

18 August 2016

The Editor

Ref: SS/JB
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Dear Sir

Industrial Action in the College Sector

It is disappointing to read that a relatively small number of UNISON members have decided to vote for industrial action that is likely to cause misery to thousands of students across Scotland.

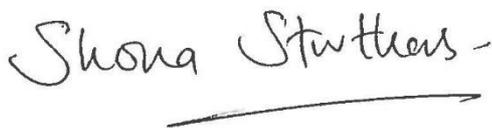
Any strike action can cause huge disruption to students across the country when many will be looking forward to starting new courses or continuing their studies at the next level. UNISON still has an opportunity to avert strike action.

We do not believe that the UNISON case for additional pay stands and while we are keen to engage with the union, we believe that their demands are inflated and do not bear comparison with reality. The overall costs of their demands would add an estimated additional £3.2m to the staff costs for Scottish colleges.

Only recently support staff secured a substantial pay rise and were also granted two additional days of leave. Furthermore, many have seen a reduction in their working hours with no subsequent loss of pay. In spite of this, UNISON is demanding a flat cash increase of £450 for all support staff for 2016/17 because they believe (incorrectly) that their staff have lost out in comparison to the separate two-year pay deal negotiated with EIS members earlier this year. Support staff have been offered the same percentage increase as lecturers.

Our colleges will do everything they can to avert a strike and to work with the trade unions. They will also do everything possible to ensure that if strike action does unfortunately take place then it has as little impact on students as possible. Nevertheless, I would not want to underestimate the amount of disruption that strike action could cause.

Yours faithfully



Shona Struthers
Chief Executive