

Reflections on the APSCUF Strike

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If you understood my upbringing, you would have stood mouth agape as I trudged up and down a picket line in October, 2016. We were pushed to that point, the point of picketing and striking, by politicians dressed up as those who care about education. A particular Florida politician brought in to break the very idea of solidarity and caring for students and an educational process increasingly maligned by politics and misinformation.

That is the particular backdrop to my hoisting home made signs that wilted and separated in the rain on the third and final day of the strike.

Enough about context and more about me, or at least my decision to walk five kilometers, thanks Runkeeper, up and down a patch of sidewalk known as Zone 5. I walked with joy in my heart and purpose in my gait.

The journey to the picket line begins with parents who worked the phones for Barry Goldwater in the 60's. These same parents would haul me off to Bel Air Presbyterian Church in Los Angeles, where the likes of Ronald Reagan could be seen at the odd sermon. The pastor at the time, Don Moomaw, would lead Reagan's first presidential invocation

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(spoiler alert—sex scandal in his future). My grandfather George loved and cherished his planes and engineering almost as much as he loved Billy Graham. My grandmother Barbara, other side, was a staunch Catholic and lover of the church. All this to provide a conservative context and backdrop to my rainy Friday stroll in Zone 5.

You bring your upbringing with you to your adult world. You are what you have learned. But learned, should not stop in the past, but be continuous as in learning. Open ended. Progressing. Learning allowed me to see that schools too often serve people who want just one more dollar. Learning allowed me to see graduate students standing up for their rights as workers and workers supporting those who walked. Learning allowed me to see a tuition rise disguised as support for education. Learning let me hear students who had to take fewer classes simply so a politician could work fewer days than any group in any state. Learning allowed me to see actions of men and women who used the state system to get educated but who wanted those that followed to “work harder” and quit complaining. We walked because it was the right thing to do.

We walked together. We talked together. I got to know colleagues whom had just been names and hellos before. We, collectively, wondered about our brothers and sisters whom we did not see. We accounted for our colleagues because we were there for them as well as ourselves. Why was this department working? But no one judged. But everyone understood. We discussed dogs. We discussed families. We discussed healthy eating.

The students came out in force. In the sun. In the rain. With brownies still warm. Cigarettes still in packets. Tea and coffee in abundance. They took photos with us. We thanked them. We graciously ate when not hungry. Drank when not thirsty. Walked when still tired. The singers sang. The band played. Cars honked. Curse words in cars were hurled. Smiles and peace responded.

I walked not because I had to. I walked because I wanted to. If we don't stand up for ourselves and for others, who will? We walked because it was right to walk. To stand up to misinformation and lies. In today's world, where accountability is false news, and evidence is misinformation, someone has to walk. The walking is a material response to bullying and lies. I called my parents. They asked, "How can you do this"? My response, "Easy. Just put one foot in front of the other."



“We Are Anything but ‘Teaching Machines,’” APSCUF VP Says After Dif- ficult Session

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Negotiations flared early today as faculty and management teams returned to the table to work on the contract between the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties and the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education.

“When we began, the State System immediately demanded we make cuts totaling \$70 million,” APSCUF President Dr. Kenneth M. Mash said. “That is not bargaining. That is dictating. We understand there are fiscal issues to consider, but on most of the core issues, the State System continues to insist on cuts that hinder our ability to provide a quality education for our students.”

Dr. Jamie Martin, APSCUF’s vice president and chair of the negotiations team, underscored negotiators’ ire.

“Their proposed treatment of our adjunct faculty continues to be extremely troubling,” Martin said. “At the bargaining

table, they once said they wanted to turn our temporary faculty into ‘teaching machines’ by suggesting that their salaries be cut or their workload be increased by 20 percent. They actually said that. I was disgusted by their disdain. My colleagues are hardworking teachers and researchers who provide valuable service to our students and our universities. We are anything but ‘teaching machines.’”

After negotiators expressed their frustration, the State System caucused for nearly four hours, after which the State System withdrew a number of its 249 proposals from the table. Most significant, the System withdrew its proposal to have newer graduate students teach courses.

APSCUF negotiators were glad the sides made some progress, but the parties remain far apart, Mash said.

“This is not a game,” Mash said, referring to the Oct. 19 strike date APSCUF announced last week. “This is going to be very, very hard, given that most of the most-controversial items are still on the table.”

The teams are scheduled to meet Oct. 14–16. APSCUF offered to meet Oct. 8–9, which is a weekend faculty negotiators don’t teach, but the State System rejected those dates.

The faculty contract expired June 30, 2015, and negotiations have been ongoing since late 2014.

APSCUF represents about 5,500 faculty and coaches at the State System universities: Bloomsburg, California, Cheyney, Clarion, East Stroudsburg, Edinboro, Indiana, Kutztown, Lock Haven, Mansfield, Millersville, Shippensburg, Slippery Rock, and West Chester Universities of Pennsylvania.

