

UCU NEC elections: Vote Paul Blackledge

for UK-elected member (Higher Education)

Elections
run from
4 February to
1 March

UCU must take up the fight against cuts and marketisation collectively

For UCU to build on the good work we have done since our formation in 2006 it is not enough that the NEC recognise the unprecedented threat to higher education posed by this government.

We should also recognise our ability to stand up to and stop the commodification of the education system.

That the issues involved are of the first importance is beyond doubt: the ongoing reforms to Higher Education will not merely lead to a further fragmentation of the sector with pressures towards a race to the bottom on pay and conditions.

More profoundly, to privatise education means undermining the last vestiges of democratic control over the means by which we pass on and push forward our cultural inheritance.

Inequality

This process will reinforce mechanisms both to fix existing patterns of inequality and to distort what we teach and research. The struggle against these reforms is not a narrowly sectional concern but is rather in the common good.

More to the point it is a struggle we can win. In 2010 many within the union argued that we could not deliver strike action. The strikes of 2011 were not only a concrete refutation of this pessimism, more importantly their vibrancy was such that they played a not inconsiderable part in galvanising other unions to join a movement that culminated in the spectacular day of action on 30th November 2011.



Since then union leaders, including some of our own, have done everything in their power to draw back this movement. 2012 was consequently a disappointment after the potential shown the previous year. This is unfortunate because the consequences both of the government's austerity programme and its drive to privatise anything it thinks it can get away with means that the situation in Higher Education is set to get much worse.

John Lanchester recently reported in the *London Review of Books* not only that austerity had worsened the deficit over the last two and a half years, but also that the Office of Budget Responsibility is predicting that 500,000 more public sector jobs will go over the next five years. This is a massive assault, and it's already affecting UCU members – even where these redundancies have been 'voluntary' as at Leeds Met the consequence is increased stress for those left behind.

As a rep I see new cases on an almost daily basis that demonstrate the

increased levels of stress experienced by our members. But despite our best efforts we only deal with the tip of the iceberg of the issues affecting our members.

This experience has convinced me that while casework must remain the essential bedrock of our activities, because it often amounts to sticking plasters over gaping wounds it cannot be the be-all and end-all of what we do. It is essential that we take up the fight against cuts and marketisation collectively. When we have taken strike action not only has this helped give our members a renewed sense of self-confidence but we also increased recruitment. When colleagues see us acting rather than merely talking they join and they get involved; indeed, the recent strikes helped renew our branch committee at Leeds Met after the retirement of leading members.

And when members vote for action we must respect democracy and deliver action. As a supporter of UCU Left I believe we can win if we stand up to the cuts, but only if we have a democratic, accountable leadership rooted in strong branches – in other words we need NEC members that are prepared to be as resolute in defending education as the current government is at attacking it.

Please also vote for Liz Lawrence for Vice-President and Gavin Reid for Honorary Treasurer.

Liz's election blog is:
<http://lizlawrence4vp.wordpress.com>

Please vote for the following candidates in the national officer and NEC elections

Vice-President
Elizabeth Lawrence

Honorary Treasurer
Gavin Reid

Honorary Secretary, Scotland
Carlo Morelli

Disabled members
Rob Murthwaite

Black members
Dawn Livingston

LGBT members (HE)
Pura Ariza

UK-elected HE
Paul Blackledge, Adrian Budd, Peter Dwyer, Jeff Fowler, Marion Hersh, Veronica Killen, Gavin Reid, Sean Wallis

UK-elected FE
David Armstrong, Mandy Brown, Alison Lord, Loraine Monk

Midlands FE
Alan Barker, Brian O'Sullivan

North West HE
Eleni Michalopoulou, Jo McNeill

North West FE
Darren Tolliday, Isabel Brotherston

Midlands HE
Ron Mendel, Nicholas Cimini

South HE
Patricia McManus, Ellen Seiss, Lesley Kane

Find out more at www.uculeft.org

STV VOTING SYSTEM

To maximise votes for progressive candidates we ask you to do the following:

- Please use your votes to **first endorse all UCU Left candidates** and only after that use lower preferences for other progressive candidates in each relevant list; and
- Give your highest preferences in the UK-Elected list to UCU Left candidate(s) **from your region**