



AFT 2121 Hardship Fund FAQ

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

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

Q: When will the referendum be?

A: The Delegate Assembly voted at the beginning of the semester to authorize the referendum. Union members will vote September 1-3 to approve a temporary dues increase to establish the Hardship Fund and also create a Hardship Fund Committee.

Q: How large of a temporary dues increase?

A: The increase to the dues rate will be .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: 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: 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 will the Union Strike Hardship Committee will be formed?

A: Upon passage of the amendment to Article VII to temporarily assess a dues/fees increase, a Union Strike Hardship Committee will be established to oversee the disbursement of monies collected based on need in the event of a strike. Committee members will be recommended by the President and approved by the Executive Board. The Committee shall create guidelines and procedures to ensure our most vulnerable colleagues are protected.

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: 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.