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Protesters working for living wage at Virginia university end hunger strike

Claire Schaeffer-Duffy | Mar. 2, 2012 NCR Today

Declaring victory, students fasting for a living wage at the University of Virginia ended their hunger strike Thursday but vowed to continue their campaign.

The students, who began the hunger strike Feb. 18, are advocating for a pre-benefit salary of $13 an hour for all entry-level employees of the university.

Here's an excerpt from the strikers' statement posted on the Living Wage at UVA website [1]:

> The Living Wage Campaign declares our action an enormous victory. Here's a short list of what we've accomplished: first, the administration was forced to send two emails to some 40,000 people responding explicitly on our campaign. We've met with them twice on short notice in the last week. We have brought an unprecedented level of attention on grounds, in the state of Virginia, and indeed in the nation, to the issue of fair wages at UVA. We have educated this campus and the broader community, and shown that UVA students care deeply about the issue of how employees are treated. Every member of the BOV [Board of Visitors], and top administration figures, got literally thousands of emails supporting us -- we know this for a fact. We have also received the support of thousands of people in the form of letters, petitions, donations, and calls. We have focused the attention and support of at least two major unions, the AFL-CIO and SEIU, on labor issues on our campus.
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> Perhaps as importantly, we have inspired campus-based Living Wage campaigns across the south, especially in other right-to-work states, and we have given them a tremendous base of research and strategy documents to work with. When 30 Harvard students occupied their administration building *for a month* fighting for a Living Wage, they emerged with exactly what we have won: a commitment from the administration to audit contractors, to examine the university's labor practices, and to prioritize the lowest-paid employees -- and to make all this information public. Harvard's campaign built on this same exact leverage to win an unprecedented living wage that included contract employees, and this is *exactly* what we will do. **We have utter confidence that this action has laid the groundwork for an indexed living wage, that includes contract employees, in the very near future.** We will not rest, indeed we will escalate, until this happens.
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> The fight for a Living Wage at this University is not over. This is still a place where workers are forced to work 2 and 3 jobs to keep food on the table. A place where the concept of a "caring community" does not extend to those whose labor makes this institution possible. A place where equal work does NOT mean equal pay and contracted employees are consistently underpaid, exploited, and ignored. The University has thoroughly and consistently abdicated responsibility towards its workers. Until this problem is rectified and all workers are paid a living wage, WE WILL NOT STOP.

In their most recent response to the living wage campaign, university officials say a state salary freeze has limited the ability to adjust wages, but they will "continue to make progress on salaries through merit- and performance-based increases with specific focus on increasing the compensation of lowest-paid employees."

Read the full statement [2].

Source URL (retrieved on *05/04/2015 - 04:30*): http://ncronline.org/blogs/ncr-today/protesters-working-living-wage-virginia-university-end-hunger-strike

Links:
[1] http://www.livingwageatuva.org/
[2] http://www.newsplex.com/home/headlines/UVa_Responds_to_Living_Wage_Campaign_141032643.html