

Mike Barton

Election runs
from 27
January-
1 March

The importance of grass roots trade unionism

UCU NEC elections: Vote Mike Barton for Trustee

I retired in 2019 having taught as a Business Studies then as a Computing lecturer.

I worked for six years at City and Islington College on a Variable Hours Contract. On two occasions management attempted to reduce my hours. On both occasions, I was represented successfully by the casualised rep. I later became a casualised rep and served on the Anti Casualisation Committee for two years.

I was a member of NATFHE then UCU since its inception. I have been a member of the UPW, TGWU, AUEW, MU, GPMU & Amicus. For several years, I was the assistant secretary of Waltham Forest Trades Council and continue to be an active delegate.

Experience

While working at North West Kent College, there was a national dispute when the Institute for Learning attempted to impose the costs of a professional fee on lecturers. Our union organised a successful boycott. This experience reinforced my belief in the



importance of grassroots trade union organisation.

I later worked at Redbridge College. The union was dormant and I took on the role of branch secretary. We managed to get a small group of members together for branch meetings but were then derecognised. After a merger into New City College (NCC) with two other colleges with strong union branches, we achieved a recognition agreement. In 2017 we joined the strike for better pay. The branch was offered a deal to raise academic salaries to the same level as other (better paid) colleges. This offer was refused until management also agreed to negotiate on academic support contracts.

Organisation

Both with the IFL and with the strike at NCC, it was the strength of local organisation plus effective regional

organisation and solidarity from other branches which made the difference.

The government is trying to weaken protection for workers' rights and is keen to use the courts to attack unions defending these rights. The role of trustee is not one of political leadership but I believe it is important to elect trustees who understand that unity and organisation are key to defending the union.

As a trustee I will be a faithful and responsible steward of UCU assets, making sure we protect our ability to represent members, when they need representation, and keep our finances in good order, so that we can operate as an independent trade union. I support building up the fighting fund, so that if we need to wage major disputes, we can do so.

Academic freedom and freedom of speech need defending, including for supporters of Palestinian civil rights. We must campaign actively for better funding of post 16 education, removal of market forces and an emphasis on education and student welfare.

For more information about the UCU Left platform and candidates [click here](#).