UC Santa Cruz students launch hunger strike to protest discriminatory budget cuts, 2009

26 May 2009
to: 31 May 2009
Country: United States
Location City/State/Province: Santa Cruz, CA
Location Description: Rallies took place at the base of the UC Santa Cruz campus.

Goals:
"Students of Color Collective Demands:

Short Term

• Hire full-time American Indian Resource Center and Women’s Center directors with student voice in open hiring process

• Maintain academic integrity and current structure of Community Studies Dept. by keeping field study coordinators Mike Rotkin and Flor Marchetti and Department Manager Penny Stinson and not merging the department into Sociology.

• Retain both Latin American and Latino Studies professors Guillermo Delgado and Susan Jonas

• Make UCSC a sanctuary campus for undocumented communities

• That UCSC openly and publicly support the state and Federal DREAM Act

• Permanent funding for Ethnic- Year-End Ceremonies from college C.A.O.s and Provosts

• Resource Center representative as liaison between local tribes and UCSC in order to maintain respectable relationships with local tribes

• Support Family Student Housing in receiving equitable rent for next year 09-10 funding (no rent increase)

• Fair transparent negotiations with workers and unions to ensure equitable pay, working condition and representation

• No layoffs!

• No worker deportations by ICE

• Freeze on Budget Cuts over the summer, while students are not present

Long Term:

• Institutionalize scholarships and other resources for AB540 students

• Access and affordability to higher education for underrepresented communities - STOP STUDENT FEE HIKES!
• Outreach and retention of faculty and staff of color (including hiring a full-time Counseling & Psychological Services staff of color)

• Fill Asian American “specialist” position for American Studies

• Movement towards an Ethnic Studies Program

• Affordable and quality housing for under resourced immigrant students

• No cuts to Disability student resources

• No cuts to Rape Awareness Programs

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

• 001. Public speeches
• 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
• 047. Assemblies of protest or support
• 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)  › Members of Students of Color Collective launch hunger strike.

Methods in 2nd segment:

• 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)  › Members of Students of Color Collective participate in hunger strike.

Methods in 3rd segment:

• 001. Public speeches
• 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
• 047. Assemblies of protest or support
• 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)  › Members of Students of Color Collective participate in hunger strike.

Methods in 4th segment:

• 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)  › Members of Students of Color Collective participate in hunger strike.

Methods in 5th segment:

• 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)  › Members of Students of Color Collective participate in hunger strike.

Methods in 6th segment:

• 006. Group or mass petitions  › Launched online petition to demonstrate solidarity with the Students of Color Collective’s demands.
• 159. The fast (fast of moral pressure, hunger strike, satyagrahic fast)  › 12 members of Students of Color Collective still participating in hunger strike.
Classifications

Classification:
Defense
Cluster:
Democracy
Human Rights
National/Ethnic Identity

Group characterization:

- UC Santa Cruz students and faculty

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
UCSC Students of Color Collective

Partners:
NewUC Coalition, Coalition to Save Community Studies, Family Student Housing

External allies:
Not known

Involvement of social elites:
Not known

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:

Groups in 2nd Segment:

Groups in 3rd Segment:

- Coalition to Save Community Studies
- Family Student Housing
- NewUC Coalition

Groups in 4th Segment:

- Coalition to Save Community Studies (exit)
- Family Student Housing (exit)
- NewUC Coalition (exit)

Groups in 5th Segment:

Groups in 6th Segment:

Additional notes on joining/exiting order:
These groups participated in a solidarity rally on the third day of the campaign.

Segment Length: Approximately 20 hours
The University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) has historically struggled with meeting their students’ desire for ethnic studies, despite its liberal reputation. In 1981, the college’s student group Third World and Native American Student Coalition protested the college’s lack of an ethnic studies major with a hunger strike. Since then, the college has offered a number of courses and major options for those interested in ethnic studies. With the massive budget cuts delivered to the University of California and California State University systems in 2009, however, professors and faculty who serve the ethnic studies/communities at UCSC were on the line. Claiming that the state’s budget disproportionately affected students of color and ethnic studies, UCSC students formed the Students of Color Collective (SOCC) to combat the budget cuts.

On 24 May 2009, the SOCC announced that they would be launching a hunger strike on 26 May to protest the budget cuts to under-served communities. Many students who would participate in the strike prepared by practising strict diets or day-long fasting two-days before the strike began. The SOCC distributed fliers and, on 26 May, they hosted a rally at the base of campus to kick-off their hunger strike. The goal of the accompanying rally was to draw attention to how the budget cuts affect students of color and their resources.

The hunger strike was launched with no official end-date and students participating were encouraged to fast for as long as they could if not until their demands were met.

The SOCC claims to have been in communication with the UCSC Administration from the beginning of the hunger strike, but there is no record of any negotiations reached throughout their strike.

On 28 May, the SOCC announced another rally to raise awareness to their cause. This time, however, they were joined by other student groups such as the NewUC Coalition, Family Student Housing, and the Coalition to Save Community Studies. These groups participated in the rally to stand in solidarity with the SOCC as well as to promote their own causes.

On 31 May, the SOCC announced the end of the hunger strike due to health complications of the strikers and the fact that finals week was rapidly approaching. Simultaneously, the SOCC launched a mass online petition for signers to demonstrate their solidarity with the demands established by the SOCC. The SOCC claims to have had two of their demands met by the
Administration when they ended their strike, but, again, there is no record of which two demands were met.

The hunger strike started out with roughly two dozen participants and by the third day, 12 members of SOCC remained. These participants were surviving on a drink mix for energy. The SOCC was established as a student group in April of 2009 in response to the recent budget cuts and seemed to have disbanded later in 2009 as their last post on their official blog was posted on 15 November 2009.

Research Notes

Influences:

In 1981, UCSC student group Third World and Native American Student Coalition protested the university's lack of an ethnic studies major by organizing a hunger strike.

Sources:


Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:
Patricia Gutiérrez, 14/10/2012