

Food workers push for admin help

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Following the ongoing battle with an expired contract and a fight for higher wages, University of La Verne Bon Appétit workers joined together on Tuesday to confront University administration and delegate their needs.

The Spot and Barbara's Place workers, dining service workers from local colleges like Pomona College, community supporters, and union representatives joined to walk over to Founders Hall, where University President Devorah Lieberman's office is located, to voice the situation to Lieberman.

However, Lieberman was not unavailable.

Danielle Vega, executive assistant in the Office of the President, carefully listened to the workers' concerns, took down a union representative's contact information, and said she would pass it onto Lieberman.

Bon Appétit workers are fighting for a pay raise and the option for retirement with pension.

Workers have been teaming up with Unite Here Local 11, a union that represents workers in hospitality and food service, to voice their concerns.

"As a delegation to administration, we're going to approach them and basically ask them to put pressure on the management company Bon Appétit, which is the company that (ULV) contracts for their dining halls, to meet the workers demands for livable wages and a retirement plan that allows them to retire with dignity," Arun Ramakrishna, organizer for Unite Here Local 11 and union representative for dining service workers at the University of La Verne and Whittier College, said.

On March 7, employees voted in favor of a strike, with 18 votes in favor and one who opted out of voting.

They also participated in a protest at The Spot on March 8.

Employees have had five negotiation meetings with Bon Appétit representatives, and nothing has progressed.

The workers were originally going to organize a picket line, but due to the rain, they decided to delegate with University administration members instead and express their concerns face-to-face.

"For my other co-workers, some of the cooks at The Spot, they've been working here well over a decade, two decades so we also really want to fight for a pension," Cora Hammons, barista at Barbara's Place, said.

"Because if you're going to work here for that long, you should be able to retire early. There's no reason that you work at one place for 10 years, 20 years, and then you can't retire



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Arun Ramakrishna, organizer for United Here Local 11 and union representative for the dining hall workers at the University of La Verne, meets with Danielle Vega, executive assistant to the president, to discuss the union's plan to speak with La Verne administration at the end of that. It's not right," she said.

Other than the expired contract and no pay raises, workers said they are extremely understaffed and underpaid.

There are 19 employees between Barbara's Place and The Spot, some of them working six days a week.

Hammons said due to understaffing issues, only student

the union members do, but we get paid up to \$1.30 less."

Gilson said student workers are now prohibited from working in positions other than a cashier or barista, like a cook, ultimately preventing them from being paid higher than their current \$15.50 an hour wage.

Jack Weidner, student at Pomona College, is involved with the Student Worker Alliance

trators about their concerns with Bon Appétit. The workers are asking to meet with University administrators to discuss their demands about retirement options and wage increases to meet the high cost of living.

showed support in their walk-out strike, some even joining the picket line with them. He believes that was a factor for their workers being heard.

"Dining hall workers on any college campus (are) crucial to the livelihood of it," Luna Romero, student at Pomona College and leader for a subcommittee of the Claremont Student Worker Alliance, said. "We owe them

ing La Verne students and workers by showing their support.

"The goal for this group is to connect the same labor fights between the campuses, so to have a direct line of communication and a way to support each other in each fight," Romero. "So that means getting student bodies out at our campuses for actions, and likewise for La Verne campus."

The La Verne workers hope University administration will step in and push Bon Appétit to make changes.

If nothing changes, workers will go on strike. No date has been announced, but workers said they are prepared.

"If I can stay here (and get a fair wage), I would love to," Fricke said. "I like the atmosphere. I love working with the students and love being able to help people and cook the food for the people."

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'Dining hall workers on any college campus (are) crucial to the livelihood of it. We owe them a lot and the school wouldn't be running without them.'

—Luna Romero, student at Pomona College and leader for a subcommittee of the Claremont Student Worker Alliance

workers run Barbara's Place after about 2 p.m., besides the cooks.

"We are getting overtime pay, I believe, but it's just ridiculous that we have to work that much and some of the cooks here have second jobs just to make ends meet," Sean Fricke, cook at Barbara's Place, said. "So you're working, there's benefits, but it's fairly minimal."

"The fact that this is the world's largest hospitality management company and they can't even spare a few dollars for this college, but they can spend millions on other places, other campuses... is just ridiculous to me," Fricke added.

Student dining service workers also joined the effort.

"I've been trying to get the students involved in the union, because we're all criminally underpaid," Stephen Gilson Jr., student worker at The Spot, said. "We do the same job that

at the Claremont Colleges and showed his support on Tuesday.

"Once I started seeing the labor fights that were going on at Pomona (College)... and starting to getting to know some of the workers and then seeing the power that students have by standing in solidarity with workers, I realized how important it is and it makes a really real, very material difference in people's lives," Weidner said.

At Pomona College, dining service workers went on a walk-out strike in October 2022. Their pay increased from \$18.60 to \$21.10 an hour. By July 2024, it will be \$25 an hour.

"It's not just this labor fight, it's not just about the workers and the students here. It's also every single labor fight that's in this area. It raises the standard for all the jobs around," Weidner said.

Weidner said a huge number of students at Pomona College

a lot and the school wouldn't be running without them."

Though there is not an active alliance like the Claremont Colleges' Student Worker Alliance at ULV, Romero said they are working to help build one.

Their first step is empower-

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