



February 7th 2024

Dear CFA Board of Directors,

We the undersigned union organizers of CFA-SFSU write to express our commitment to an egalitarian union democracy and an equal commitment to the Anti-Racist and Social Justice goals of our union. We request that the statewide resources of our union, paid by members' union dues, be restricted to impartial communications and processes related to the ratification vote on the Tentative Agreement (TA). We see this as an essential step in restoring trust pursuant to the abrupt demobilization of the strike without consultation with the members. We have been sincerely delighted by the embrace of open bargaining as a step toward the broader open-bargaining principles followed by democratic, fighting unions that win big for their members. The abandonment of these principles at the height of our power has demoralized rank-and-file members and broken trust. A scrupulous commitment to neutral communications and equal time for proponents of YES and NO perspectives is essential to restore trust, ensure that members will accept election results regardless of the outcome, and foster reconciliation and unity.

Open bargaining has inspired previously disengaged members. It is a key part of educating members about the bargaining process and our demands, collaborative support across CFA chapters, and building our organizing power by getting more of our members to vote for strike authorization and to become strike ready by signing up for picket shifts. That is how we built toward our union's unprecedented strike actions in December and January. The transparency and bottom-up democracy of open bargaining made our union more powerful in our fight against management for fair pay and working conditions.

The fact that there is widespread disagreement about the TA is not a reason to retreat from egalitarian democratic practices towards top-down imposition. "Selling" the TA by attempting to scare members about the consequences of a NO vote, and bullying and discrediting those who object to the TA or the process that produced it, is landing as paternalistic at best among a newly energized and optimistic rank-and-file. Consensus cannot be reached by doubling down on persuasive messaging; it can only be attained by trusting the CFA membership and permitting open debate under fair conditions. Steamrolling through dissent is the opposite of union democracy and the culture of a member-led union. It does not build unity; it prevents it. It does not build power; instead, it leads to the disengagement, frustration and disenfranchisement of

the many hundreds of active members in our union. We think that a vigorous internal debate is the sign of a healthy union. We do not feel that the CFA leadership has thus far accepted this principle. A union in which everyone agrees on something as contentious as a TA is one in which a few have imposed their will on the rank-and-file. While there is formal agreement by all parties about the value of debate, in the end what matters is practice—and it is here that we think the leadership could do better.

At the Chapter President Council on January 30th 2024, San Francisco Chapter President Brad Erickson noted that three big decisions were made by the Board of Directors without consulting the membership: 1) demobilizing the strike, 2) accepting the compromises of the TA, and 3) extending the contract another year. He assessed that this decision-making process has provoked a crisis of trust in our union, and made the following recommendations:

1. *Acknowledge and be fully accountable for the mistake of not consulting the membership on these three big decisions before signing off on the TA.*
2. *A fundamental change of tone that is respectful and permits disagreement. All text messaging, social media, email and the scripts given to staff to get out the vote need to be neutral on the content of the TA. No more selling the TA as a “triumph” with three exclamation points. In communication with members who oppose the TA, there should be no defensiveness about the process, no fear mongering, no yelling at members, no calling members traitors, no calling members racists, and no calling members liars. To the extent that leadership is seen to abuse its monopoly over membership communications to push an agenda, trust will not be restored. Members have not consented to campaigning.*
3. *The ballot and voting process for the TA must be utterly impartial. Backers of the Vote YES and Vote NO camps must have exactly the same access to communicate with members about their positions.”*

Brad's sentiment and proposals received strong support among other Chapter Presidents, CFA organizers across California, and more broadly among the rank-and-file membership. In a similar vein, all of the M&O Chairs signed a letter on February 2nd 2024 defending our union from the right-wing anti-union campaign of the Freedom Foundation which has capitalized on the abrupt ending of the strike and the way the TA was reached. This letter concluded:

As M&O Chairs we share a unified commitment to greater rank and file involvement, transparency, democracy, and participation in our union, and are working consistently to achieve these goals together and collectively. We are committed to CFA being a member-led union and to fully engage rank and file members and chapters. We see times of challenge as an opportunity to build a stronger CFA. This is something we can all do together.

In short, there is a growing sentiment in our statewide union that, regardless of how members feel about the TA, whether they are inclined to vote YES or NO, our organizational culture and practices need to change to allow more discussion, debate and engagement, without personalizing differences, and without stigmatizing dissent. Broadcasting the arguments for both the YES and the NO campaigns in all union forums is not only a basic democratic practice, but

crucial for fostering the active engagement of the rank and file in any future bargaining and striking process in the spirit of Open Bargaining.

Despite these calls for CFA to operate in a more democratic manner, and to our great dismay, the BoD has again directed elected leaders and statewide staff to use our resources (Hustle, email, staff time, etc.) to campaign for a "YES" vote on this TA. The Town Halls organized by CFA leadership have been strictly facilitated with no opportunity for those advocating for a NO vote to present their arguments to the membership. This violates egalitarian democratic principles, disenfranchises our members, sows division and distrust, and threatens the power of our union.

We the undersigned formally request the following:

1. ***That all text messaging, social media, email, and the scripts given to staff to get out the vote be neutral on the content of the TA and are not biased towards a YES or NO vote.***
2. ***That all Town Halls organized by the CFA statewide leadership offer equal time to proponents of both a YES and a NO vote.***

A commitment to these two actions will allow us to start rebuilding relations of trust between the statewide leadership and rank-and-file union members, and furthermore to normalize differences and dissent in the union on the road to build union power. These are basic norms of democratic functioning enacted in many other organizing spaces that do not cost money or entail a replacement of leadership or staff. We request a prompt response regarding whether you are willing to implement these changes ahead of the vote, or at least a version of them, or an explanation of why you do not consider them appropriate. We are all committed to continue organizing in our union to make it stronger, to win good contracts, and to fight for racial and social justice demands. We will continue to engage in discussion with everyone in it, while we actively work to transform our organization.

In union, solidarity, and struggle—

Executive Board Members:

Mark Allan Davis, CFA-SFSU, Executive Board. CRSJ Rep. Africana Studies T/TT Department Rep.

Marie Drennan, CFA-SFSU, Communications Chair, Executive Board

Brad Erickson, CFA-SFSU Chapter President, Executive Board

Melissa Hagan, CFA-SFSU, Department of Psychology, College of Science & Engineering Rep.

Lawrence Hanley, CFA-SFSU, Tenure/Tenure Track Retiree Representative

William Jacobs, CFA-SFSU, Executive Board

Ali Kashani, CFA-SFSU, Executive Board

Jaimy Magdalena Mann, CFA-SFSU Executive Board, Race and Resistance Lecturer Department Rep.

James Martel, CFA-SFSU, Executive Board, Political Science T/TT Department Rep.

Blanca Missé, CFA-SFSU Membership and Organizing Chair, Executive Board, Modern Languages & Literatures T/TT Department Rep.

Sepideh Modrek, CFA-SFSU Executive Board, Treasurer
Kurt Nutting, CFA-SFSU Executive Board, Chair, Faculty Rights Panel
Irina S. Okhremtchouk, CFA-SFSU, Executive Board, Graduate College of Education, Department of Equity, Leadership Studies, and Instructional Technologies (ELSIT)
Anthony Pahnke, CFA-SFSU, Executive Board, International Relations, Political Director
Teresa Pratt, CFS-SFSU Executive Board, Student-Faculty Chair
Ann Robertson, CFA-SFSU, Executive Board
Al Schendan, CFA-SFSU, At-Large Lecturer Faculty Representative

Strike Committee Members (CAT activists and Committee Coordinators):

Tina Bartolome, CFA-SFSU, Metro College Success Program in the College of Ethnic Studies
Will Clark, CFA-SFSU Department of English Language and Literature
Valerie Francisco-Menchavez, CFA-SFSU, Sociology and Sexuality Studies
Melissa Guzman-Garcia, CFA-SFSU, Latina/Latino Studies
Ron Hayduk, CFA-SF Department of Political Science
Venoo Kakar, CFA-SFSU, Department of Economics
Leora Kava, CFA-SFSU, Department of Race and Resistance Studies
Jenny Lederer, CFA-SFSU, Department of English Language and Literature
Tara Lockhart, CFA-SFSU, English Language & Literatures
Cesar Rodriguez, CFA-SF, Department of Race and Resistance Studies
Loretta Stec, CFA-SFSU, English Department
Mayuran Tiruchelvam, CFA-SFSU, School of Cinema
Omar Zahzah, CFA-SFSU, Race and Resistance Studies

Union Department Representatives:

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Tanya Augsburg, CFA-SFSU, School of Liberal Studies, T/TT Faculty Representative
Denise Battista, CFA-SFSU, Humanities and Comparative World Literature Lecturer Faculty Rep.
Jennifer Blecha, CFA-SFSU, School of the Environment Faculty Rep.
Ana Lourdes Cárdenas, CFA-SFSU, Journalism Department Representative
Karla Castillo, CFA-SFSU, Counseling & Psychological Services Rep, CFA Statewide Counseling Committee Co Chair
Daniel Ciomek, CFA-SFSU, Information Systems Department, Lecturer Faculty Rep.
Sarah Crabtree, CFA-SFSU, Department of History, T/TT Rep.
Sarah Anne Cox, CFA-SFSU, English Department Lecturer Faculty Rep.
Matthew Clark Davison, CFA-SFSU, Creative Writing Department, Co-Lecturer Faculty Rep.
Francis Wong, CFA-SFSU, Asian American Studies Lecturer Faculty Rep.
Kat DeGuzman, CFA-SFSU, English Department Tenure/Tenure-Track Faculty Rep.
Regula Dhedhi, CFA-SFSU, Kinesiology Department, Lecturer Faculty Rep.
Susan Englander, CFA-SFSU, Department of History, Lecturer Rep.
Deborah Farris, CFA-SFSU, Communication Studies Department Rep.
Mira Foster, CFA-SFSU, Library Faculty Department Rep.
Constance Gordon, CFA-SFSU, Communication Studies Department T/TT Rep.
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Rachel Gross, CFA-SFSU, Jewish Studies Department Faculty Rep.
Shawn Heiser, CFA-SFSU, Library, Lecturer Faculty Department Rep.

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