

University of Bath report for Regional Committee February 2013

Perhaps the most important thing to report to the Region is that we have had a firearms incident on campus.

A failing overseas postgraduate student was called to a meeting of his supervisors. They raised their concerns about his work and discussed the possibilities open to him. His first reaction to this was to try to bribe them with a bundle of notes. When this failed, he pulled a gun on them. Luckily it was a replica but the lecturers did not realise this at the time and one of the lecturers acted bravely to contain the threat.

This raised a number of issues for the branch. The first is that the even happened in November and was reported in the local newspaper in December when the student was remanded in custody on charges of bribery and firearms offences. When we approached the Health and Safety Unit asking why we hadn't been informed of this as an incident they said they were unaware of it. Subsequently we found out that the University Secretary refused to allow the incident to be recorded as a health and safety incident, arguing that it was 'merely' a security and student discipline issue. UCU got the incident logged and insisted that it be 'officially' recognised as a health and safety issue. Concerted pressure by us and our Director of HR led to the University Secretary relenting.

This is against a background of UCU raising concerns in February last year about staff safety in respect of failing students; particularly overseas students. We were accused of being dramatic. However this has highlighted a need for a violence policy at the University.

We are facing the biggest group redundancy ever experienced in Bath. This is as a result of the closure of a department (UKOLN) which was externally funded and which affects 26 staff. This has underlined our paltry (statutory) redundancy payments but has opened the door for us to enter into negotiations to establish a voluntary redundancy scheme offering decent payments.

Our fight to get staff voice heard on our remuneration committee and to force them to pay our VC and senior management team a reasonable salary continues. Our VCs salary and benefits in kind rose by a whopping 25.1% as she swapped most of her employer's pension contribution into salary. Our questions to University Council about the KPIs for the SMT and in particular the decision making about our VC's pay were left unanswered. We have written to Vince Cable to raise our concerns about the lack of transparency and restraint but have not yet received a reply. We are planning a lobby of University Court in March to demonstrate and raise awareness of the issues of Executive pay.

We are continuing to negotiate and organise around Teaching Fellows and the issues of HPLs and fractional contracts. We are pressing for a disability leave policy.

Finally, now that according to the Sunday Times we are the third best University in the land (after Oxford and Cambridge), we are all practicing our bowing, scraping and curtsies as the University has announced that they are proposing that our next Chancellor beHRH the Earl of Wessex.....beat that Exeter!!