

The TUGSA Tribune

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Our Campaign — Context, Questions, and Current News

As a special feature, in this issue we discuss the recent labor environment at Temple University and the potential impact of the new president of Temple.

Our Campaign and the Strategic Initiatives

By Erik S. McDuffie

Trustees of Temple University. According to Liacouras, the Strategic Initiatives is a “blue print” that outlines the ways in which Temple can become a leading, regional university in five years’ time. According to the former president, the university can no longer do business as usual if it intends to function as a reputable public research institution. In light of our recent defeat before the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board, it behooves us to develop a more thorough understanding of the Strategic Initiatives and their results which have already seriously affected Temple students, labor, and the community.

In June 1997, former President Liacouras issued his Special Report by the President on Strategic Initiatives to the Board of

While the vision as expressed in this document has been widely lauded by local media and public officials, a careful analysis reveals that the Report on Strategic Initiatives is a racially-coded document that envisions a new, elitist, corporate university where education, labor, and the community are subordinated to profits. In other words, the plan calls for Temple to reject its historic mission to serve students from urban, working-class backgrounds. While the former president notes that he hopes that the university will remain on good terms with its neighbors, it seems unlikely considering the report’s overt racial overtones.

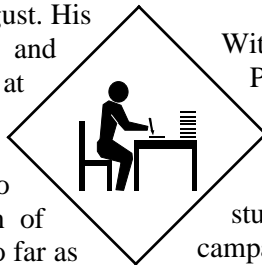
The Strategic Initiatives calls on aggressive strategies to recruit white suburban students, including constructing

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End of Liacouras Era — Adamany’s Entrance

By Greg Katz

With a good bit of fanfare, Peter Liacouras stepped down as President of Temple University in August. His farewell tour included numerous television and radio appearances, as well as publicity events at the Liacouras Center (formerly known as the Apollo). At each of these events, Liacouras congratulated himself for his years of service to the university, and for his expansive vision of Temple’s future. Shockingly, Liacouras went so far as to look back with pride on his legacy of labor relations. The graduate employees at Temple know that his labor legacy is ignominious and not illustrious, and we have found our concerns to be repeatedly ignored and



dismissed by his administration.

With the selection of David Adamany as the new President of Temple, hope has been created for real dialogue on labor issues at Temple. While Adamany’s labor record wasn’t great at his previous positions in Detroit, the graduate student employees had a successful unionization campaign under his watch at Wayne State; the union achieved recognition shortly after he left office. He is familiar with our issues and aware of the labor that is involved in being a TA, RA, or a GA at a large school.

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Critical Conditions at Episcopal Hospital

By Sue Clemons

In October 1997, the nurses and technicians of Health Professionals and Allied Employees Local 5106 signed their first contract with Episcopal Hospital. Fourteen months later, Temple University Health Care system "acquired" Episcopal, refused to honor the pre-existing contract, and then used a legal loophole to deny recognition of the union. Temple immediately attempted to roll back employee benefits. We feared that Temple's intention was to drive away staff and downsize Episcopal until it no longer existed.

We were forced to reorganize and to re-apply to the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board for an election. Temple then tried to postpone the election as long as possible with legal maneuvering. Our threat to picket the Apollo resulted in a compromise, and on March 23, 1999, the election took place, and our RN and Technical Units won overwhelming victories.

After contract negotiations were stalled for months by Temple, our members approved a two-day strike for July

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Child Care at Temple

By Vickie Milhouse, United Childcare Union

I worked for over 19 years at Temple University's Day Care Center, represented by AFSCME District Council 47, Local 1723. I was a teacher, trainer, and a union representative until our center closed its doors in 1995, and our staff was laid-off as Temple built to open the doors of the Apollo. We had served not only the university, but the surrounding community for well over 25 years. There was a great outcry over our closing from the parents, union, staff, community and many more. To

all us, the university turned a deaf ear. They claimed to have no money for a 25-year-old quality day care center, but plenty to build a new sports arena. One thing this has shown me again is how important a union can be. Most day care teachers are not unionized and earn low wages with little or no benefits, and they often can't afford them. These problems did not happen to us at Temple University because we were unionized.

Local 511's Upcoming Contract

By Officer Dwight Duley

Local 511, Security, Police and Fire Professionals (formerly, United Plant Guard Workers of America) will commence negotiations with Temple University within the next few months. Local 511's contract expires on February 28, 2001. Since 1997, the union has maintained a good working relationship with Temple's management.

The key focus of negotiations, for the union, will revolve around Campus Police issues of wage parity with other Police Departments in the area, and a better pension plan. Many additional issues will be raised with the University at the commencement of negotiations.

Campus Police Officers, on a daily basis, put their lives on the line in order to maintain a safe and secure environment for the university community. While others

have the option of running away from trouble, Campus Police must run towards it. Their job should not be undervalued.

Under Temple's jurisdiction, Campus Police are empowered by the state with the same authority as Philadelphia Police. Moreover, they receive the same training as city officers at either Temple's Police Academy or the Philadelphia Police Academy.

Local 511 looks forward to negotiating a better Police future at Temple University through the employment of pragmatic discussion and cogent dialogue.

Ask Ms. TUGSA: New Prez & New T.A. s

By Ms. Tugsa



Dear Ms. Tugsa,

I understand that Temple's new prez, David Adamany, comes from a school where grad employees are unionized. Is this true? If so, does that mean Adamany is going to recognize us, or at least be more willing to do so than Pete was? —Hopeful in History

Dear Hopeful,

Yes, Wayne State University, where Adamany was president for fifteen years, does have a union for its graduate employees. Wayne State's Graduate Employee Organizing Committee (GEOC), which won recognition in the spring of 1998, has secured dental benefits, increased pay, and protection from excessive workloads for the university's teaching assistants.

Does that mean Adamany will be ready to sit down and negotiate with us? The jury is still out on that question. TUGSA's steering committee sent Adamany a letter in early August to welcome him to Temple and to request a meeting; we've yet to receive a response. Moreover, Adamany retired from the presidency at Wayne State in the fall of 1997, the semester before GEOC won its victory, so Adamany never had an opportunity to deal with the graduate employee union there directly.

Adamany's overall record on labor relations, however, doesn't give us much hope that he'll be especially sympathetic to our struggle. As president of Wayne State and later as CEO of the Detroit public school system, Adamany showed himself to be no friend of labor. In the beginning of the fall of 1997, his last semester at Wayne State, he proposed huge cuts in health insurance benefits for graduate employees, but vociferous and organized opposition from T.A.'s, G.A.'s, and R.A.'s forced him to retract that proposal.

One thing is clear: the better organized we are, the stronger our union is, and the more we'll be able to improve compensation and conditions here. In the classrooms of the university, we do about a third of all the undergraduate teaching, and we do a higher proportion of the critical core classes required of first-

and second-year students. In the laboratories of the university, we do the research essential to Temple's reputation. In the offices of the university, we do much of the administrative work that keeps Temple running smoothly. The university needs us, and, if we're well organized, Adamany will have to listen to us.

Dear Ms. Tugsa,

I just started in a PhD program here at Temple. I'm a little overwhelmed by it all. I was happy to receive a teaching assistantship, but I've never taught before, and my department really hasn't given me anything in the way of training. I feel like I'm teaching by the seat of my pants: I've no idea whether my syllabus makes sense; I'm not sure what sort of standards I should hold students' work to when grading; I'm still a bit befuddled by my newfound authority as an instructor, given that all of my students are only three or four years younger than me. I know this isn't a coherent question, Ms. Tugsa, but the problem is that I've too many questions; I'm not sure where to start. What is a new T.A. to do?

—Anxious in Anderson

Dear Anxious,

I'm sure that you're going to enjoy being a T.A. The pay is lousy, the benefits worse, and the hours worse still. But, corny though it may sound, there are few joys more rewarding than the satisfaction of coaching students through their intellectual maturation. Still, these joys are often easy to overlook in the mania of one's first year, especially if a new T.A. hasn't been adequately prepared for all the hard work of the job.

The union, though, has set up a helpline for new T.A.'s such as yourself. It's a number you can call to speak to a more experienced T.A. and get advice on whatever issues are of concern to you. Sometimes chatting with somebody who has been around the block a few times can relieve a lot of anxiety. If you'd like to speak to a seasoned T.A., give the TUGSA office a call at (215) 235-0512, and someone will put you in touch with one. Teaching is a lot of work, but you don't have to face it alone.

Questions about life, love, or labor law? Write to Ms. Tugsa at <ask-ms-t@2street.com>.

Episcopal Hospital (continued)

By Sue Clemons

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11 and 12. After the strike, Temple closed over half of the hospital and laid-off a majority of our members. We reached out to our political officials and community leaders to pressure Temple to reopen Episcopal fully. We took to the street again on Sunday, November 21, 1999 with a rally in front of the Apollo. We were joined by other union members and activists who spoke out in our behalf. With this action, Temple finally realized we were not going away.

By February 2000, a new contract was signed and ratified. More importantly, in the course of our struggle, Temple made a public commitment to keep Episcopal Hospital open, which may not have happened without our intervention. Not only have most of our positions been protected, we will likely see the creation of new jobs. It was a battle, but we prevailed with the persistence of our members and the unwavering support of our state organization and community.

Strategic Initiatives (continued)

By Erik S. McDuffie

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more residential halls and expanding programs at suburban campuses. Liacouras adds that new marketing in the suburbs is key to changing “those ‘mind-sets’ that equate ‘Temple with ‘City’ and ‘North Philadelphia’ with ‘crime.’”

In order to reduce white suburbanites’ fears of supposed rampant Black criminality in North Philadelphia, the Strategic Initiatives envisions “Temple Town,” a gated-like community complete with shopping areas, dormitories for undergrads, and recreational activities for Temple students. “Temple Town” will provide the university with its own distinct “personality and identity” in an otherwise “undifferentiated” North Philadelphia. The Strategic Initiatives clearly uses racially-coded language to describe this new, corporate university.

The plan also calls for “university-wide cost-cutting measures” and “program restructuring.” This has been reflected in the reduction of T.A. positions and fellowships in several departments, the firing of unionized security guards in 1997, the cancellation of journal subscriptions in the library, sharp cuts in scholarship and programs to help at-risk students of color, concerted efforts to close Temple-owned Episcopal Hospital in Kensington, and battles with the nurses’ union at Temple Main Hospital. In fact, it was the reduction of T.A.’s in early 1997 that initiated the formation of TUGSA.

It is in this context that we need to understand why the administration has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to try to defeat TUGSA. The administration’s opposition to our movement is not an isolated development. Rather, it is one segment of a larger campaign outlined in the Strategic Initiatives to suppress labor on all of Temple’s campuses and to isolate the university from the community. We must, then, begin to view our struggle in broader terms, ones that connect our campaign for collective bargaining rights with those of others on campus and to our North Philadelphia neighbors. TUGSA will need to build strong coalitions with working people on campus and beyond. We will also need to recognize the importance of championing racial justice, since the Strategic Initiatives is predicated upon a racist vision for Temple’s future. Failure to view our campaign in these broader terms or to build coalitions will seriously reduce our chances to win collective bargaining rights for graduate employees. We must seize the time and move forward not only to win the rights that we deserve, but also to create a more democratic university for all.

*For more information on President Liacouras’s Strategic Initiatives, see
<http://www.temple.edu/EOP/report/>*

Action Reports: Mock Strike and June AFT Rally

By Shakti Jaising

The July 6 rally and the April 27 mock-strike, two recent TUGSA actions, further confirmed popular support for a graduate employee union.

The April 27 mock-strike, the last TUGSA action for Spring 2000, was aimed at alerting the administration of the possibility of future work stoppage. TUGSA members carrying signs reading “just practicing” set up picket lines outside Conwell Hall since 9:00 am. At the noon rally they delivered a report card to the Board of Trustees Office giving the Liacouras administration a failing grade in labor relations.

About 150 people came to show their support, 100 of whom were TUGSA members, a sizable turnout given that it was the end of the semester. Non-members included speakers from student, religious, labor, and community groups who pledged their solidarity with our cause. The action was visible enough to draw not only Temple students but also the local press.

In the middle of the summer term TUGSA organized yet another rally to appeal to the new president, Adamany. About 40 members and 80 people in total, including press members, showed up outside Sullivan Hall on the morning of July 6. The non-TUGSA members were largely from the AFT, who passed a special order of business expressing solidarity for us. Speakers included TUGSA members Adisa Alkebulan and Haiyan Zhou, AFT vice presidents Barbara Bowen and William Scheurman, and AFT Secretary-Treasurer Edward J McElroy. McElroy, who was barred admittance to the building to deliver TUGSA’s letter of support, later

commented that, “No citizen of any state should be kept out of a public building of a university. No public university should ever bar anyone from exercising their First Amendment rights of free speech.”

The Liacouras administration left without recognizing our basic right to organize ourselves. We hope that Adamany will be more supportive of our effort. Undoubtedly, though, visible TUGSA actions serve to mount popular pressure on a non-cooperative administration, as well as to allow the larger community to learn of our struggle.



Adisa Alkebulan speaks on July 6



TUGSA Pickets outside of Conwell Hall

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Adamany Entrance (Continued)

By Greg Katz

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The leadership of TUGSA sent a letter to the incoming President at the beginning of August that was both courteous and optimistic. The letter asked for a meeting with him to discuss our concerns. Disappointingly, the letter has not been met with a reply. As a student of the university and as an employee of the university, I expected some response.

While I am disappointed in the President's lack of action (and lack of courtesy), I am hopeful that the new administration will set a new path in university labor policies. Recognizing TUGSA is the right thing to do, and the new President will hopefully realize this. Graduate employees deserve a living wage, family health benefits, safer working conditions in laboratories, and reasonable workloads so that we can be available to our students. Racial biases in the distribution of assistantships need to be investigated and rectified. Implementing these changes will not even put a dent in Temple's multi-million dollar surpluses and will be an excellent way for the new administration to show the Temple community that it is concerned about quality educational and work environments.

Plan of Action

This next academic year provides the best possible opportunity for TUGSA to win recognition. The August 2000 Stewards' Council Meeting approved a proposed plan of action for the academic year. Each action builds on the next, and increases our ability to mount subsequent actions. The culminating event of the fall semester is a community-sponsored vote on unionization. Our hope is that the university will recognize this election and begin contract negotiations with TUGSA.

	<u>September</u>
8	<i>TUGSA Back-to-School Party</i>
11	<i>Stewards' Council Meeting</i>
27	<i>General Membership Meeting</i>
	<u>October</u>
TBA	<i>Stewards' Council Meeting</i>
26	<i>Rally & Community Town Hall</i>
	<u>November</u>
TBA	<i>Stewards' Council Meeting</i>
	<u>December</u>
TBA	<i>Stewards' Council Meeting</i>
TBA	<i>Union Election</i>
	<u>January</u>
TBA	<i>Membership Meeting</i>