



AFT 2121 Hardship Fund FAQ

Q: What is a Hardship Fund and why do we need one?

A: A Hardship Fund is a fund that a union establishes to help members that are out on strike meet life necessities. Having a fund in place shows the administration that we are serious about striking if we have to, and it prepares us to support our most vulnerable members and maintain unity.

Q: When will the referendum be?

A: Union members must vote to establish the Hardship Fund and a temporary dues increase in a referendum. The Delegate Assembly must vote to initiate the referendum. The first DA meeting is August 25. At that meeting we will set an exact referendum date, probably for the first week of September.

Q: How long might a strike be?

A: A strike is not necessarily open-ended. A strike lasting for a day or a few days could be effective. When the membership authorizes a strike it will also determine the length for which the bargaining team may call a strike.

Q: Is there a way to win a good contract and avoid a strike?

A: The best way to avoid a strike is to demonstrate to administration we are serious and ready to strike, if they give us no other choice. That should give them an incentive to settle with us on favorable terms before it comes to actually walking out.

Q: What is the process for strike authorization?

A: A strike is only authorized as a last resort. If the district refuses to budge at the table over issues that are unacceptable to the bargaining team, our team can call for a strike authorization vote. Only once a majority of members have voted to authorize a strike can the bargaining team then call for one.

A: There is a legally enforced cooling down period before public workers can strike in California. Our negotiating team would declare impasse in negotiations and move to mediation. If mediation doesn't work we go to a process called "fact finding." Only after those two steps are completed would we actually be in a position to call for a strike.

Q: In the event of a strike, how would the money be disbursed?

A: The key to winning a strike is maintaining the solidarity of everyone, and so that means protecting the most vulnerable first. A Hardship Committee would be established to determine need and authorize disbursements.

Q: How large of a temporary dues increase?

A: Currently we are looking at .05% of a paycheck. That represents about \$4.50 a month for a full time faculty at the median of the pay scale, or \$2.50 for a part time faculty. The increase would be in effect only

for the duration of the contract campaign; once we settle a contract, the temporary increase will be discontinued.

Q: Is .05% a large enough increase to make a difference?

A: We need to build a fund for our specific needs. We know that faculty are hurting right now after years of pay cuts and want to keep the amount as small as we can while still building a fund large enough to be effective. With all of our members contributing over a period of time we believe that we will raise enough money to help our members most in need. If the money proves inadequate, by already having sacrificed some, we can go to the larger community and ask to augment what we have raised on our own.

Q: What happens to the money if we don't go on strike?

A: When the contract campaign is over we will confer with the membership on whether to re-appropriate the fund for other purposes or save it in a standing Hardship Fund for the next contract campaign.

Q: Will threatening to strike affect our accreditation?

A: Our contract is between us and the district, and the ACCJC is legally barred from interfering. That does not mean that administration will not use the threat of the ACCJC to try and break our unity. The ACCJC has already shown it is biased against us and appeasement has not worked in the past. If they try to interfere, we will take legal and collective action as we have before.

Q: Will striking hurt my students? In the midst of an enrollment crisis, isn't it too risky to even threaten to turn students away?

A: Our working conditions are our students' learning conditions. What will happen if we lose our contract demands? Faculty will continue to struggle under the increasing workload with less compensation. This will hurt our students and our college in the long run.

A: If the district rejects our proposals to help rebuild the college – such as ensuring minimum class sizes and alternative reassignments for faculty with cancelled classes – students will have a downsized college with fewer course offerings. In turn, more students will be forced to seek their education at for-profit institutions that require them to take on massive debt burdens.

Q: Do we have community support?

A: Through our fight to save our college AFT 2121 has already made many connections with community organizations that understand the importance of faculty voice to the future of the college. Additionally, faculty have deep connections in the community and daily contact with students to help get our pro-public education message across.

Q: How can I get involved?

A: We're fighting to negotiate the best contract possible. History shows unions are most successful when members are united, engaged around a plan to win, and have relationships with each other. You can help by talking with your coworkers and spreading the word about our referendum. Call our office for more info at 415-585-2121.