

# CREATIVE RESPONSES TO CRISES IN EDUCATION

## An SCFA Grants Program Award Recipients

April 12, 2013

This letter is being distributed to members of the UCSC Academic Senate.

Over the last year, the SCFA has offered two programs of grants to the UCSC community; each has resulted in financial support for students and faculty who developed creative approaches to recent crises in public higher education. The first program was geared primarily towards students, and the second toward Senate Faculty.

In the first call for applications, the SCFA grant committee focused on raising awareness of unprecedented problems that public universities face in their educational missions. The applicants proposed art, journalism, education, and communication projects that addressed the problems of privatization, collapsing teaching budgets, and rising tuition. The successful applicants argued and articulated, in various ways, the relevance of truly public research universities in the 21st century.

The SCFA awarded grants to three projects:

- *Rebuilding the Public University*: (\$400.00) Kyle McKinley, Madeline Lane and Nick Lally created a convivial and relaxed space on the site of the March 1, 2012 picket lines, where dialog about the issues at hand flourished. Participants produced postcards on the possibilities of public education that were addressed to recipients chosen by the participants.
- *Giant Banana Slugs*: (\$1,000.00) Noah Miska, Courtney Hanson, Cheyenne Epps, Iris Roselinsky and Adam Odess-Rubin constructed and mobilized a puppet theater that functioned to draw attention to and raise awareness about the CA education crisis. The puppets were present at the UC Santa Cruz action as well as during the Sacramento demonstrations in March.
- *Tableau Madness*: (\$400.00) Willie Sayso and Nicole Dunn conceived and constructed a massive found-art sculptural tableau to mobilize student for both the March 1 strike and the March 5 Occupation of the Capital. Tableau Madness was installed at the base of campus on March 1.

In its second annual grants program, the Santa Cruz Faculty Association drew a strong pool of applications for projects led by Academic Senate faculty at UC Santa Cruz. The mission and purpose of these grants addressed a need seldom met in UC funding sources: to encourage a connection between university research and our increasingly crucial advocacy of the idea of the public university.

Public research institutions have long been sources of strength for diverse intellectual, economic, and cultural dimensions of society. More recently, in the shadow of economic crises, public dialogue on the struggles of higher education has been focused on tuition and the costs

associated with serving a growing number of students. But universities are not mere service providers and students are not mere consumers; they are larger communities of endeavor that draw innovation, ingenuity, and critical thinking together, sometimes from great distances, for common purposes.

The focus of the Santa Cruz Faculty Association's second annual grant program was to direct some of the energy and creativity of the UCSC community toward research that foregrounds the broadest definitions of the university and its role in society. We received a number of interesting proposals for projects dealing with the struggles of higher education. We have funded two projects which we feel respond to the needs of our university at this time of crisis. Congratulations to the award recipients:

- *Budget Cut Impact Survey: A Cross-Disciplinary, University-Wide Analysis:* (\$7,350.00) Miriam Greenberg, (Sociology) with Vanita Seth (Politics), Megan Thomas (Politics) and additional support from Ronnie Lipschutz (Politics), Deborah Gould (Sociology) and Chelsea Blackmore (Anthropology). The members of this team propose to do a survey of faculty from across all major fields at UCSC on the impact of the budget cuts. We were all impressed by the way that this project makes use of faculty research skills to document the impact of budget cuts upon the university, and by their plan to disseminate the findings widely so as to make the most possible political impact.
- *Santa Cruz Commons: An Activist Research Project.* (\$5,000.00) Helene Moglen, Research Professor, Literature. Participants in Santa Cruz Commons are community activists and activist academics who are seeking innovative solutions at the local level to social and economic problems that seem intransigent in a national context. Beginning in January 2012, representatives of local non-profit agencies and members of the UCSC faculty have been strategizing about the creation of collaborative forms of research and social activism. Their goals are to make the progressive work of the campus and the community visible and to define organizational forms and areas of research that will engage community problems, facilitate advocacy, and support partnerships that benefit the university and the county. The SCFA Grants Committee was impressed by the political imagination this project displayed and by its excellent public outreach/community building components. In many ways, this project makes concrete the value of a research university to its local community.