Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

In Loving Memory of CPAL: An Obituary for COVID-19 Relief

Olga Garcia Echeverria · Wednesday, February 3rd, 2021

DECEASED:
CPAL

TERMINATED
December 31, 2020
BORN
March 2020
RESIDED
California State University (CSU)
OBITUARY:
CPAL (AKA Covid-19 Temporary Paid Administrative Leave) lived a very brief tumultuous life in the California State University system. Full of promise and unfulfilled potential, CPAL came into existence as an emergency relief program in the spring of 2020. CPAL was far from perfect (some described her as "messy" and "cumbersome to access"), but she was nonetheless essential pandemic aid, offering paid administrative leave for eligible employees unable to work due to Covid-19-related reasons. For faculty with school-aged children, CPAL provided the opportunity for paid course reduction. Imagine being sick with COVID-19 and having a few paid weeks off to recover or being able to teach one less course during the pandemic semester so you could better take care of your five-year old. These are a couple of the humanistic things our gal CPAL made possible for staff and faculty at CSU.

Sadly, only after 9 months of existence and with COVID-19 infections and deaths still raging in California, CPAL's life was cut short by the new CSU Chancellor, Joseph Castro, and his labor relations team. These executive elites stated in a letter to the California Faculty Association (CFA), the workers' union, that CPAL would not be extended into spring 2021 because CSU "does not find a paid course reduction program to be operationally feasible."

CPAL will be dearly missed by unlucky employees who contract COVID-19 from here on out and by working parents within the CSU system. Underpaid lecturers, many of them women, who juggle heavy course loads to make ends meet *and* who also assist their school-aged children at home with online learning sans childcare and institutional support are sure to suffer the most as a result of CPAL's termination. One female instructor shared via CFA, "Since the fall, my childcare situation has worsened – not improved – and I'm at a total loss as to how I'm supposed to continue to proceed to teach effectively and parent effectively."

CPAL is currently survived by no other CSU employee relief program. There is no doubt the institution has been hard hit by the pandemic. Yet despite the fiscal crisis and the gender-specific austerity, the CSU Board of Trustees recently found it in their hearts (and pockets) to usher in the

new chancellor with an extravagant annual salary of $625,000. Chancellor Castro will also receive a monthly housing allowance of $7,917 and a monthly auto allowance of $1000. Oh, R.I.P. CPAL! If only you had been a chancellor you may still be alive today!

No memorial services will be held for CPAL. However, in lieu of flowers you can spread the word about CPAL's most unfortunate death. You can also add your name to support CSU faculty and staff in their campaign to demand COVID-19 relief be resuscitated and reinstated: https://www.calfac.org/post/demanding-continuation-covid-19-leave

CSU executive salaries are public information and can easily be found on the Internet. The quote from the CSU chancellor's labor relation team regarding the discontinuation of CPAL is from an official letter quoted in CFA Headlines dated January 21, 2021. The parent-scholar who is quoted in this piece is one of 500 employees who sent comments to CFA over the break about how the pandemic is impacting them. The parent-scholar was originally quoted in CFA Headlines dated January 21, 2021.

***

Featured photo is "Empty Classroom in King Hall" by Jesse Jimenez. Jesse Jimenez is a Oaxacan Zapotec Xicano photographer and a CSULA student. He 100% supports CSU faculty and staff in their fight to reinstate employee COVID-19 relief.

This entry was posted on Wednesday, February 3rd, 2021 at 6:01 pm and is filed under Essay, Education, Social Action

You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.