

Socialist Organizer: Towards a Statewide Student Union

Building a student union — i.e., a democratic, autonomous, and permanent structure that is seen by the students and administration as the legitimate collective voice of the student body — is an urgent and necessary task, given that students currently lack an effective vehicle to organize against austerity and move toward our most effective tactic: a statewide strike against the cuts. We are still largely in the phase of educating our campuses about what a student union is (how it's different from student government, why a student strike is needed to fight the cuts, etc.) and accumulating experience in our efforts to take the first steps towards building local student unions.

At this moment we need to set up a formal, but still relative loose, statewide network that can link together activists at different schools who are fighting against austerity in public education and who, in this process, are engaged in the long-term process of building student unions at their schools. It would be premature to come up with a formal structure that each school must follow for the proposed union — more experience must be accumulated to see what forms work or don't work, and what are the most effective means to actually build student unions locally. We support the Students for a Democratic University structure proposal. To know how to move forward, it is necessary to point out some of key obstacles facing the struggle. These include the following:

1) Racial segregation: Given the highly segregated nature of public education — and society as a whole — in California and the U.S., it is necessary to consciously take action to ensure that the leadership and concerns of communities of color are central to our organizing efforts. There is an urgent need to bring into our organizing efforts the autonomous organizations of oppressed communities (BSUs, MEChA, etc.) and to actively fight against the re-segregation of public education (repeal of Prop 209, full legalization for all undocumented people, etc.)

2) Low level of mobilization: It is only through the mass mobilization for our demands that a student union can actually be built. A main obstacle at this moment is the low level of mobilization in schools across the state (largely due to the cooptation efforts of the Democratic Party and Governor Brown), which limits the immediate possibilities for organizing student unions on the ground at this time. An upturn in the struggle — which could happen at any time, particularly after the elections — would immediately pose the possibility of moving toward a more concrete mass agitation/organizational campaign to sign people up for the union, hold general assemblies, elect local representatives.

3) Student Government: A student union is only really a union if the mass of students see it as their collective voice (and thus give it the power to bargain with the admin and state). So as long as the "official voice" of students is seen as the student government (which are not truly autonomous structures), this will be a major obstacle to the creation of real student union. It is necessary to dismantle/transform the current student governments and replace them with student unions. To do this, we need a dual approach, both looking to (a) engage in a direct organizational campaign from below (general assemblies, individual sign-up pledges, etc.) where possible and (b) seeking to run student union slates in campus elections on the platform of mobilization of the students (in unity with staff and workers) against the cuts, and the dissolution/transformation of the subordinate structures of student government and their replacement by a genuinely autonomous student union.

Running student union slates has nothing in common with the current liberal approach of some current student government (lobbying, etc.). Key to this tactic is running slates that are actually willing to break with the official politics and structures of student government, for example by calling for strikes and making all major decisions on the basis of mass general assemblies — of course, this will likely result in major “constitutional” clashes with the administration, which will pose to the whole campus community the need for a real autonomous movement and student union.

4) Subordination of the Union Leadership to the Democrats: The central ally of students are the teachers and staff that make our schools run; solidarity with workers and their unions should be a major component of our strategy. Unfortunately, most union leaderships remain tied to the Democratic Party, a party of big business and educational privatization. While seeking at all points to unite with all unions around the concrete demands around which we agree, we should also seek to link up with and support militant union caucuses such as Educators for a Democratic Union (EDU) in San Francisco, which are organizing to transform their unions into instruments of struggle, as demonstrated by the Chicago teachers and their new CORE leadership. As the struggle heats up, running independent labor-community candidates and a building a mass Labor Party will become increasingly feasible and urgent.

Long live the struggle of students and workers in defense of public education!

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The Workers’ International League: Proposal for a California Student Union

Perspectives

For years our only answer to the cuts has been days of action, marches to the capital, and demonstrations that haven’t brought any real change. The one thing that the movement has been lacking is a permanent structure to mobilize across the state and provide consistent response to attacks. We are like workers that have been trying to strike without a union—but that is now changing. The establishment of a statewide student union with links to every campus and community is a huge step forward in the struggle for education.

In the past, efforts to mobilize the students were quickly exhausted and fell apart because they have been confined to isolated groups. To their credit these groups have been very successful at mobilizing mass demonstrations. But on the campuses the student movement has been limited to a minority of dedicated activists. The tactic of small groups has been exhausted; it could not sustain the mass participation of the students. The next stage of the movement must be based on the initiative of the students as a mass.

But we must go beyond this; it is also necessary to draw on the strength of our allies in the struggle against austerity - the faculty and staff unions. Launching a statewide organization is an enormous task. The [California Faculty Association, etc. etc.] have the necessary resources, finances, and networks to construct this organization. These groups will continue to be our allies because our interests are fundamentally linked to theirs. We must actively promote partnerships and solidarity with them.

Our efforts will not have the necessary legitimacy if they do not have the will of the mass of students behind them. In order for any union to be successful the students must regard it as their own organization. A day of action or a demonstration does not require the commitment and initiative that a permanent organization does. A demonstration will come and go but if a union does not have the commitment of the students it will not succeed and fade away just like a demonstration. The only way to accomplish this is through a truly democratic General Assembly.

Structure

The union must be formed by convening General Assemblies on each campus, this allows the students to discuss and vote on issues facing them. The students must also be allowed to discuss and vote on establishing a union on their campus; only in this way will it truly be their union. It is crucial that the General Assemblies reach the widest layer of students possible. For this task we must energetically mobilize ourselves but also lean on the already established organizations—the staff and faculty unions as well as the student organizations, which have the capacity to convene a mass assembly.

The General Assemblies will be the highest decision-making body in each school and campus. In addition the General Assemblies will elect struggle committees, which will be revocable at any time, and will have the task of coordinating efforts with other committees and campuses. There will also be regional and statewide committees established to assist in this.

This union must be an independent organization. This is to insure the political character of the student union and separate it from the associated students and student governments, which are only arms of the administration. The student union must move away from this and give political voice to the movement, but this does not mean separating ourselves from the faculty and staff. Student movements in Quebec and Chile have succeeded insofar as they have rallied the community, especially the unions. The cuts and austerity affect them just as much, their struggle is our struggle and we must be prepared to take up demands in support of the instructors and staff. The students and youth are key to rallying the rest of society but they cannot do this alone.

In order to combat the bureaucratic control in the education system it is necessary for the student union to be democratic. Part of this is an open discussion of criticism and self-criticism within the organization. All positions should be immediately revocable by the bodies that elected them.

As a broad democratic organization it is necessary to reject discrimination of any kind within the organization. The union must fight against discrimination on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, nationality, legal---status, age, disability, orientation, etc. Harming or inhibiting fellow students from participating in the union only hurts us. We must take up the slogan: "An injury to one is an injury to all!"

Principles

The Student Union must fight for

1. Immediate rejection of all budget cuts to public education.
2. Fully fund our public schools, colleges, and universities against rising fees and privatization.
3. Plan to create new spaces in higher education for future students.
4. No to overcrowded classrooms. For the reduction of the students per instructor ratio to less than 25.
6. Grants for low---income students, equivalent to at least the minimum wage and provided without discrimination on the grounds of age, gender, ethnicity, etc.
7. No charge for transportation, school supplies, medicine, boarding, and food to the children of working people.
8. For an end to discrimination of students without documents.
9. For full democratic rights of students and education workers. Right to strike, meet, and assemble during school hours.

Membership

All students are eligible to join the CA Student Union and participate in the General Assemblies, struggle committees, and other working bodies. Members will be granted full voting and democratic rights within the union.

Student organizations and clubs should also be granted the ability to affiliate with the union. This way the union can welcome representatives of the various organizations, as well as the unions and progressive associations in the community.

The question of finances is an important one. An apparatus will have to be created to handle the finances and this should be done openly and democratically. Dues should be discussed on the campuses and decided between the individuals and the union apparatus on the basis of commitment and ability.

Organize

In order for the Student Union to be effective it is necessary that we reach out to other sectors of the community. Especially to disenfranchised students--those who do not have documentation, were unable to pay for school, etc. These may be some of the most dedicated in the cause for education, even if they are unable to be students. They must be welcomed into the ranks of the union and given every democratic right that the students have.

It is also necessary that we link up with the faculty and staff unions, as well as the parent associations and other progressive associations in the community. Only by mobilizing both inside and around campuses can we be successful. The faculty and staff unions are the closest allies in the struggle and should have some role in the student organizations.

FULL SOLIDARITY WITH THE UNIONS! GENERAL ASSEMBLIES ON EVERY SCHOOL AND CAMPUS!
ONWARD TO A STATEWIDE STUDENT UNION!

Students for a Democratic University: UC Berkeley’s Proposed Student Union Structure

LONG TERM:

Ultimately, we seek to build a student union modeled on the federated structure exemplified by the militant unions utilized in recent mobilizations in Quebec and Chile. The union we seek to build will be structurally different than our current student government, will be qualitatively different in its goals and democratic practices, and will be different in its power: we seek a student union that can strike and bargain collectively for student demands.

SHORT TERM:

This union cannot simply be willed into existence, but can only be built with a long-term perspective. To move forward at this initial stage, the most pressing task is to raise the level of political awareness and mobilization throughout the state. To this end, we propose the following immediate steps:

- 1) We maintain an up-to-date listing, with contact information, of the different campus groups in California working on building the union.
- 2) We have a coordinating committee with monthly conference calls in which a representative from each group participates to coordinate actions and share experiences.
- 3) We ask for a brief status reports from each group, each semester, simply explaining what they are working on and their successes and challenges. This way we can collectively stay informed about one another’s efforts, have an updated sense of the level of mobilization on different campuses, and learn from one another’s experiences.
- 3) We make a conscious effort to establish ties on campuses that currently have no organizing body connected to the student union project.
- 4) We reach out in our work locally to build coalitions on each individual campus with other groups that are politically sympathetic to the building of a student union, or can be won over.

5) We maintain a monthly online press, with individuals or groups contributing articles pertaining to the student union project. A working group should be established to facilitate this, with the understanding being that articles will be accepted unless they are seriously unfit for print because of offensive language.

6) We will continue to have two conferences a year, one during the fall and one during the spring.

7) We will operate on simple majority vote.

**International Socialist Organization:
Perspectives on Building a Future Student Union in California**

For decades, the right to accessible, equitable and democratic education has been under assault in California and around the world. This assault is one part of the right-wing project of undermining all political and social rights of the 99%, in order to shift the global balance-of-power in favor of the 1%.

Today, U.S. students pay unprecedented sums for access to education while we experience lower standards-of-living than previous generations. The class of 2011 bears an average debt burden of nearly \$23,000, making it the most indebted in history. In fact, total student debt surpassed total credit card debt this year, growing to exceed \$1 trillion.

In these times of crisis, students can be agents of social change. We must organize the broadest possible movement based on the collective strength of the student body and we must meet our enemies with the will and determination to fight for a better future for everybody.

The centrality of anti-racism

Access and equity for all students will be central to any successful student union project in California. This means we must engage in a ruthless struggle against the racism built into the structure of the public education system.

More African Americans are under control of the criminal injustice system today than were enslaved in 1850. Record numbers of immigrants have been deported in recent years. And affirmative action programs have been eliminated on the grounds of “reverse discrimination” and “preferential treatment,” despite the fact that Black people, Latinos, and other oppressed groups are underrepresented in public colleges and universities. UC Berkeley, considered the premier public university in California, is located between Richmond and Oakland, two historically Black cities, but Black people make up a mere 3% of the student body!

We must learn from and aspire to revitalize the heroic tradition of organizations like the San Francisco State Black Student Union, which lead the longest student strike in U.S. history (Fall 1968 – Spring 1969) and established the first College of Ethnic Studies in the world. And the Chicano movement,

which started with student protests in California in the late 1960s that lead to the formation of MeChA. Anti-racist organizing can stimulate, facilitate and improve a broad student movement.

Rank-and-file democracy

The union must be organized from the bottom up, through democratic participation and active involvement of the membership. Efforts dedicated toward running union candidates for student government should only be undertaken if and when those campaigns help build rank-and-file participation and recruit new members to the union.

While it may be possible to win some student government positions on some campuses, it is certainly not possible on all campuses. Furthermore, student governments are designed to be more accountable to campus administrations than to their supposed constituencies. Thus, if we run candidates for student government positions, we must be clear that the union must be strong enough to both defend those elected members and hold them accountable, even under threats and pressure by campus administration.

Independent funding – the role and importance of dues

All successful union projects are based on independence through an active, dues-paying membership. The workers who have been striking Wal Mart want to join and pay dues to a union. Even Wobblies paid dues. The size of a dues base can serve as a measurement of organizational strength, reflecting the effectiveness of the accountable, elected leadership and the rank-and-file membership as a single, cohesive unit.

**Santa Monica College:
Proposed Model for the Community College Student Union**

Structure of the Community College Student Union

Structure

The Student Union is composed of all members. It is recommended that each member join a base body, such as a club, vocational students (base), etc.

Each affiliated base may, and is recommended to have, assemblies in order to self-organize.

The General Assembly is the highest decision-making body of the Student Union. Its decisions are binding on all members of the Student Union.

The Coordinating Committee meets weekly, is responsible for reviewing all of the work of the Student Union and helps to coordinate it, calls General Assemblies, elects a financial rep., communications

director, etc. And establishes coordination and elects delegate(s) to the Statewide Community College Coordinating Body and the Statewide Public Education Coordinating Body

The Coordinating Committee will initially be composed of delegates from a combination of the base bodies and from the campus-wide General Assembly.

Decisions affecting the entire union always flow through the base bodies and are decided at the General Assembly (campus-wide). Coordinating Committee only helps to facilitate.

Functioning

- Regular meetings of the base bodies that work on the affairs, interests, and struggles of the base community.
- Assemblies at least once a month of base bodies (where possible and necessary) to decide on issues of significance, what activities and campaigns to carry out, vote on demands affecting the base, develop proposals for the General Assembly, and vote in delegate(s)/ to the campus coordinating committee.
- Campus-Wide General Assemblies, at least twice a semester, will decide on Major Campaigns and Struggles in the coming period; open to every student or must be member first?; will include report back prepared by delegates of the campus coordinating committee. New members can be registered outside the General Assembly.
- Special Working Bodies that shall receive their mandate from the Campus-Wide General Assembly: Against Oppression; Expanding the Student Union; Cultural Activities, etc.
- Develop a faculty & staff relations and solidarity committee.

Membership

- Includes a membership card and a \$5 affiliation fee
- Can join at general assemblies or at meeting of any base body.
- Member should join a base body

Membership: Agree with the Principles of the Student Union; uphold the decisions of the Student Union as reflected in the General Assemblies; pay \$5 membership; encouraged to participate in a regular base body of the Student Union.

Potential organized base bodies

- Clubs
- Campus Student-Workers

Potential Student Community "Base" Bodies

(like departments or sororities at the university level)

- EOPS students
- Financial Aid Students
- Undocumented Students

- First Year Students
- Adelante Program students and other similar student programs
- Arts Major Students
- Athletics Students
- Vocational dept. students like Cosmetology
- Students in the Social Sciences
- Students in the Natural Sciences
- Returning Students
- Worker Students
- Organized through Majors (instead of by department)

Statewide Student Union

Establish a Statewide Coordinating Body composed of delegates of all affiliated schools.

- Can call on schools to host general assemblies to decide on unified campaigns, struggles, etc.
- Or can call for unified campaigns around concrete issues to be discussed at each campus.
- Or can put forward proposals to be voted at each campus

Establish a Statewide Coordinating Body for each system of public education, with rotating representatives from other systems to stay informed of all systems.

Statewide Congresses of the entire statewide student union with delegates from each school that are the highest statewide decision-making body. A coordinating body elected at the Statewide Congress implements statewide direction between Congresses, develops the statewide orientation and campaigns, and seeks to build national links and coordination.

FOR CONFERENCE ADOPTION: Nominate and elect a coordinating committee that will: work over the summer in correspondence with the entire Student Union network to develop coordinated events and/or actions to publicize and help build the Student Union for the Fall semester, develop a website and other communication infrastructure, and develop or find literature, videos, etc. that explain the role and purpose of the Student Union and student unionism in general (including internationally).

Summer Ideas

Establish Summer Working Group to study Campus conditions, situation & condition of students including student government and clubs, demographics, where the cuts have hit, etc. and to prepare the work for Fall semester

Develop clear goals, campaigns, and events for the Fall semester, including well-publicized general assemblies and educational events on the purpose of the student union, that are well executed.

Develop a sub-set of committees, caucuses, etc. that are necessary to push the project forward; these are more like working groups whose mandate should be discussed at each General Assembly. A few key ones could be the committee against attacks on public education, one on social & cultural activities, another one against oppression, one against women's oppression (perhaps one on academic success?) and lastly one working on building and enlarging the student union.

**All of the above are working models to provide inspiration in moving forward with the student union project, specifically at community colleges. Changes and adaptation will be necessary as the student union grows. Some of the ideas contained above are more appropriate when the student union is just starting out and small, while others are probably better fitted when it is large, with greater participation and inclusion of many base bodies, etc.

**La Voz de Los Trabajadores:
Why We Need a Student Union and What Kind of Student Union?**

Why do we need a student union?

- To Fight for the Right of All Students to a Free Quality Public Education
 - To Fight for Democratic Governance of the Schools by Students, Staff and Faculty
 - To Unite and Fight for All Sectors of Public Education across California
 - To Fight Against Oppression in the Movement, in Society and Everywhere
- What are our organizing principles?

- Participatory Democracy
- Orientation towards Mobilization and Mass Direct Action
- Political Independence
- Student and Worker Solidarity and Unity in Struggle
- Against Repression: in Defense of Free Speech, Academic Freedom, and the Right to Protest
- National and International Solidarity

Why do we need a student union?

To Fight for the Right of All Students to a Free Quality Public Education

The basic mandate of our student union should be to defend the right of all students to an affordable, accessible, fully funded education that is both public and high quality.

Today, we are facing unprecedented attacks on the structure of public education in this country. Our schools are being privatized and resegregated. Every facet of our academic experience is under attack: from rising costs and skyrocketing student debt to restructuring of the school functions with the elimination of critical student services and programs and the imposition of two-tier educational structures, from decreasing access for academically under-represented communities and the undocumented to targeting Ethnic Studies and Gender and Womens' Studies Depts for harsh cuts.

While neo-liberalism is pushing its privatization plans for public university systems all over the world, in other countries students are mobilizing through their student unions to defend their rights and are managing to hold off attacks.

Here in California, we see urgently the need to build a broad and united organizational structure that corresponds to the gravity of the attacks we are facing. We see clearly that we cannot defeat these cuts without the organized strength of the entire education sector, especially its student component. We need a student union to coordinate and develop the student movement on a statewide scale. We have “student governments” and “associations” that govern us, the students, but we do not need a “government” to keep us quiet and in line; we want a powerful and democratic union that fights for our present education and our future, and that is independent of all governments!

Even though our first goal is to stop the fee hikes, cuts to classes, layoffs, lack of access for undocumented students and increase the public funding for education, in the long run, we should be fighting for an education system that is free and open to all. This is the only way to honor the human right to education!

At the same time, we are fighting to ensure that our education system is democratic and just in its governance structure, social role, and academic content. This means our student union should put forward a transformative vision for education that is directly linked to the needs of the community, especially the working class, and not corporations, US imperialist interests, or the military. It should fight to open up access to the schools and universities in a broader sense, bringing the cultural and intellectual life of the education system into the community. And it should fight to change the relationship of our schools and universities to the communities they exist in.

Beyond this, the student union should investigate and mobilize around student problems in a broader sense – including housing and tenants rights, the need for affordable, guaranteed childcare, the position of youth in the workforce and unemployment, the inadequate access to health care and psychological support, the lack of collective access to culture and the consequences of its privatization for society, the high costs of public transportation and food, attacks on our future working conditions, criminalization and imprisonment, and student debt.

To Fight for Democratic Governance of the Schools by Students, Staff and Faculty

Our project for the Student Union should not be to build another organization to govern students in the way that our current student government does. Rather, we should strive to build a democratic organization through which students can make decisions about the future of our schools and universities and about our own education at every level – from the departments and dorms to the governing bodies of the entire education system.

We should fight to replace the Regents, Boards of Trustees, and Boards of Education with a real system of Shared Governance in which those who use and run the universities and schools – students, staff, and faculty – are the ones who govern.

We should build democratic bodies for decision-making like General Assemblies where students can develop their self-organization and capacity to run the education systems and society. We should support processes of self-organization of other sectors of the campus community, including faculty and staff, and seek constantly to build common spaces where we unite all campus sectors to develop self-governance together.

To Unite and Fight for All Sectors of Public Education across California

In order to effectively resist the attacks on public education in California, we need to build an organization uniting us across different educational sectors and geographic regions to fight for our public education system as a whole. We must reject all efforts to divide us and pit us against each other.

This means uniting around demands that encompass the problems every sector is facing on a statewide level and fighting back together. We should choose collective campaigns, struggles, and proposals for education at our statewide and regional Congresses that orient and give life to this cross-sector unity.

Our unity must also extend to all sectors of the campus community – so staff and faculty as well – because it is our collective labor that makes the campus function. As a student union, we should try to build meaningful solidarity with other sectors.

To Fight Against Oppression in The Movement, in Society, and Everywhere

Our Student Union should be a force to unite all students in defense of the interests and demands of the most oppressed sectors of the student body, including students of color, student parents, veterans, undocumented students, students with disabilities and the LGBTQIA community. This means fighting for full access to education for all students regardless of citizenship status, race, or sexual or gender identity.

It also means fighting against all manifestations of sexism, racism, xenophobia, homo- or trans-phobia within our classrooms, schools, bodies of struggle, and movement to create spaces that are safe, affirming and welcoming for all students. We should recognize that this will not be an easy fight and prepare to take it up in a serious and constant way, with a policy of zero tolerance for oppressive behaviors within the movement.

Beyond this, it means that our Student Union must develop a conscious plan to ensure the participation and leadership of oppressed communities and to educate and politicize the rest of the student body about the fight against oppression through committees, campaigns, literature, working groups, etc. devoted to this work.

What are our organizing principles?

Participatory Democracy

Our Student Union should be organized on the basis of the broadest possible participation of students. Its structure should be open, democratic, member-run, transparent, and participatory. It should represent the interests of and fight to involve all students, not just the most active ones.

It should be organized from the bottom up, with base bodies in the departments, colleges, and dorms. The highest decision-making bodies should be the student General Assemblies and the Regional and Statewide Congresses. Our organization will require statewide coordinating bodies beyond the

Statewide Congresses, but should reject the hierarchical structure of Presidents, Vice Presidents, etc. and should have frequent rotation of positions to prevent bureaucratization. In addition, all positions and chosen representatives should be revocable at any time.

All students, from all political tendencies, should have the right to participate, form caucuses to fight for their views, present proposals and run in elections within the student union. However, the student union should remain organizationally and functionally independent of any party or organization.

An active and constant fight against all forms of oppression must be central to the work of creating this participatory democracy. We need to seriously assess the deep roots of oppressive behaviors and attitudes within the student body and lead a fight within the union to challenge students' consciousness about oppression and win them to be fighters against oppression both within the movement and within society. The union should also have conscious policies to develop the participation and voice of oppressed communities within the movement and the union.

Orientation Towards Mobilization and Mass Direct Action

Our Student Union should be explicitly political and oriented towards struggle. It should strive to educate, organize, empower, and mobilize all students in order to mount an effective fight-back. In defending our interests, our union should rely primarily on our own power as students – a power we express through our own democratic self-organization, mobilization, and mass, militant direct action, as the recent mobilizations of the student unions in Puerto Rico, Chile or Quebec have shown us in the past two years. It should use a diversity of tactics but orient towards mass, militant struggle over institutional or legalistic approaches like the courts or the bourgeois elections.

Political Independence

We must protect and maintain the political independence of our student union from campus administrations and the State. This means not only total independence at the level of our program and action but also in our finances. The student movement must rely financially on the students themselves, and not on the ones we are fighting against.

The student union must actively create this political independence through producing its own media, culture, reviews publicizing our struggles, etc. to develop this independence among the entire student body and society. It should take public positions on all political questions affecting us today as students and in the future as members of society more broadly.

Student and Worker Solidarity and Unity in Struggle

As a Student Union, we should build real solidarity with campus workers and unions against our common enemies and support efforts of these sectors to self-organize and fight back. Faculty and staff working conditions are our learning conditions. We must defend campus workers by winning over students to support and fight for their demands and mobilize students against attacks on workers anywhere. As an organization, we should give our full support to all struggles of campus workers in order to assure that they win.

We should also call on education workers and labor unions to recognize our student union, support student demands, and actively mobilize in our defense. We need to start building the structures for a faculty, staff and student run school system today.

In addition, our student union should build a student movement that defends the interests of the working class in society more broadly. The attacks we are facing as students are part of a larger project of attacks on the working class as a whole. We should stand with the entire working class in saying: "We, students and workers, will not pay the price for the economic crisis! Make the bosses pay!"

Against Repression: In Defense of Free Speech, Academic Freedom, and the Right to Protest

The Student Union should take a stand against all forms of repression from the administration, government or police. It should organize and fund legal support for students and mobilize broad campaigns in their defense, as well as keep all students informed of and mobilize resistance to new repressive measures or ongoing cases. We want to build a campus environment and a society where there is a real right of free speech and of free assembly to discuss and organize around the issues that affect us.

This is why we should take up seriously the fight to get cops, immigration officers, ROTC and military recruiters off campuses, to deal with repression and to lead campaigns for broader freedoms of speech and protest in our society. This fight must foremost be one of education of the students and the campus community and of mass action to defeat the police and militarist projects being pushed on our school campuses.

National and International Solidarity

The plans of privatization, austerity measures, resegregation, and dismantling of public education we are combating are not just being carried out at the statewide level. Across the country, education is under attack. These attacks are being enacted by the Obama administration at a national level through the gutting of state budgets for education and social services in order to fund the bail-outs and wars and through Federal policies of privatization and charter schools, high stakes testing and union-busting like Race To The Top and No Child Left Behind. For this reason, we should try to build connections with students across the country by supporting their demands and calling for united actions. Further, we should seek to expand our student union beyond California.

On an international scale, the neo-liberal model of education that exists in the United States, Chile, and Japan and which we are fighting against is at the same time being pushed across the world. In the European Union, this project is embodied in Plan Bologna. In the Global South, it is being pushed through institutions of US imperialism like the World Bank and IMF. But everywhere it is facing resistance. And everywhere that there is resistance, we have allies in struggle. Our Student Union should have a plan to build connections with student unions across the world to share our experiences and unite our fights.

Ernesto Moreno: Proposal for a Student Union

Membership Qualifications:

- You must be a student of a school.
- You must have paid your membership fee (not to exceed \$10) at the beginning of your first term at your institution.
- You must agree to respect the decisions of the Union (which would be made in a democratic fashion—more on that later).
- The fee will come with a membership card which will be used during voting.

Principles:

- The Student Union must remain a democratic space (perhaps run in a General Assembly style).
- It must be free of all sponsorship (independence from the institution—including established student governments and school boards—corporations, religious institutions, political parties or any other outside influence).
- Openness is extremely important. There can be NO back door dealings. Any decisions made at Secret Meetings will not be honored by the Union.
- It should remain community conscious (take up issues affecting the community, this is where many students live and even if not, it is where many of them study).
- The Union itself should not be affiliated with any political parties. Students can independently be part of whatever party they so please Left, Right or Center, but the Union should strive to represent as many students as possible.
- A lack of hierarchy will probably be best to avoid the hindrances that plagues bureaucratic systems like many current Student Governments have.

Organization:

- This will be different at each school system (K-12, UC, CalStates, CCs, etc) so this part mostly applies for CCs, but can maybe be used elsewhere—if not in entirety, partially.
- The campus can unite around Majors as at CCs there are no Departments.
- Each Major will form a Union (History Union, Accounting, etc.) and that Union will solve issues that deal with that particular Major's students via General Assemblies in which there will be no hierarchy.
- Issues that plague the entire campus will be looked at by the Campus Union which will be made up by Delegates sent by the various Major Unions. (Delegates will have no power other than presenting the proposals, issues, etcetera of the their respective Major Unions.)
- At the state level, the Student Union Congress should be made up of Delegates chosen at the Campus Union.
- Congresses/General Assemblies should be called into session every one or two months and also whenever they are needed.
- Voting at the General Assemblies (the only place in which decisions can be made) will be done by card carrying Students.
- Students can only vote at one campus that they are members at. This is to avoid one student voting multiple times. (For example is Student A is attending both Z Community College and J State University, then said Student A can only vote at ZCC or JSU.)
- For purposes of this proposal, Undecided will be counted as an official Major.