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Day 11: Living wage activists continue hunger strike

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy | Feb. 28, 2012 NCR Today

With 11 days down, members of the Living Wage Campaign at the University of Virginia [1] say they will continue their hunger strike.

No resolution in the dispute over the school's compensation for its lowest-paid workers was reached in Monday's two-hour meeting between the living wage protesters and officials at the University of Virginia.

The protesters are pushing for the university to pay its employees, direct and contract, a living wage of $13 per hour plus benefits, demands officials say are unrealistic.

Although a number of students quit the strike for health reasons, others have joined. Nineteen activists are now fasting, including UVA football player Joseph Williams, who wrote about why he is participating in a blog for the Huffington Post [2].

According to *The Daily Progress* in Charlottesville, Va., university spokeswoman Carol Wood described Monday's meeting as "collegial" and reiterated the university's commitment to its poorest workers. She said there are only 26 workers at the university making the entry wage of $10.65 per hour. After training, many workers see a raise to $10.94 per hour, she said.

But hunger striker Hunter Link said Wood's description "does not include the hundreds of contract employees [at UVA] who make $7.25 an hour or above and who do not get the same benefits as direct employees."

In an email update about Monday's meeting, Link wrote: "I have not eaten for the last 10 days. I had hoped that it would never go this long. I had hoped that the Catholic president of our University would have stepped up to the plate by now. We use phrases like 'moral urgency,' 'people's lives,' and 'protecting dignity,' while the administration talks about 'political constraints,' 'legal boundaries,' and 'budgetary realities.' I hope and pray for a world where human needs are valued above law and order and regulation. Until then, I will continue to strike."

Link said another meeting between the living wage protesters and university officials is scheduled for tomorrow.

Find more on the hunger strike and the university's response here. [3]

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Links:
[1] http://www.livingwageatuva.org/
[2] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/joseph-williams/uva-hunger-strike_b_1299360.html
[3] http://www2.dailyprogress.com/news/2012/feb/27/uva-wage-protesters-see-no-breakthrough-hunger-str-ar-1720725/