Op-Ed: CFA strike is in the best interest of faculty and students

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On February 8th, the California Faculty Association, which represents faculty, librarian faculty, counselors and coaches in the 23-campus California State University system, [announced strike dates of April 13, 14, 15, 18, and 19, if the labor dispute with CSU management is not resolved.](http://www.thedailyaztec.com/74104/news/california-faculty-association-plans-5-day-strike-in-april/)

Most students at San Diego State University have seen faculty wearing red t-shirts, signs and buttons with “Fight for Five” on them, and syllabi language that a possible strike might occur this semester.

Faculty do not want to go on strike. No one wants to go on strike from a job, and this is true for those of us who teach in the CSU. We care about our students and we want every student to succeed.

We hope you understand our concern for your success is exemplified by classroom instruction, by academic advising, by mentoring and advising undergraduate and graduate theses, by including you in our research projects, and by the many other ways we contribute to student excellence.

We also care about our own families. We want and believe that teaching in the CSU can and should be a solid middle class job that lets us support our families while we help students get college degrees.

So why have you heard faculty saying “We don’t want to strike but we will?”

The most basic answer is that for at least 10 years, our pay has stayed flat while the cost of living has gone up. Our “purchasing power” today is weaker than it was in 2004. The loss of purchasing power for SDSU faculty from 2004 to 2013 is $7,114. And, as we all know, San Diego County has one of the highest costs of living in the state. It’s a serious problem for us and our families.

For almost a decade, we received no raises, had to endure a year of furlough reductions in pay, and saw our classrooms get more crowded and our university workload outside of the classroom increase.

It is also a growing problem for CSU students because it’s getting harder to hire and retain faculty for your classes. And some of the faculty you have now are looking for better ways to earn a living at other universities or outside of education. Faculty at SDSU do leave and take higher paying positions elsewhere.

CSU faculty members are the lowest paid educators in the state, and that includes not only the University of California system but also the community college system and K-12 teachers. On average, CSU faculty earn $45,000 per year. This underscores the fact that about half of CSU faculty are on part-time contracts.

Many of our lecturer faculty work on temporary assignments at low pay. Most of them do not have full-time work at SDSU—and some of them must rush to other jobs or other schools to make ends meet.

Faculty are the single most important factor in student success. We carry out the core mission of the CSU by educating students with a solid academic foundation that prepares them to contribute to the state in many productive ways. Teaching students is the most rewarding work we do.

Faculty members have the growing sense that CSU administration doesn’t care about the core mission or faculty. They talk about student success, but they do not respect the faculty who teach them.

This stagnant faculty pay has persisted regardless of rises in state funding as we have seen in the last few years. The commitment of increased state money to teaching is weak.

Faculty are seeking a modest, very fair salary increase of 5 percent plus a salary step of 2.65 percent for eligible faculty. Fair is fair. The CSU’s broken salary structure must be fixed.

We hope a satisfactory resolution to the salary dispute is reached. A resolution is in the best interests of students, faculty, and the CSU. You will be updated throughout the remainder of the semester regarding any possible strike actions.

*Learn more on the CFA Web Site at* [*http://www.calfac.org/fight-for-five*](http://www.calfac.org/fight-for-five)

- See more at: http://www.thedailyaztec.com/75881/opinion/op-ed-cfa-strike-is-in-the-best-interest-of-everyone/#sthash.MAJiB5Ep.dpuf