

Remarks regarding the

Campaign for the Future of Higher Education

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- Lillian Taiz, President, California Faculty Association

SPEAKERS TODAY

- Tom Auxter, President, United Faculty of Florida
- Barbara Bowen, President, Professional Staff Congress, CUNY
- Howard Bunsis, Treasurer, Michigan Conference, American Association of University Professors
- Steve Hicks, President, Association of Pennsylvania Colleges and University Faculties
- Maria Maisto, President, New Faculty Majority
- Arnold Mitchem, President, Council for Opportunity in Education
- Ron Reel, President, Community College Association
- Victor Sanchez, President, U.S. Student Association
- Heike Schotten, Executive Committee, Faculty Staff Union, UMass

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- Phil Smith, President, United University Professions, SUNY

LILLIAN TAIZ

President, California Faculty Association / California State University

OPENING

Last Sept, those of us in the California Faculty Association started reaching out to other faculty organizations about what felt like a mounting assault on the quality of higher education and on our students' opportunity to get a college degree. In those early days, we never imagined we could come so far so quickly.

Sixty-four faculty leaders (most of whom did not even know each another) from 21 states met in Los Angeles in January and over the course of two short days agreed that we simply *had* to take on these issues and initiate a campaign.

We recognized that all of us were working incredibly hard just trying to cobble together a quality education for our students in crumbling and often toxic circumstances. We also realized that we were doing all of this in isolation.

And, it is because of that isolation that we were losing the battle.

This campaign is about changing that dynamic. It is about tearing down the walls of isolation among faculty but, more importantly, bringing together faculty and other groups who are passionate about higher education and deeply distressed about its current direction. We need to talk and work together and too often that has not been happening.

We have broken down many walls just since January.

If you look around the room at the faculty and other organizations represented here, you can see the evidence of just a few short months of our work. We are still at the beginning of the outreach, collaboration, and action we know is required to achieve our goals.

These goals are symbolized in the date of today's event.

On May 17, 1954, the Supreme Court handed down its decision in *Brown v. the Board of Education*. That important milestone changed the direction of our nation, and laid the foundation for greater educational opportunity.

The specific issues have morphed over time, but those of us in this campaign hear the echoes of those momentous issues arising today; equality of access to quality higher education is under assault. Our campaign is about changing that direction.

As the events following May 17, 1954 demonstrate the collective will, collaboration, and action of many people and disparate groups all working together for the same goals—can create massive change.

We are committed to making May 17, 2011 the beginning of the next era in the history of higher education that will move us in a new and better direction for our students—present and future—and for our country.

Thank you.

TOM AUXTER

President, United Faculty of Florida / University of Florida

The promise for higher education has never been greater. It is clear that it takes an educated citizenry for democracy to function. In advanced economies, higher education adds enough of an edge to critical thinking and deliberation that democratic societies can actually make complex policy decisions affecting the future of everyone.

At the same time, advanced societies are moving rapidly toward knowledge-based economies. In this world, higher education is the engine that drives the process and produces results. Research for innovation starts in the universities and colleges, technology transfer creates jobs in new businesses, and the workforce is educated and trained in every institution of higher education. In this way we escape living in a service-based economy with minimum wage jobs.

In three years of a worldwide recession, all of the advanced economies (except one) maintained the same or greater level of investment in public higher education. In other words, the advanced economies of the world are investing in higher education at the same time they are cutting budgets and services in all other agencies to deal with less revenue.*

However, threats to the future of higher education in the United States have never been greater. The U.S. is the only advanced economy that consistently cut higher education funds for the last decade and now is the only country to cut funds for higher education dramatically during a three year recession. In the states, higher education as a percentage of the budget decreased more than any other agency. Against the advice and the practice of every other comparable economy, the U.S. is gradually disinvesting in higher education.

This change has been in the making since the beginning of the Reagan Revolution and the “New Federalism,” which shifted most domestic funding obligations to the states so that the federal budget can be used primarily for defense-related priorities.** When states must struggle to meet mandated expenses such as Medicaid, schools, and prisons, legislators tend to view higher education as optional and dispensable. They tell higher education institutions to make up the difference with cost savings and efficiencies.

Within 30 years most permanent faculty positions are replaced with jobs held by contingent faculty paid much less per course and hired and fired at will. Tenure-track positions are now held by less than 30% of the faculty. Institutions are also forced to accept the other imperative of the Reagan Revolution, which is to privatize everything that anyone can make a profit on. The private sector is even called upon to cover expenses for curriculum and hiring—often in return for special treatment.

The culmination of this trend is for-profit colleges, which “deliver” higher education at a much greater cost to students, often based on false promises of employment after completion of degree. Students in public universities and colleges find that departments are so underfunded and understaffed that the loss of even one person can mean, for example, that there is no one qualified to teach a specialization students need to graduate. The turnover in departments is so great that students often have a hard time locating a faculty member who knows them and can write a recommendation upon graduation.

We do not have to accept the defunding of higher education. Coalitions are already in the formative stages in most states that will speak for the majority of citizens who need an authentic higher education to develop their plans for the future in a global economy. We see evidence of that today in the emergence of a national Campaign for the Future of Higher Education.

**Higher Education Budgets and the Global Recession,” Center for Studies in Higher Education, University of California at Berkeley, Feb 2010.

**I develop this point in “Radical Transformations in Higher Education: Where Do We Go From Here?” Thought and Action, Fall 2010, 59-69.

BARBARA BOWEN

President, Professional Staff Congress / City University of New York

A powerful way of understanding the danger facing higher education and the urgency of taking action is offered by Lenore Beaky, a professor at LaGuardia Community College, who reads current educational “reform” agendas in light of Erving Goffman’s classic 1952 essay, “On Cooling the Mark Out.” Describing what he calls “adaptation to failure,” Goffman observes that a con man will typically not just rob his “mark”; he will “cool him out”—attempt to console him after the robbery by replacing what was lost with something of lesser value.

We are launching this campaign because we refuse to see genuine college education replaced, for all but a tiny minority, with something of lesser value. The union of the faculty and staff at the City University of New York—the oldest, largest and most racially diverse public urban university in the country—has joined The Campaign for the Future of Higher Education to develop a national strategy against the *rationing* of higher education. We do not accept the premise that the powers and pleasures of college education should be limited to the children of the richest two or three percent of Americans. We insist that our students—people of modest means, people of color, children of the working-class, the middle-class and the poor—are entitled to more than the utilitarian “streamlined” education increasingly being prescribed by politicians and foundations. It should not surprise us that this country’s landmark decision about desegregation was reached on the terrain of education. There is no justice, *Brown v. Board* recognized, without educational justice. That’s what our campaign is about.

Why a new campaign and why now? The 2008 recession created by the finance sector led to the current crisis of state government funding. Emboldened by shortfalls in state revenues, foundations and think-tanks have claimed an unprecedented place at the national policy table and are pressing opportunistically for “reforms” of higher education. Almost without exception, the reforms they demand have been developed without the benefit of faculty, staff and student voices, and they suffer from that absence. Too often, the new prescriptions amount to asking students to pay more for less. College education, like other resources once free and public, will be private and rationed.

The great experiment of mass democratic higher education that distinguished this country since 1945 and supported the development of a thriving middle class is in danger of collapsing. If we do not act now, and act nationally, we will see public higher education whittled away state by state as advocates scramble to fight local battles.

We’ve come together in this campaign because we believe that advocates of educational justice need to share strategies and resources. We also believe that we can make a difference. There is a new wave of creativity sweeping across college campuses, as students and their communities stand up against being “cooled out” with something less valuable than a real college education. Millions of ordinary Americans know that their children’s future—and our future as a society—depends on equal access to higher education, and we believe they are willing to work for that future. This is a campaign in their name and in the name of every working person, every person of color, every new immigrant whose life has been transformed by the unmistakable experience of a real college education.

HOWARD BUNNIS

Treasurer, Michigan Conference, American Association of University Professors

In Michigan and the Midwest, we are most concerned with the lack of support for public higher education in our states. In Michigan, the budget that just passed actually spends more on prisons than on higher education.

But it gets worse. Not only is the state spending more, the budget for 2011 will lead to an INCREASE in prison spending, and a DECREASE in spending for higher education – by 15%!

How is this possible? How did the priorities of our state become so warped? In what universe are these warped priorities acceptable?

But it gets worse again. Consider these facts: Michigan has the fewest number of prisoners in the state in the last 20 years, and Michigan has the most college students it has had in the last 20 years.

Think about this: there are fewer prisoners, but we are giving more money to support them; there are more college students, but we are given them less support. However, the ramifications for giving college students less support is that many of them will simply not be able to afford to go to college.

Michigan has suffered more job losses than almost any state in the country, and if we want the state's economy to improve, we must support public higher education. We must stand up and demand a more logical allocation of resources and a reordering of priorities.

In Ohio and Wisconsin, teachers are fighting for a simple right: the right to collectively bargain, and the right to have a middle class way of life. We have teachers who are trying to stay in the middle class, and we support students who are trying to achieve a middle class way of life.

The assault on teachers, firefighters, police and other middle class workers is just another assault by the wealthy to shift resources away from the middle class and shift those resources to the wealthiest in society. This shift is even more pronounced for our students; as the support at the state level for public higher education is diminished, the states in the Midwest are closing the doors of higher education to those from families of modest means, closing the doors to minorities and those who would be the first in their families to get a college degree.

Every time a state legislature reduces the support for public higher education, the state shatters a dream, and denies an opportunity to the very people who dream the most and would make the best of those opportunities.

We must stand up for those dreams, stand up for those opportunities, and recommit our support for public higher education.

STEVE HICKS

President, Association of Pennsylvania State Colleges and University Faculties

As Lil mentioned, this campaign was only imagined back in January of this year. We just *knew* we needed it.

The horror stories in higher education news since January only heighten our sense of urgency. We need this campaign and we need it NOW. The de-funding of public higher education is racing at an unimaginable—and an ever faster—pace. Let me give you an example:

In Pennsylvania in March, the new governor proposed cutting public higher education by 54%. 54%!!

And he didn't act like this historic proposal was beyond the pale, that it was giving up on a whole generation of Pennsylvanians. Gov. Corbett wanted us to face the budgetary truth, but we have to start facing another truth—you can't provide quality education (or access to it) on the cheap. Doing more with less has as its logical end getting something for nothing and we all know how that works out.

Part of the supposed solution in the last few years has been the creation and expansion of for-profit education. The scandals in the for-profit sector reveal the truth about the dishonesty and exploitation there—and the tragic costs for students. Even the unfinished story makes this clear—making money off higher education is not the same as meeting the needs of this country.

Stories like these—if you read *Inside Higher Education* or the *Chronicle of Higher Education* of the education pages of local dailies, you will see them—these stories show us that too much in higher education is going in the wrong direction.

We believe it will take principled action to turn things around and get us moving in a better direction.

You have a copy of the Campaign's "Principles"; we think these point us in the right direction. As those principles detail—and as I want to emphasize—this campaign is about CHANGE—but we need change that is good for our students and for the quality of higher education that they deserve.

Too often today, hawkers of "innovation" and "restructuring" of higher education have other agendas. These principles are important, but it will take action to advance them.

One of our first projects in the campaign will be the formation of our own "think tank." This think tank will do research, as all think tanks do, but it will be action-oriented research leading to new legislation, new policies on our campuses or in our states, or other changes.

Other actions will follow, but today, we've begun building this campaign by laying its foundation. During the summer we will continue that building (which, as Lil said, will involve knocking down some more walls). We will have more announcements in the fall.

Thank you for being here.

MARIA MAISTO
President, New Faculty Majority

I am one of approximately one million faculty members on contingent appointments who now constitute 75% of the faculty in colleges and universities and who are systematically deprived of basic professional support. We are permanent temporary workers, and we are denied equitable pay and benefits – for many, not even a living wage-- and academic freedom protections.

I represent New Faculty Majority, a national nonprofit whose mission is to advocate for academic excellence through professional equity for adjunct and contingent faculty. As our being invited to join this Campaign suggests, none of the Campaign's goals can be achieved without honestly confronting contingency. This is a social justice issue. Students need us to teach and lead by example.

As a teacher and parent, I am inspired by the Topeka families who stepped forward in 1951 to fight for their children's future. I am involved because I will not stand aside while my three children – or anyone else's children -- are cheated by policies that weaken the core mission of higher education. Policies that divide and demoralize educators are a direct assault on the right of all students to the highest quality education possible, because educators' working conditions are students' learning conditions.

Like the Topeka families, we have to overcome our fear and turn our anger into action, to show that the hierarchies and so-called efficiencies higher education has embraced uncritically are in fact undermining our best efforts to serve our students and our communities.

This campaign can be a turning point, if only we make it one. We can make it one by pushing ourselves to ask uncomfortable questions and work on real solutions.

We support the Campaign. We expect it to help us change the counterproductive and substandard employment practices in higher education. T

he Marguerite Casey and Ford Foundations are supporting New Faculty Majority's efforts to reverse the profound and pervasive harms of contingency, and in January of 2012 we will hold a national summit on contingency to help us move from envisioning reform to implementing it. We invite everyone who understands the urgency of this issue to join us. Together we can mobilize students, parents, colleagues, neighbors, and whole communities to set the goal of excellence through equity – and to achieve it.

ARNOLD MITCHEM**President, Council for Opportunity in Education**

- A federal responsibility to educate all without regard to class or race is inherent in Brown v. Board of Education.
- Quality higher education for all requires a greater public commitment than America is currently demonstrating.
- Without a greater national commitment, the United States will never reach the President's goal of having the highest proportion of students graduating from college in the world by 2020.
- The U.S. must focus its attention on students from low-income and working-class families. We must give students more than money to get in the door -- access without preparation and support is not real opportunity.
- According to data from OECD and Tom Mortenson, the wealthiest half of students (18-24) in the United States are at the top of the world in bachelor's degree attainment while those in the bottom half are second to last out of industrialized countries in bachelor's degree attainment.
- The lack of federal support for college access and success for low-income students and families is evident in the recent budget compromise for FY 2011-- HR 1473. In this bill, significant cuts are made to education programs that specifically focus on low-income students and families.
- The bill terminates several literacy programs and slashes funding and terminates services for hundreds of thousands of students served by TRIO, GEAR UP and adult education programs.

RON REEL**President, Community College Association, California Community Colleges**

My name is Ron Norton Reel, and my parents and my brothers and sisters were itinerant farm workers. I was born in the Government camp John Steinbeck writes about in, "The Grapes of Wrath." My mother was Cherokee Indian, and my father Irish. Neither could read nor write. They came to California to get rich working in the fields. However, the wealth they received was not monetary; it was in the public education that was provided to their 10 children. Each child was able to have a better life than that provided to the two of them who had no education.

Today, we are being attacked by those who have much, and being asked to no longer provide the equalizer (EDUCATION) to those who need it most to advance from the economic poverty or near poverty they currently experience in their every-day-life.

The community college is what saved me, and I have taken great pride in teaching in this field of higher education for more than two decades. Please allow me to share some facts you may not know regarding California Community Colleges.

The California Community College System is the largest higher education system in the entire world. We have 112 colleges, 60,000 faculty, and we teach over 2.8 million students each year.

Last year the state did not pay the colleges for approximately 140,000 students. We turned away over 200,000 students.

It is estimated that we will turn away over 400,000 students this fall. That is access denied for almost as many students that currently are being taught in the California State University system.

Over 70 percent of all nurses who are practicing in California are trained in a California Community College.

Over 80 percent of all first responders (Firepersons, Police, and EMT's) are trained in a California Community College.

On this eve of Brown v. the Board of Education, we cannot allow our educational system to disenfranchise the working class of Americans. We must spend the money needed to keep those seeking to make a positive change in their lives which we can document makes a change in our society. Invest where it provides the most back into our social areas that are hurting so much at this time.

VICTOR SANCHEZ
President, United States Student Association

57 years ago today, *Brown v. Board* fundamentally changed the way education was seen in America. It took us closer to universal access and put us on a path to provide equal opportunity for all.

In theory we cherish this decision as a major point in American history. Sadly, our current situation threatens to take us backwards. We are at a crossroads. Higher Education—the pillar that once embodied American greatness is in danger of being lost to the unsustainable model of privatization.

Equal access finds itself in jeopardy, and although our decision makers believe it exists in theory, skyrocketing tuition, declining quality, and a less diverse institution are what define public higher education across the United States. We are losing departments, programs, services, faculty, staff, and workers.

It is no coincidence our students have occupied buildings, state houses, rallied against devastating cuts, protested graduations, and have risked deportation in the name of equal opportunity. Pell Grant is at its lowest, covering less than a third of total cost of attendance. State-based aid is being gutted, academic preparation programs like TRIO, GEAR-UP are being slashed or zeroed in the budget, and finally, funding for Minority Serving Institutions is being reduced as much as 78%.

We are being systematically pushed out, priced out of an institution and a future that was promised to us. All we ask of our decision makers is to have the same chance at an education that they did.

Year after year the budget has been balanced on our backs—and so today we make it clear, we're going to stand up and walk towards a new direction. The United States Student Association, the country's oldest and largest student-run, student-led organization, representing over four million students nationwide, will join the *Campaign for the Future of Higher Education*.

We believe Education is a Right and not a privilege, and we will not stand around, but continue to organize to change what's right and needed—greater access, more affordability, increased quality, and rich diversity at our institutions of higher learning.

We will work together, with our faculty, staff and allies in breaking down the barriers, to build a collective movement powerful enough to make our alternative vision for higher education a reality.

Our time is now, we are ready.

HEIKE SCHOTTEN

Executive Committee Member, Faculty Staff Union / University of Massachusetts

I have only been teaching at the University of Massachusetts, Boston for 6 years. But I have taught there long enough to understand the impact that the lack of state funding has on the quality of education.

First, I know that state disinvestment from higher education means increasing student fees. Increasing student fees means that students work even longer hours in order to compensate for the increased cost. This profoundly affects the quality of education at UMass Boston. I know this because I see those overworked students in my classrooms every week. I know that by the time mid-semester rolls around, a third of my students will already have gotten sick enough or exhausted enough or overworked enough to miss at least a week of class, if not more. I know that by the time 10th week rolls around, a fifth of my students will have stopped coming to class altogether. And I know that by the time of final exams, a number of those students will never have come back. So when the state divests from public higher ed, our students pay the price—in wages, in failed classes, in burnout, exhaustion, and overwork.

I also know that when the state disinvests from public higher education, we have larger class sizes. And larger class sizes mean a dilution of the quality of education. This is true simply logistically: some of my classrooms don't have enough desks to seat all of the students. Some of my classrooms have enough desks, but the room itself isn't big enough for that many bodies. None of my classrooms regularly have chalk to write on the chalkboard, much less working technology or internet access. So there are practical problems with bigger classes. But there are also pedagogical problems. If I teach three classes of 35-40 students, that means I am single-handedly responsible for the academic progress of over 100 students in a single semester, as I was last fall. And I know that when my 100 and 200-level classes go from 25 students to 35 students, as they have during my brief six years at UMass Boston, I assign less reading, I am able to grade less writing, I offer less individualized help, and I let more struggling students fall through the cracks.

Students understand this, too. When they are warehoused into lower-level classes that are taught at increasingly rudimentary levels of instruction because their professor is unable to grade the kind and amount of work necessary to give them a quality education, you can bet that they are less likely to come to class, and less likely to get the instruction they deserve when they do come to class. So when the state divests from public higher ed, the quality of education suffers.

But I also know something else about this state disinvestment from public higher ed. Beneath the explicit claims about budget cuts and financial crises, something more subtle is being communicated to us. What state disinvestment from public higher ed says to us is: *you don't matter*. The education of the students who go to UMass Boston doesn't matter to the state of Massachusetts. The work of the educators employed there doesn't matter to the state of Massachusetts.

AND YET IT *DOES* MATTER VERY MUCH – TO THE SUCCESS OF not only the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, but to our entire country. It's time for Massachusetts AND THE NATION to recognize that among its greatest assets are the students and educators who study and work in our nation's public colleges and universities. We are engaged in important work at UMass Boston, and it is time the state lived up to its responsibility to support it.

That is why I am here to speak for this campaign. I am here on behalf of my struggling, overworked students and on behalf of my tireless and devoted colleagues. We stand in proud support of this campaign and we will help to build it.

PHIL SMITH

President, United University Professions / State University of New York

CONCLUSION

Thanks to everyone in this room and everyone who has been watching this webcast today.

This is the beginning of a campaign to end the isolation so many of us feel. We teach across this nation, on our campuses, in the classrooms.

Too often people with no actual experience in higher education are driving initiatives that have profound implications for a whole generation of students but that are not carefully researched or thought out.

We need to push back. And in this campaign, we will.

Of course, we know that faculty alone cannot change the direction of higher education policy

But as this event today shows, we are not alone in our fears for the future of our nation's colleges and universities.

This campaign is launched in the firm belief that faculty, students, and other groups working together CAN change the direction of higher education.

In fact, May 17 and the history associated with it should remind us that unity of disparate groups and action has changed so much in our history.

There is so much at stake now: the futures of our students, the vitality of our economy, and the vigor of our democracy.

Working together, we CAN shape a brighter and a stronger future for higher education and for our country.

Please share your ideas about what you can do to participate on our web site at futureofhighered.org or on Twitter using #cfhelaunch

Send us an email message at info@futureofhighered.org and we will keep you updated about the campaign.

I urge those of you out on the campuses, from my home state New York to California and Hawaii and Florida and all the states in between, to join together in a Campaign for the Future of Higher Education.

Welcome to the next step.

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