

## **Brief Statement on Lynn Mahoney's Transfer to SFSU**

In the middle of graduation week at Cal State LA, the announcement was made that Provost Lynn Mahoney would be relocating to San Francisco State University, where she would take up her new post as university president. Role changes were made for other administrators, too. Months of student organizing have clearly shaken things up on this campus.

Rather than ominously speculate on the transfer and promotion of Lynn Mahoney to another school where “impaction” (stricter admissions standards caused by underfunding) has not yet been implemented in general admissions, it might be more valuable to examine the role and incentives of administrators in the CSU system more broadly.

Administrators are appointed by the Board of Trustees of the CSU, which is appointed by the governor and confirmed by the state legislature. The consequences of this hiring process are twofold: 1) In order to effect change within the CSU, administrators are required to demand it from those who granted them their positions in the first place; and 2) The Board of Trustees is unlikely to ever appoint someone who is “uncivil”—i.e. someone who would go to any length, however upsetting to the powers that be, to demand that California fully fund public higher education. That kind of troublemaker simply does not rise through the ranks of the Cal State bureaucracy. The peer group to which administrators belong is one of extreme conformity to “respectable” personal conduct. Their inflated salaries (which have increased even under CSU’s financial strain) further insulate administrators from the consequences of disinvestment by the state. Even if administrators like Mahoney sincerely believe in fully funding the CSU and catering to working class communities, their comfortable lifestyles and deferential behavior limit their efficacy as student advocates.

Where does this leave students, faculty, staff, and families who really do suffer the consequences of austerity and disinvestment in our schools? The short answer is, it leaves us without paid advocates. This is crystal clear at the state level, where the “liberal” Democrats have held a majority in the California legislature every year since 1971, and a majority in the senate during the same period (except one blip from 1995-96). During this stretch of time, what happened to the CSU? As California became less white and more brown, and the ideology of neoliberal economics gained strength, funding declined and tuition escalated. Berkeley graduate and millionaire Dariel Garner observes that we used to tax the rich to fund schools, but we now borrow from them to enroll.

On top of economic degradation and exclusion, CSU “leadership” has found more ways to exclude marginalized students—through gerrymandered service areas that avoid Black neighborhoods, or policies like impaction, which exacerbate CSU’s inability to meet the demand among high school students by only admitting those with high GPAs and test scores.

All of this amounts to an ongoing crisis of leadership at every level. The current situation exposes the failure of existing institutions to accommodate the growing need among working class, Black, and Latinx students and their families. Without allies among administrators or politicians, students, as always, must organize themselves to make change.

One last word on Mahoney: There is an SFSU student rep who is a member of the CSSA board (the CSU-wide student government body), who regularly advocates for policies that promote student empowerment and justice. He brings his well-trained chihuahua to every meeting and event. That chihuahua has done more on behalf of students than Lynn Mahoney, or any other CSULA administrator, will ever do.