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Demonstration at Worcester College

Due to a £1 million shortfall, Worcester College is looking to make 23 redundancies. ATL believes cuts such as these are bad for the FE sector, for the community and for the economy. We need to build skills and teach them.

Gary Moses, ATL rep at the college, organised and led the ATL demonstration against the cuts on 1 May. ATL members demonstrated alongside members of UCU and Unison.

For more about redundancies in the FE sector see page three.

FE sector zone success

The FE sector zone, at ATL’s Annual Conference in Manchester in March, was a huge success, with a packed room of members listening attentively to the three exemplary college leaders selected by ATL members to speak.

Jackie Hughes (pictured here) from Preston College gave a talk on her upbringing and personal values, and how they helped her relate to staff and deal with major issues in college. Nick Bennett gave a talk that reflected on the extent of improvements in Gorseinon College, which is merging with Swansea College. He reinforced the view that “taking staff with you” and talking openly to staff helps significantly in dealing with the most difficult changes.

Finally, Ambrose Smith gave a unique view of how he has retained his relationship with staff, even though his college (Aquinas College, a sixth form college in Stockport) has grown in size. He expressed his opinion that things can be clear from the top or the bottom of an organisation, but that the real issues and daily life often come within the “muddle in the middle”.

As members have responded so enthusiastically to the presentations and the positive views of leadership they heard, ATL is hoping to expand on these views in a paper for reps and for all education professionals.

Richmond upon Thames College

ATL had never been big at Richmond upon Thames College in London and in 2007 it hit an all-time low, with the local representative retiring and the membership figures falling to a small but passionate party of four.

When Kate Ryder decided to fill the position of local representative in 2008, she believed the role would involve simply passing on information via the odd email. Her view changed fairly rapidly, however, and through word of mouth and flying the ATL flag at every occasion, membership at Richmond upon Thames College has now grown to a figure of 40-strong and negotiations for recognition have begun.

On 11 May, Norman Crowther, ATL’s national official for the post-16 sector, and Doru Athinodoru, ATL regional official, visited the college and met the growing community. It was a great afternoon – every member felt valued and left the event with a sense of belonging.
Is the Teachers’ Pension Scheme over-generous?

The average pension under the Teachers’ Pension Scheme (TPS) currently in payment has been estimated by the TPS as approximately £9,000 per annum. This gives clear evidence to counteract accusations that public sector final salary schemes are over-generous.

The latest statistics from the TPS relating to teacher retirements in 2008-09 make disappointing reading for FE lecturers. As is clear from the table below, the pension of FE lecturers lags significantly behind that of pensioners employed in all other sectors.

The average pension for a male FE lecturer is £10,730 per annum, which is over £4,000 less than the average male pension paid out to teachers retiring this year. With the average pension for female teachers across all sectors worse than that for their male counterparts, female FE lecturers average at only £6,270 per annum – almost £4,000 less than the average female pension.

ATL produces a series of factsheets explaining the Teachers’ Pension Scheme. There is also a factsheet on how to improve your pension position. These can be downloaded from www.atl.org.uk.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Men’s average pension (£)</th>
<th>Men’s average lump sum (£)</th>
<th>Men’s average salary (£)</th>
<th>Men’s average service (years)</th>
<th>Women’s average pension (£)</th>
<th>Women’s average lump sum (£)</th>
<th>Women’s average salary (£)</th>
<th>Women’s average service (years)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maintained</td>
<td>15,660</td>
<td>45,892</td>
<td>41,423</td>
<td>30.24</td>
<td>10,334</td>
<td>30,613</td>
<td>35,227</td>
<td>23.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sixth form</td>
<td>16,713</td>
<td>49,229</td>
<td>44,302</td>
<td>30.18</td>
<td>9,671</td>
<td>29,131</td>
<td>36,318</td>
<td>21.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>10,730</td>
<td>33,007</td>
<td>35,158</td>
<td>24.41</td>
<td>6,270</td>
<td>19,518</td>
<td>30,852</td>
<td>16.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HE</td>
<td>16,146</td>
<td>49,174</td>
<td>46,425</td>
<td>27.82</td>
<td>11,893</td>
<td>36,013</td>
<td>41,875</td>
<td>22.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>17,106</td>
<td>50,969</td>
<td>45,228</td>
<td>30.25</td>
<td>9,748</td>
<td>29,446</td>
<td>36,460</td>
<td>21.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>15,051</td>
<td>44,599</td>
<td>41,224</td>
<td>29.20</td>
<td>9,966</td>
<td>29,679</td>
<td>35,148</td>
<td>22.68</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ATL has been informed about proposed redundancies at a number of FE colleges around the country.

At The Manchester College, the country’s biggest college, 250 people could lose their job, partly as a result of the higher than expected cost of servicing the college’s prison education contract. At Birmingham Metropolitan College, where ATL recently ensured continued union recognition for its members, the union has heard 97 redundancies are planned. ATL has also been told about plans for 60 job cuts at Stanmore College, 99 at Petroc College in Devon, approximately 90 at each of Barnet College in London, City of Bristol College, Carlisle College, Castle College in Nottingham and Leeds City College, 88 at Wiltshire College and 16 at Derwentside College.

ATL believes FE institutions must try to absorb the impact of government funding cuts through efficiency savings in order to minimise job losses.

You can read more about the campaign against FE funding cuts at www.atl.org.uk/fecuts.

ATL, together with the other recognised unions in the FE and HE sectors, supported a national protest day against FE and HE funding cuts and job losses due to take place on 21 June involving coordinated local protests and petition signing.

Member elected to IfL board

ATL member and rep Govind Bharadia has been elected as a member representative onto the Institute for Learning’s (IfL) non-executive board.

The board is part of the IfL’s new governing structure. It meets nine times a year and gives strategic direction for IfL, ensures business probity and has sub-committees focused on specific requirements.

Govind, a programme area manager for hospitality, travel and tourism at Stanmore College in London, said:

“I am honoured and excited to have been elected on the board.”

A guide to CPD for Institute for Learning members

As the professional body for teachers and trainers in further education and skills, the Institute for Learning (IfL) is committed to supporting continuing professional development (CPD) in raising the professional status of our members.

All IfL members are required to declare their CPD between 1 June and 31 August each year. A minimum of 30 CPD hours are required to be undertaken each year (pro-rata for part-time teachers and trainers).

IfL’s first CPD review of the 2008-09 cycle showed that 98 per cent of members declared more than the minimum number of hours required. IfL’s first review of CPD also provides useful resources for members including:

- recommendations and tips for teachers and trainers
- a suggested CPD calendar, to help you stay on track throughout the year
- ideas of effective CPD activities.

You can find out more about declaring your CPD as well as hints and tips on effective CPD at the IfL website, www.ifl.ac.uk.
Professionalism matters

“Between 2001 and 2005 I was involved, along with colleagues, in the only large-scale independent study of teaching and learning in English FE. Entitled ‘Transforming Learning Cultures in FE’, the project was part of a bigger programme of research called The Teaching and Learning Research Programme. The project outcomes included sets of ‘principles of procedure’ for improving teaching and learning (aimed at government and national bodies, colleges, tutors and students), some about the nature of professionalism.

“FE teachers are generally the most important of the many things that go together to make the character and quality of the learning and student experience – what we called the ‘learning culture’.

However, there were real limits to what tutors could actually do. These were often to do with resources, for example progressive reductions in contact time which tipped into being unsustainable. What surprised us was how systems of funding, audit and inspection were also implicated as limiting factors. The irony was that systems with a quality ‘raison d’etre’ were often themselves responsible for damaging quality, sometimes preventing or undermining tutors’ attempts to improve teaching and learning.

“One example is a group of photography tutors abandoning a successful course innovation because auditors could not see the sort of attendance records that they regarded as legitimate. Another example is some skilled tutors setting aside their best practice for a time in order to conform to institutional views of what it was safe to allow Ofsted inspectors to see.

For more about the Teaching and Learning Research Programme, visit www.tlrp.org/proj/phase11/phase2b.html. For more of David James’ work, see Improving learning cultures in further education by David James and Gert Biesta (Routledge, 2007).

“My colleagues and I were also struck by the importance of professional identities. We studied the way in that, over time, professional experience creates and consolidates a set of dispositions. The people concerned become something that goes a long way beyond sets of standards. A good example of this was Gwen, a business studies tutor. When her contract changed to that of NVQ work-based assessor, she still saw a need for helping people to learn and put considerable, unpaid effort into making this happen, negotiating opportunities and providing materials.

“In other words, she continued to teach as she couldn’t simply ‘turn off’ her professional practices, even though many of them were no longer officially required. She was not naïve, out of touch or resistant to change, she simply didn’t ‘buy in’ to the supposed separation of ‘learning’ and ‘assessment’ characteristic of NVQs. This also demonstrated her professionalism in a wider sense.

“There are many tutors like Gwen, and by the end of the project our view was that much more needed to be done to recognise and harness their energy and creativity. We argued this required good management and leadership, but not managerialism.”

Holiday anyone?

ATL rep Marion Ashcroft reports how things are at her college in the Isle of Man...

“We have contracts that require 21.5 hours of contact time and 9 hours of administration time per week. This can be flexible to fit the requirements of the job.

“In regards to continuing professional development (CPD), we are expected to do 30 hours per year. The college organises a programme for us and then additionally we search for events or training opportunities that allow us to develop the skills we would like.

The necessary ‘time off’ is then organised by the head of our department. I have thus been allowed to develop my interest and expertise in autism, now even delivering talks on the subject, as well as on health and safety, also being health and safety rep, of course! I am also expected to attend a range of events, for example those covering college development plans and dyslexia awareness. In addition there are a number of practical courses such as training to use our whiteboards.

“Our terms and conditions are still based on the silver book that the UK no longer follows. For salary, we have an agreement in place that links our salaries to those of teachers. We have a system of threshold payments to reward excellence in teaching – annually, for five years – above the top salary for our scale.

“This year, for the first time ever, there will be some difficulty as we normally have an additional award from Tynwald (our Parliament) for the cost of living rise which we are given, which is decided in September. As in the UK, the island is now entering some difficult times financially, and we have been told that the rise in the cost of living rise must be financed by savings within our allocated budget.”

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June 2010. ATL Product Code: BUL01