

# [International Network of Scholar Activists Updates](#) Summer 2015

## **Meet International Network of Scholar-Activists**

- **At the Left Forum, New York City --Saturday May 30th, 2:00-3:15, Humanities Quad,** 8th floor of John Jay College
- **At Latin American Studies Association in Puerto Rico** (See below-Purdue University)
- **American Sociological Association Annual Meeting, Chicago Monday August 24th,** 12:30pm to 2:00pm--Room 206 [Carboy Law Center/Loyola University Downtown Campus](#) 25 E. Pearson St.

## **Fighting Neoliberalism on our Campuses**

*This task force of the International Network of Scholar Activists supports and helps document and connect the struggles of scholar-activists to fight the growing corporate influences on our campuses and to defend public access to universities and university resources. Please share your stories of work on your campus: inosa [at] riseup.net.*

### **TAKE ACTION ON YOUR CAMPUS:**

#### **Peoples Movement Assembly: Austerity, Precarity and Academic Labor**

Following our Peoples Movement Assembly on "[Austerity, Precarity and Academic Labor.](#)" held last fall at George Mason University, organizers at different campuses are working to convene or expand conversations that are happening around the world as academic workers increasingly come together to change our working conditions and to defend public access to quality higher education. We provide an organizing [template](#) to make it easier for folks to convene discussions on their campuses, and we'll work together to help synthesize the results of these conversations. We envision a regional or national assembly to allow space to discuss common themes and proposals emerging from local assemblies, following the model offered in the U.S. Social Forum's Peoples Movement Assembly Process.

## **Occupying Universities in the Netherlands**

In the Netherlands, resistance to neoliberalization and new public management taking over the universities has been slowly building up for years. In February this year, it was catalyzed when students of the University of Amsterdam first occupied the home of the Humanities Faculty, which was due to be sold off in the context of university management's complete stranglehold on the humanities, and then moved on to occupy the university's central administrative building for six weeks, during which an increasingly interlinked alliance of resistance groups bringing together students and staff was able to exact significant concessions and groups at other universities across the country - as well as in other countries - also became increasingly connected with the struggle to take back our universities. The occupations are ended at the time of writing, but the battle is of course not won. [The Academic Manifesto: From an Occupied to a Public University](#) was written by

Willem Halffman of Radboud University Nijmegen and Hans Radder of the Free University Amsterdam shortly before the recent occupations began and provides a good summary of the relevant grievances and the spirit of resistance with drives the continuing protests.

## **Purdue University INoSA Chapter Takes Off!**

- Purdue's INoSA network will be leading a Peoples Movement Assembly on polycentrism in social movements during the Anarchism and the Body Conference that will take place at Purdue June 12-14.
- We have organized and carried out a campaign to get our university to address the sexual assault crisis on US college campuses.
- We will reactivate the Purdue chapter of United Students Against Sweatshops next semester and will deploy various tactics, including civil disobedience, to get Purdue to cancel its licensing contracts with corporations that have not signed on to the Bangladesh Building and Fire Safety Agreement (such as VF Corporation).
- We will be promoting INoSA during the Latin American Studies Association Conference in Puerto Rico (May 27-30). Please let us know if you plan to go so we can connect and introduce INoSA people to activists in Puerto Rico and people coming to LASA (Contact Fernando Tormos fernandotormos [AT] icloud.com).

## **Washington D.C./George Mason University-Organizing Knowledge Workers**

- [Mason Coalition of Academic Labor](#) officially announced its formation in the fall semester. We are strategizing methods of organizing without collective bargaining rights that we hope to disseminate across the nation. One thing that is promising about organizing in a "right to work" state is that we have no rules that we have to follow. Therefore the coalition is made up of all instructional academic laborers from graduate instructors and post-docs to traditional adjuncts and term faculty to tenured faculty.
- In the fall, working with the Service Employees International Union Local 500. organizers in the DC Metropolitan area, MCAL mobilized a [petition](#) after the release of [Indispensable But Invisible](#) report, a unique and comprehensive study of contingent faculty working conditions at GMU. Based on the major issues raised in the report, we asked our supporters to demand a timetable for faculty appointments, access to private office space, course preparation fee and support for out of pocket expenses, and a cancellation fee for courses that are cancelled with less than three weeks notice. The ongoing petition now has over 200 signatures.
- In February, MCAL organized "Adjunct Dignity Day" in response to the National Walkout Day call to action. With dozens of people in attendance, we voiced the challenges and struggles of GMU contingent faculty and discussed the integral role of organizing with SEIU Local 500. Our organizing received national attention from a variety of media outlets including [Marketplace](#).

- As a result of our work, university administration formed an [Adjunct Faculty Taskforce](#) to address our challenges and demands. As MCAL we look forward to working together toward our goal in making Mason a more equitable and accessible university and sharing our strategies with others who are working in similar conditions. .
- Most recently MCAL organized a rally in support of Dr. Thomas Stanley, a term faculty in the School of Art, whose contract was unceremoniously [terminated](#). The rally and teach-in co-organized with the School of Art faculty in April was attended by over 50 people and highlighted not only dedication and teaching excellence of Dr. Thomas Stanley, the School of Art's only African American full time faculty member, but also the lack of transparency and faculty governance in the college. It was an inspirational and empowering moment for all of us.
- During this year, we heard overwhelming support from undergraduate students, contingent and tenured faculty as well as administrators. We truly appreciate it and look forward to organizing more in the upcoming year. As an [SEIU Local 500](#) Chapter, we are gearing up for an exciting new school year.

## Iowa State University Resists Corporate Takeover

- Bakken Pipeline construction: Our Iowa State University (ISU) Sustainable Ag Student Association and ISU Activus have been fighting the construction of a crude oil pipeline that would move oil from the Bakken region of ND across IA into IL for shipment for processing to the Gulf. This pipeline would be larger than Keystone and some predict it would be the new Keystone if Keystone is finally vetoed. We are part of the Bakken Pipeline Resistance Coalition, a state-wide effort of some 27 diverse organizations united to stop this pipeline and [have recently launched a petition I would encourage all to sign](#). We are hopeful we'll stop this and have been working to organize landowners.
- **Dr. Vandana Shiva:** Came to campus for a powerful lecture on March 11 and you can listen to the podcast [here](#).
- Transgenic banana: The Gates Foundation is funding the development of a transgenic banana to try to address Vitamin A deficiency in Africa. The first human testing of this banana is underway at ISU. A group of us at ISU have been pressuring the administration to disclose more info. about the study. They claim that it is a culturally appropriate solution yet they have incorporate no sociological or economic analysis within the study. The study at ISU focuses solely on bioavailability and includes analysis of socioeconomic situation. We challenge their claims. Without that socioeconomic data, how can they claim this is an appropriate solution? We know that most small shareholder farmers cannot plant perennial crops like bananas and that different types of bananas are uniquely used depending upon region. [We have launched a petition to call](#) on the ISU administration to address our concerns. We also hosted a critical dialogue which we invited ISU admins to attend and they refused. Video of that event is also on our website [isutransgenicbanana.com](#)
- INoSA leader, Angie Carter presented at the MSU's **Neoliberalism in Higher Education conference** this spring about the rising corporate influence at ISU ([watch video here](#))

## University of Pittsburgh – Mobilizing Against Commercialization of Research

Earlier this spring, the University of Pittsburgh’s newly installed Chancellor issued a well-publicized message to the University Faculty [encouraging the commercialization of research](#). Faculty responded by issuing an [Open Letter to challenge the emphasis on commercialization](#), and more than 75 faculty members signed the letter. As a result of our efforts, the University’s Faculty Senate’s new Standing Committee on Research has been instructed to use our open letter to help define its mission and agenda. We plan to mobilize some of the signatories of the Open Letter to plan events in the coming academic year to foster greater awareness of the issues at stake and provide spaces for dialogue and debate.

### RESOURCES

#### Selected resources on commercialization of universities

- [AAUP's principles on academic-industry partnerships](#)
- *Chronicle of Higher Education* April 20, 2015 “[Now Everyone’s an Entrepreneur](#)”
- *Chronicle of Higher Education* April 6, 2015 “[The Slow Death of a University](#)” “If the humanities in Britain are withering on the branch, it is largely because they are being driven by capitalist forces while being simultaneously starved of resources...” Educating the young, like protecting them from serial killers, should be regarded as a social responsibility, not as a matter of profit.... It would also seek to restore the honorable lineage of the university as one of the few arenas in modern society (another is the arts) in which prevailing ideologies can be submitted to some rigorous scrutiny. What if the value of the humanities lies not in the way they conform to such dominant notions, but in the fact that they don’t?
- [The Academic Manifesto: From an Occupied to a Public University](#) “Management promises that an ‘entrepreneurial university’ ... will provide economic salvation. By cooperating with business, it expects universities will transform their wonderful discoveries into marketable products within a few years. ...The colonisation of the university is a success because we cooperated en masse – and still do, to this day.... Our generation let the Wolf in.”
- [The Academic Manifesto: From an Occupied to a Public University](#) by Willem Halffman, Radboud University Nijmegen and Hans Radder, the Free University Amsterdam  
**Abstract:** *Universities are occupied by management, a regime obsessed with ‘accountability’ through measurement, increased competition, efficiency, ‘excellence’, and misconceived economic salvation. Given the occupation’s absurd side-effects, we ask ourselves how management has succeeded in taking over our precious universities. An alternative vision for the academic future consists of a public university, more akin to a socially engaged knowledge commons than to a corporation. We suggest some provocative measures to bring about such a university. However, as management seems impervious to cogent arguments, such changes can only happen if academics take action. Hence, we explore several strategies for a renewed university politics. ([Read more](#))*

**CLASSROOM RESOURCE: "Sustainability" or Survival? Popular Responses to Global Climate Change (Video Series)**

This video conference series highlights the voices of international and local leaders of grassroots struggles to protect communities from the effects of global warming and to promote climate justice. Speakers explore how climate change and environmental damage disproportionately affect already-vulnerable communities, the limitations of government, UN-based, "free-market," or technological attempts to address climate change, and the rise of popular movements advancing new strategies to build broad-based movements for "system change" rather than climate change. **FOR INSTRUCTORS: Each session is about 50 minutes** and includes reflections from leading organizers about the challenges of and opportunities for movement building across race, class, geographic and other divides. For overview of speakers and topics, visit <http://inosa.wikispaces.com/Climate+Justice+Video+Conference+Series>

**Sociology's Nero Syndrome?** Jackie Smith's short essay in *Mobilizing Ideas* explores why social movement scholarship has failed to help us understand and address the most urgent crisis of our time.