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Contact: Tim Killikelly, [\(415\) 622-7965](tel:(415)622-7965)  
Li Lovett, [\(415\) 370-5279](tel:(415)370-5279)

## **EDUCATORS PERFORM CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE TO PROTEST AUSTERITY AT CITY COLLEGE OF SAN FRANCISCO**

Thirty City College of San Francisco teachers, librarians, and counselors, joined by labor and community allies as well as educators from around the state, blocked the doors to the office of CCSF's lead contract negotiator in an act of civil disobedience today. By 1:30pm, the police had taken away the protestors in front of the SF Financial District building. Locked in difficult contract negotiations with City College administration, faculty took to the rain-soaked streets to draw attention to what they say are misplaced priorities. The dramatic protest comes a day after the faculty union announced that over 92% of their members who took part in a strike vote this week authorized a strike should negotiations break down.

AFT 2121 President Timothy Killikelly, a political science instructor and one of the protestors risking arrest, explained that, "Educators do not want to go on strike. We would much rather be in the classroom. We are willing to risk arrest today in order to defend the college that San Francisco deserves, and we hope that drawing attention to our struggle will help our elected Board of Trustees come to their senses."

As City College recovers from the accreditation crisis, faculty and administration have presented starkly diverging visions for the future of CCSF. Last year, the administration unveiled a plan in contract negotiations to cut the College by 26%, a move that has raised the ire of both students and faculty alike. The protestors today insist that the College must now invest in keeping courses open so students do not experience a disruption of their education, and so enrollment can grow back to normal levels.

"The administration needs to hear from students on these decisions," said Vivek Narayan, a student representative on CCSF's Participatory Governance Council. He added that programs and classes would be hard to rebuild once cut, and these are vital to boosting enrollment. "The number one thing that hurts enrollment is class cuts. That's because people come from all over for the unique classes offered at City College. That's why I came here from Concord."

According to Killikelly, CCSF faculty are engaged in a broader fight to maintain access for those who need City College the most – first generation and low income students, veterans, displaced workers, all who need second chances in the post-recession era.

"We see this as part of the broader struggle to provide services and upward mobility for the working people of San Francisco," said Malaika Finkelstein, an instructor in the Disabled Students Program, who participated in the civil disobedience. "Our administration is planning to permanently downsize the College by enacting absurd across-the-board cuts even to programs in high demand areas such as Computer Science."

In fact, during the previous academic year, monies allocated for teaching had dropped 9% while the budget for administrator salaries saw an overall 29% increase.

Gordon Mar, executive director of Jobs With Justice, said, "We support City College's teachers in their struggle for a fair contract. The booming economy in San Francisco has actually left many people behind. This is also a fight for CCSF's students and the broader community that relies on this critical working class institution."

The protestors also demand that the College increase pay to retain high-quality instructors, a growing concern as the affordability crisis in San Francisco pushes many out of town. In the past, educators at City College took voluntary wage cuts when the College claimed budget shortfalls. Faculty salaries remain below 2007-08 levels, even as the CCSF district is sitting on reserves that are 30% of the college budget.

There are no dates currently set for a faculty walkout. Killikelly explained that, "We hope that by taking action today we can avoid a strike in the future. We remain committed to the collective bargaining process and believe that an agreement with administration is still possible. We need to see college leadership like Board President Rafael Mandelman step up and avert a strike by negotiating a contract that invests in the future of City College students."

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AFT local 2121 represents over 1500 City College faculty in the San Francisco Community College Federation of Teachers.