separate weeks for HE and FE. There were gains across the board particularly in HE branches, including **Harper Adams** featured above. The branch, including reps Lucy Crockford and Richard Langley, did a range of activities including an "Intro to UCU", cake bake sale and "walking signposts" session complete with UCU T Shirts. Elsewhere, **Shrewsbury College** gained six members in one day. The chance to sign a Stress/Workload survey being run jointly by branch and regional office was used to sign members up. Sarah Preece, branch secretary has also secured promises to join from around the college, as well as a member expressing an interest to join her as a rep.

UCU **Sandwell** Branch held a tea and coffee session for existing UCU and prospective members. Members were encouraged to bring a prospective member to the Union Office. The branch also did door knocking, promoting the work of the branch and how they can get involved and participate too.

Birmingham City University ran several drop in sessions around their different sites and all site reps leafletted their schools and have gained 8 members as a result. As well as various activities, **Aston**, **BCU** and **Sandwell** celebrated International Women's Day. Their activities gained 5 new members since the last NRW.

Warwick University have been leafletting members and holding meetings about removal of Statute 24 and its replacement with a suite of HR policies. Their numbers have increased, which is a reflection of the effective job the branch are doing.

Gloucestershire College gained 6 members and **Hereford, Henley College Coventry, Herefordshire & Ludlow** and **Kidderminster** all had small gains.

The University of Wolverhampton held a members' meeting that was addressed by Liz Lawrence, immediate past president of UCU over issues such as gender pay gap and casualization. Membership has increased

there also, since the last NRW in November 2016.



!!!!!!CONGRESS REGISTRATION OPEN!!!!!!

[Registration for Congress 2017 is now open.](#) The deadline for registration is Wednesday 26 April 2017. Online registration is available and delegates are encouraged to use it where possible. [Delegates can register online here.](#)

Please nominate a delegate from your branch!

FE Round Up

SHREWSBURY COLLEGES GROUP

Newly merged with Shrewsbury Sixth form, UCU members at (what was) 'SCAT' have contrasted their workload with colleagues at the sixth form and decided to be proactive about workload, class sizes and reducing guided learning hours. A Stress and Workload survey was conducted. There has already been one meeting with the College Vice Principal on findings; the college is broadening the UCU survey to include a wider field of staff by running a college-wide questionnaire incorporating UCU questions. The UCU survey has elicited data from part-time colleagues highlighting issues regarding variable working which would not have been revealed if it was not for the proactive approach from Branch Rep Sarah Preece. There is currently discussion on terms and conditions of SCAT members post-merger. The merger may bring improved an pay scale for UCU members; this is currently under consideration.

ADULT EDUCATION WOLVERHAMPTON

A restructure at Adult Education Wolverhampton proved to be a cohesive process as members were actively involved in all levels of consultation. Through consultation, members of the Branch re-shaped the proposed structure so it was framed around changing provision which incorporated changes to apprenticeship provision and the new combined authority. A new layer of curriculum leader secondment posts was welcomed by the branch as a promotion opportunity especially as members were able to influence the composition of the job descriptions. Members of the Branch demonstrated they were a force to be reckoned with, actively involved in consultation and confident about expressing their views. This bodes well as there is a future consultation to 'update' contract and terms and conditions later this year!

WALSALL ADULT AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

WACC members had their fill of workload stressors and called in Regional Office to acquire advice on what they could do to help themselves. A workplace stress survey was designed which was branch specific. Branch contacts advised extensively on what should be the format. The survey was well and truly owned and supported by members. There was a good turnout and tangible survey outcomes from the analysis conducted. Results of the survey have now been taken to management who has committed to work closely with UCU on establishing and identifying issues from the UCU survey and broader. Management has already embarked on conducting a broader survey of all staff, and has committed to using the next term to address all issues.

BIRMINGHAM METROPOLITAN COLLEGE

Following the adoption of a new contract last year BMetC colleagues have worked with management to initiate a 'Lean project' the focus of which is to review lecturer duties. Already, there is work to eliminate task duplication; broaden the definition of teaching contact time and increase remission for specific responsibilities and the work is ongoing. This is welcomed by BMetC colleagues but workload stress remains an issue. To identify particular stress triggers BMetC members have undergone a Workload survey and the analysis is now with Branch officers to lead on actions post survey. In the first instance a meeting will be convened with BMetC SMT to discuss the findings and turn actions into outcomes.

NORTH WARWICKSHIRE AND SOUTH LEICESTERSHIRE COLLEGE

Newly merged, the branches are fighting to keep existing rights and facilities. Members of these branches are currently battling over recognition and facility time and mostly winning the arguments. Again, sterling work happening here with a newly convened working party analysing lecturer duties; the branches have already won a lecturer place on a mostly management working party implementing and maintaining IT systems. As with all colleges lecturers now tasked with using tracking systems, Moodle and 'The Box' (similar to Pro Monitor). If not checked these systems cause task duplication for lecturers. **The aim is to eliminate all duplication.**

NORTH SHROPSHIRE COLLEGE

Major attacks on terms and conditions are being fought/resisted at this branch. There is currently a consultative ballot on an improved set of proposals. Branch officers Sally Jones and Mike Smith have worked inordinately hard in a very difficult negotiating forum as the College is currently in very difficult financial circumstances. Members of the Branch too have supported the officers by conducting extensive research and offering interesting insights and perspectives.

STRATFORD-UPON-AVON COLLEGE

Branch officers Alex Dengate and Ian Whitehead are working exceptionally hard at Stratford as the college is in difficult financial circumstances and looking to merge. Officers have secured input with the SFA on the future of the college as members were concerned about the direction of travel. Hopefully, members can influence what happens to their college instead of 'being done to'.

“GROWTH IS OK BUT WHAT ABOUT QUALITY?”

COV UNI EGM



Doug Chalmers

Coventry University have published a pamphlet, “Growth is OK but... what about *quality*?” which they distributed to a packed meeting of around 100 members on 5 April. The meeting was a huge success and featured excellent, informative speeches from Douglas Chalmers, UCU President Scotland and UCU President Elect and Jane Nellist, President of Coventry TUC.

This pamphlet sets out serious concerns about the direction that the University is taking and the meeting discussed management’s failure to engage in negotiations over changes being implemented in staff working conditions and also the intention to expand student numbers across their University group to 80,000 mooted in their 2020 Corporate Plan.

It was revealed at the meeting how PhD students are badly treated by Coventry University . They used to be paid by faculties at a full rate of £30 per hour. Now they are hired in via *thefutureworks* an employment agency wholly owned by Coventry University at a measly rate of £13 per hour. *thefutureworks* gets the rest. The University recoups the money they pay their “subsidiaries” in administration fees as it is gift-aided back to the University!! This outsourcing has also been extended to Linguae Mundi language teachers who are also being paid a disgraceful rate of £13 per hour!

Stephen Cowden and David Ridley, Branch Chair and Secretary, outlined how management is trying to justify the unsustainable growth of the university whilst ignoring the impact on staff and students. Lack of communication and diktat from the top, even ignoring layers of management seem to be the order of the day. They reported that traditional checks and balances by the board of governors are being eroded in the increasing preoccupation of bringing in money. There has been an erosion of the civic role of the institution which has been slowly swallowing up the city centre, buying up buildings and housing, causing bad feeling with the Coventry’s citizens. There have been VC roadshows which are one way affairs, because those attending feel too intimidated to ask questions.

De-professionalisation of academics was also discussed, Lecturers’ status and ID gradually being eroded and undermined through a Development Performance Review system which has completely failed. It was outlined at the meeting that it was an unaccountable process, not transparent, has no appeal process or way of challenging any result given. It seems 85% get the same result – “strong” – there is no data provided about the staff who gain “excellent” – such as gender, ethnicity or grade. Management will not provide that information.

Management have also attempted to impose new academic job roles, or jobs families of which some are directly concern-

ing Enterprise or money making roles. The institution is legally a charity, i.e. not a profit making organisation. These potentially will result in grade slip-page – more work with no pay increase and “teaching only” contracts and outsourcing.

UCU Coventry branch want the management to negotiate with them – staff have to be recognised as they do the work that keeps the university going. The Uni has accused the branch of acting in bad faith – yet as illustrated in the recent prolonged battle for Trade Union Recognition at CU services – management acted in bad faith after recognition was won by sacking the staff at CU Services and re-engaging them on *thefutureworks* contracts. They agreed to reinstated them on CU Services contracts but offered an inducement of £2K to stay on *thefutureworks* contracts.

The strong attendance at this meeting has showed that the branch are the voice for academic and professional staff at the University and that they have the backing of their membership. The branch continue to grow, - also recruiting members in the subsidiary companies CU Services and CU College – they have gained 31 members since the last recruitment week, which says it all.



APPRENTICESHIPS REGISTER BIRMINGHAM COLLEGES SCANDAL

13 FE Colleges in the West Midlands including the 4 Birmingham and 3 Coventry FE Colleges were omitted from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) Register of Approved Apprenticeship Training Providers. After a successful lobbying campaign by UCU and MPs, these colleges have now been given another chance to re-apply by 7 April to go on the Register.

We will keep you posted on developments!

COV UNI KEN LOACH COUP

OTHER NEWS



Unite Communities Organiser, Ken Loach and Stephen Cowden, Branch Chair

On 22nd February, Coventry UCU were honoured to have co-organised a screening of *I Daniel Blake* with Unite Community (Coventry and Warwickshire Branch) along with supporting organisations Peoples Assembly and Coventry Recovery Centre.

Their aim was to raise awareness of the sanctions regime in the benefits system and to highlight the desperation and indignity that this imposes on thousands of people in Britain today.

After the film there was a question and answer session in the theatre led by the director of the film Ken Loach, which was a huge success and enabled some very important issues to be raised and discussed.

The Q & A was filmed and the branch hope to be able to put on another screening for those who didn't manage to get a ticket, with a screening of the Q & A later this year. The lecture theatre was full to capacity, and those who attended found it a profound and inspiring experience.



WEST MIDLANDS REGIONAL COMMITTEE

SATURDAY 29 APRIL AT 1000 HRS, UCU, 3RD FLOOR, ALPHA TOWER, BIRMINGHAM B1 1TT

There are many issues in FE, HE and AE that need to be discussed. Please make sure your branch has representation at the meeting. Email Rhonda rclougher@ucu.org.uk to let her know who will be attending from your branch and if they have any dietary requirements.

NEW TRAINING DATES 2017

**UCU Rep 2: Representing UCU Members
14, 15 and 16 June**

**UCU Rep 1: Induction
21, 22 and 23 June**

**UCU Introduction to Pensions
5 & 6 July**

Details and application form on the UCU website:

<https://www.ucu.org.uk/article/4832/Courses-in-the-Midlands-regions>

There are also courses running at Shrewsbury Colleges Group, including a Diploma in Employment Law, and Occupational H&S along side reps courses. Contact Mike Edwards on mikee@shrewsbury.ac.uk There is no substitute for face to face training and the opportunity to network

CONGRATULATIONS TO OUR NEW NEC MEMBERS

The following reps have been elected to the National Executive Committee:

FE Midlands

Rhiannon Lockley (Halesowen College)

John Sullivan (Warwickshire Colleges Group)

HE Midlands

David Ridley, (Coventry University)

Justine Mercer (Warwickshire University)

UK National (Black Members Standing Cttee)

David Muritu (Sandwell College)

Nita Sanghera (Bournville College)

Thank you to **Simon Bruce-Jones** and **Jackie D'Arcy**, past Midlands NEC members for all their hard work .