



NEWS Bulletin

UT-Austin halts plan to outsource food service

After 10 months of TSEU and community pressure, UT has decided to keep food service in-house, and not raise student fees

Ten months after the University of Texas at Austin released its plan “*Smarter Systems for a Greater UT*”, the administration has decided not to implement the plan’s recommendation to outsource food service and increase student fees. Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Kevin Hegarty recently emailed the campus community and stated that “now is not the right time to adopt this set of recommendations.”

This decision comes after ten months of TSEU organizing and mobilizing on campus against the ‘Smarter Systems’ plan, which included recommendations to eliminate jobs and outsource campus services, raise student rates, and overall consolidate, commercialize, and downsize the entire UT community. TSEU has also taken part in the UT Save Our Community Coalition, which includes student groups and other community members. Just last week, students from the coalition held a ‘study-in’ on Halloween, where they called on the administration to halt the Smarter Systems plan, and ‘not let poverty haunt UT’.

After the Smarter Systems report was released, UT created seven committees to research and analyze the various aspects of the plan. The committee tasked with exploring the option of outsourcing food service never made a recommendation and was dissolved after the UT administration’s recent decision.

While this announcement is a huge victory, the outsourcing of food service was only a small piece of the larger ‘Smarter Systems’ plan. Last month, TSEU obtained a draft of another component of the plan, ‘Shared Services’ and released it to the press. According to the draft plan, UT administrators plan to spend \$160 to \$180

million to eliminate 500 jobs in Human Resources, Information Technologies, Procurement, and Financial.

Recently, TSEU and the Save Our Community Coalition held a forum called “Shared Services and Other Bad Ideas” that included City Council member Mike Martinez, State Representative Elliot Naishat, and guest of honor Dr. Robert Ovetz. An alumnus of UT, Ovetz wrote his doctoral dissertation on privatization at UT Austin. Speaking at the event to a standing room only crowd, Ovetz concluded that “Shared Services should be resisted by students, staff, and the local community. It’s a highly questionable plan from a highly questionable source.”

TSEU members are leading this resistance and the cancellation of plans to outsource food service jobs at UT is proof that when university workers stand together and fight by organizing and mobilizing against privatization, we can win. While members should be proud of the work that was done to stop this plan, there is no time to celebrate. University workers at UT and across the state still face an onslaught of privatization and consolidation attempts to make our public universities run more like private businesses. Plans like ‘Shared Services’ will not be cancelled simply because they are bad policy. We must continue to organize more university workers off of the sidelines and into the fight in order to stop them.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

JOIN TSEU AND COPE. Be a part of the fight to stop privatization at UT and all around the state of Texas.

Already a member? Ask a co-worker to join!

GET INVOLVED! Contact your local TSEU office about mobilizations and organizing events at your university.