I would like to thank Jake Allen and Crescenzo Scipione of Rochester SDS and Rochester IWW for their feedback, suggestions, support and enthusiasm, their help was invaluable as I rushed to finish Towards a Student Unionism.

I'd like to thank Patrick St. John for his contributions and support.

I'd like to thank Daniel Meltzer for his work laying out Toward a Student Unionism.

I would like to thank my good friends and comrades Nicole Davis, Robin Markle, and Daniel Meltzer for their theoretical and personal support while I wrote Towards a Student Unionism.

I would like to thank all the people who talked about Student Unionism with me for hours on end, who challenged me and supported me even when they might have wanted to talk about other things.

Student Strike at the University of Puerto Rico, 2010

INTRODUCTION

The current crisis of capitalism confronts students with a rising cost of education and a drastic decrease in the real-world returns from a college degree. Not only is it harder to afford college, but we're coming out of it with more debt and fewer job opportunities. It seems like a four year degree only qualifies you to become management at Wendy's instead of a fry cook.

Students are organizing on campuses across the country, but we are a divided movement at best. Since the collapse of the student movement in the 70s, most campus activism has taken the form of single issue groups. There are the environmentalists, the labor solidarity organizations, the identity based justice groups, feminist collectives, and a growing number of radical anti-capitalists, sometimes all organizing on one campus but rarely together supporting each other. While it's great to see all this organizing, it's disheartening to see our different organizations having such difficulty working together. Even when we do coordinate our work on a local level, our national networks are often very reluctant to do so.

Even the militant resistance that is popping up against budget cuts and tuition hikes is disconnected. The fiscal situation in California is not unique. States across the country are cutting funding to schools, and univer-

sity administrators are using these budget cuts to hike up tuition (hikes that will remain long past the current depression) and to cut essential services and programs that students fought for in the past (African-American studies, queer studies, sexual assault resources, to name a few.) While students in California are launching an amazing response to these hikes, there seems to be little connection with students engaged in the same fight over here on the east coast. Students at University of DC just lost a fight against a 100% tuition increase, making one of the most affordable colleges in the country out of reach for many. Students at the University of Maryland are fighting to keep their Office of Diversity afloat, and are gearing up to confront cuts to Women's Studies and African American Studies programs. While all of these campuses are fighting nearly identical campaigns that spawn from the same "crisis", there is almost zero coordination beyond individual campuses.

If we are to address our common crisis as students, as current and future workers, as people living on this planet, we need to focus on building our power. Students are fighting amazing campaigns, but if we want to hold onto these changes, we have to organize beyond individual policy changes at our respective schools. We must organize for institutional power over our universities and create a way of holding onto that power. Progressive policy changes are a great thing on our campuses, and they should be fought for, but they should be fought for in the context of building student power at our own school and across the country. Building student power means gaining more and more control over our colleges and the decisions that affect us as students. In the end, student power means a student-run educational system. It's our education — we should control it.

To ensure that our local victories do not become isolated pockets of progress and resistance, to ensure that our work spreads, we must find ways to coordinate our cam-

UC Berkeley March against Proposition 209 , 1995

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Creating Towards a Student Unionism was an immensely collaborative process. I certainly take credit for doing they typing, but very few of these ideas originate with me.

I would like to thank Caroline Bourbonnais, François Carbonneau, Simon Gosselin, and Richard Huot of the AESS ("Association of Social Science Students" in English) for their presentation about Québécois Student Unions at the Rochester Students for a Democratic Society(SDS) Northeast Action Camp in 2009. Their presentation was critical to my understanding of Student Unionism, and their model is the basis of most of this pamphlet.

I would like to thank the chapter of SDS at the University of Maryland at College Park for all of their amazing work over the last few years which has inspired me and taught me a great deal. They helped me think about how to go about building a Student Union from scratch from talking with them about their past organizing projects and from brainstorming with them about a Student Union at UMD-CP.

I would like to thank the people who attended my workshop on Student Unionism at the 2010 Mountain Justice Summer Camp for really encouraging me to offer concrete strategies for building Student Unions, and for challenging me to think about how different each state handles higher education.

NEXT STEPS

We can't build a movement of Student Unions without working together, but right now Student Unionism is just an idea in this country. So aside from beginning to plan for building a union at your campus, I want to offer some ways to build communication amongst those building Student Unions. For starters, you can send an e-mail to studentunionism@gmail.com to reach me with any questions, criticisms, ideas, or bags of money. I'd be glad to support students as best I can in this important work, but I'd be more interested in supporting the development of a body of people who would discuss these ideas and their experiences with working to build Student Unions. Please feel encouraged to send me ideas for making Toward A Student Unionism better, I would love to update it. I would also encourage people to check out my friend's website, forstudentpower.org which contains reporting on global student struggle, as well as a video of 4 Quebecois students teaching a room of US students about how Student Unions work in their home.

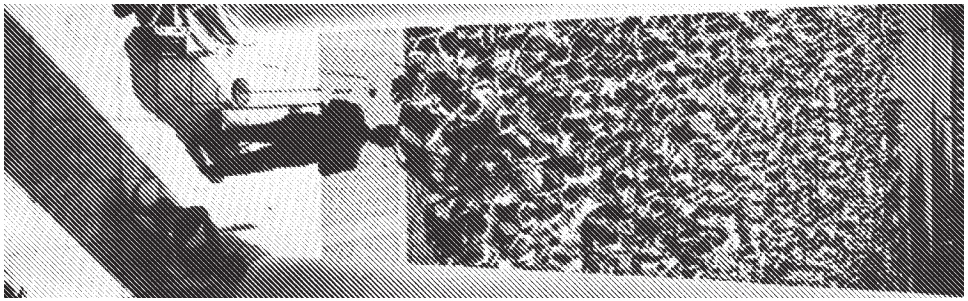
That video can be found here - http://bit.ly/fsp-quebec

pus efforts with other schools in our area. Movements grow not only by example, but when we actively engage people and share our resources and hard earned lessons. Because so many education policy decisions are made by state governments, we need to coordinate our work on a statewide level in a ways that foster cross campus solidarity and still encourage local initiative. And if we ever want to seriously push for universal education, we have to have a student movement that coordinates on a national level. Coordinating efforts should never mean that local campus organizing becomes merely an extension of some larger campaign because this sort of strategy can't support long haul organizing. We need coordination that is mutually beneficial to everyone involved.

If we want to create radical change at our colleges, change that addresses economic and cultural facets of our life, we need to move toward Student Unionism. We must move toward a Student Unionism that is run by the rank and file students, that fights alongside of faculty and workers, that acknowledges and seeks to empower the historically oppressed, and that seeks to revolutionize our educational system and the world.

NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

This pamphlet is meant to get students talking about student unionism as a strategy for change and as a vehicle for running a free university, it is by no means an exhaustive account of student unionism. I look forward to discussion and criticism of these ideas and I'm excited to put out another edition of Toward a Student Unionism with the input of more student organizers. I hope that these ideas will encourage student organizers to experiment with new ways of building power.



Student Strike at the University of Virginia, 1970

EXPLAINING AND IMAGINING STUDENT UNIONS

We all have Student Union buildings on our campus, but a real Student Union is something else entirely. Student unions can be thought of as parallel institutions to student government. They are similar because they both seek to be bodies of students for making decisions on campus. However, we all know that our student governments have little power other than to rubber stamp administrative decisions. Where Student Governments do have power, they are generally training grounds for those trying enter politics and they rarely make decisions that actually benefit most students. Our Student Governments are so glaringly weak and useless that it seems like administrators don't want to even dignify us with sham democracy.

Student unions would be bodies of direct student democracy. Although they would probably function differently from place to place, their purpose would be the same everywhere. Student unions are a space for students to figure out what should happen at their school, and to then make that happen. In short, Student Unions are a tool for building student power to

ORGANIZE

Get out there, talk to your fellow students and make real connections with people. Canvass the dorms and student housing with concrete ways for people to get involved. Talk to your classes about the advantages of a Student Union help more and more people take leadership over the process of building the union.

PRAXIS

Whether you build a Student Union that has 100% of the student body as members or whether you fail miserably, find ways to learn from your experiences and find ways to share those lessons with others. Praxis is the process of reflecting on your application of an idea, so that you can improve both the idea and your application of the idea. If we want to build a Student Union in this country that can challenge the current system of neoliberal education, we have to be committed to supporting the work of our fellow students. So write down your successes and mistakes and let people know what you've learned through your experiences, that's the only way people will be able to learn from each other on a large scale.

A REARRANGED STUDENT GOVERNMENT DOES NOT A STUDENT UNION MAKE

I've certainly implied this, but it's worth stating outright: simply changing the constitution of your existing student government to look like a Student Union won't send your classmates rushing out of their dorms to the nearest Campus General Assembly. True grassroots democracy can't be imposed from above: we win a democratic campus through the process of organizing and fighting for it, and it's through that fight that students become engaged and invested in transforming their university.

egy, is to establish goals that you plan to meet on the way to the end goal. Goals that you can achieve before your final goal will help you measure your success, create space to evaluate your strategy, and help you stay motivated. Assuming your goal is somewhat similar to the Québec model, a good starting place for a strategy is to figure out lots of different strategies for building up departmental unions. Starting from the department, gives your organizing group digestible goals toward the end goal of a campus wide Student Union. Figure out who can commit to organizing their department and then each person or group of people can develop a plan for their department. Your strategies for organizing each department should not be isolated, but rather should be integral parts of your overall strategy for getting the idea out their and building the membership.

EDUCATE

Students already know that they are being exploited by the education system, we don't need to educate our classmates about what they already experience every day. We need to educate students about what they can do fight against this exploitation, we need to show them that students in Puerto Rico went on 55 day system wide student strike against rising costs of education and WON. As organizers, we have to help embolden people to take risks by convincing them that they can create change and better their lives.

MAKE THE CONNECTIONS

When working to organize with your fellow students to build a Student Union, don't come from a purely ideological or idealistic place. Students may ignore your ideas for a perfect educational system, but they may listen if you offer a way for them to escape from mandatory meal plans that waste their money.

fight for the issues of students, but the tool is also a goal in itself. Student Unions could replace out-of-touch Student Governments, give the boot to overpaid Administrators, and actually run the university in cooperation with other organized groups on campus (more on a vision for an egalitarian university later).

ONE MODEL FOR STUDENT UNIONS

Student unions could organize in a variety of ways, here is one possible way that they might work, based off my understanding of Student Unions in Quebec. My hope is that we can discuss and develop new ways of building more powerful and democratic Student Unions, and so this explanation is meant to be a jumping off point for much longer discussions about Student Unions.

As students, we all come from different backgrounds and different life experiences which are critical to who we are as people. The commonality that we all share is our experience as people taking classes at a school. Some of our parents paid for our school, some of us are on full rides, most of us are going into massive amounts of debt, but all of us are in classes. Membership in our unions should be based on this basic commonality, those people taking classes(whether enrolled or auditing).

DEPARTMENTAL STUDENT UNIONS

Solid organizing relies on real personal relationships of trust and solidarity, and so it would be foolish to just organize all students into one university wide union. It seems that the simplest way to organize an entire university is from the department up. Our Student Unions should be based on real personal relationships, and most students tend to know the people in their departments fairly well. Aside from a sort of basic affinity that people develop for people in their department, there

is also a serious need for student input in curriculum. If we organize our Student Unions from the department up then we base the basic unit of our Union on real human connections and also allow students to push their departments to better meet their educational needs. Departments control most decisions about textbook purchasing, classroom size, faculty selection; many of the things that dramatically affect our education and our wallet. Organizing at the department level allows students the ability to coordinate affective book sharing programs, to pressure departments for more classes, better curriculum, better professors, etc.

Organizing from the Department up also makes starting from scratch more manageable for students working to build a Student Union. On many campuses, student activists and radicals are concentrated in departments. If we build our Student Unions from the department level, then we can have easy initial goals of organizing those departments that house the most sympathetic students. So rather than trying to get tons and tons of students into one giant union, Departmental Unions make the first steps of building a Student Union much simpler.

COLLEGE STUDENT UNIONS

If we take students as the membership of our unions, and first organize ourselves into departmental unions, it seems the next level of organization would be by "school/college". Schools/Colleges(name varies from place to place) being collections of departments that are similar, we would be federating our departmental unions into the next wider level of university organization. Federation is a concept that has been used by lots of different groups. In this instance, I'm using federation to mean Departmental Unions coordinating with other Departmental Unions on issues that they share in common. In some federations, the basic unit of organization

take time, dedication, pizza, and lots of critical thought. Pizza may be the deciding factor though.

A GOOD PLACE TO START

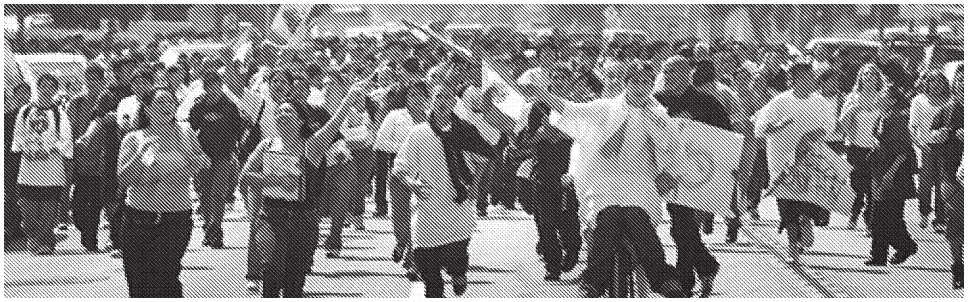
First things first, you need to know your campus. I'm a strong believer in mapping out the terrain that you're organizing which can be a learning experience for all those participating in the process. Its important to consider every thing about your campus, how many students are there, what percentage of students are full time or part time, what percentage work part time or full time, is your campus ethnically or racially diverse, how many students live on campus, how much debt does the average student accumulate, what are all the departments (and how many students are in each department), what are the issues students have with the school. This information is all really important, but you should push yourself to answer even more questions, you should know the campus well before starting a drive to organize all of the students.

SET GOALS

You should always know where you're going before you start organizing, but you should also be flexible. Have a solid idea of how you think your Student Union would work best on your campus so that you can present students with a structure that's easy to understand. Still, keep your ears open and listen to your fellow students about ways to make your Student Union model stronger and more relevant.

MAKE A PLAN

Once you have a solid idea of your campus and have established your long term goal, create a strategy for achieving that goal. One important part of your strat-



Walkout against HR4437, Los Angeles 2006

MAKING IT HAPPEN: STRATEGIES FOR BUILDING POWER THROUGH STUDENT UNIONS

I've been writing this pamphlet for a while now, it's gone through different drafts, but none had this section. I want to thank the people who attended my workshop on Student Unionism at Mountain Justice Summer Camp 2010 for asking lots of great questions about how to birth Student Unionism into the US. Without those questions I probably would have called this pamphlet done without any practical ideas for bringing the ideas into reality.

Every department is different, every campus is different, every state is different. These ideas for building a Student Union on your campus should be taken as loose suggestions based both on my experiences as a campus organizer and on the suggestions of Student Union organizers from Quebec. If they don't apply to your situation, I hope they at least prompt you to develop your own strategy. Student Unions will not spontaneously appear on your campus, building them will is subordinated to the broadest body of organization, but this model of federation destroys local initiative and disempowers people. A better way of federating, is to empower the basic units(Departmental Union) of the larger organization(Student Union) to control all of the things that affect them only, and to have those basic units form into bigger units(College Unions) for issues that affect more than one basic unit. Organizing by college/school would allow department unions to organize with people with whom they probably share classes, professors, equipment, etc. Students are pretty likely to take classes outside of their department that are within their college/school, so many people in the College/School Union would be familiar and would have similar educational concerns. While a biology major probably doesn't have much interest in how the school of humanities functions, she probably does have some interest in how other science departments function.

UNIVERSITY UNIONS

Federating outward, Departmental Unions would be a part of College/School Unions, and then they would federate to include all students in the University Union. University Unions would serve as a place for students to fight for university wide issues like meal plans, condition of libraries, university investments, expansion policies, etc. University unions would not have the power to direct the college and departmental unions that make it up; rather those unions would direct the university union. In Quebec, University Unions take action when Department Unions put forward proposals to the rest of the campus. University unions are where students coordinate on things that affect all students, but again, don't make decisions on issues that don't affect all students. Unions would follow this pattern, federating outward to the state level where most issues of funding are decided, at least for state schools.

State schools are administered differently from state to state. Some state school systems are very tightly organized, others have different systems inside the state, and others are organized differently. Student Unions should be flexible structures that can change with concrete needs. Statewide Unions could struggle together to win increased funding for the system, fight against statewide policies of privatization, or anything else that affects all the schools in the state. Private schools make this model of organizing more complicated, although most do receive state funding as well, they don't share the same issues that state schools do. The basic principle of federation could still apply (though differently from place to place), meaning Universities would form wider Unions in their state based on shared interests. It might be that there is a separate State University Union and a Private University Union and that they come together to make decisions that affect both of them, or it might be that in one Statewide Union, both public and private schools both participate but can't participate in decision making that doesn't affect them. There will likely be tons of issues with this model that will require creative solutions to make them work. Finally, these Unions would federate to the national level. A National Union could coordinate the fight for universal, equitably funded higher education, it could also fight for increased access to federal subsidized loans in the interim. It could exist to coordinate our local organizing work toward common goals (determined locally) but not as a body to command the rank and file.

Delegates

As our unions federate outward, they will probably do so by empowering delegates. Delegates are not politicians who make decisions for their constituency, instead delegates are empowered spokespeople. Delegates are the go-betweens who communicate the decisions of those who chose them, not the people who make those

those with greater experience than us, education has to respect and value the wealth of experience and information that all people have simply from living their lives. Along with putting students in control of their education, students should also shoulder the responsibilities of maintaining a productive learning environment. Our universities tend to rely on marginalized workers who often have little access to education: a Free University can not be built upon the backs of others.

UNIVERSITY AND THE COMMUNITY

Education should be a holistic part of all communities, not a distinct place occupied by a few. People learn throughout their lives, some lessons are best learned from a book, others through hands-on experiences, and sometimes your Grammaw is the only person who can teach you certain things. Knowledge is not simply about abstract formulas or theories, it's about understanding our world: the university should foster learning throughout the community and throughout people's lives. Learning should be something that our society constantly encourages and supports, not just an experience for the young. Spaces of education should also be in harmony with the community in which they reside, rather than parasites that invade and gentrify, forcing people from their homes.

ests of all people. Hopefully these vague ideas will spark you and your classmates to critically think about education and come up with even greater ideas for an egalitarian university.

OPEN ACCESS

Sites of education should be open to all people, requiring nothing more than a willingness to learn. Open access to education means taking education out of the market, and putting it back into the commons of society where all people are free to engage in the process and utilize resources. However, open access also means more, it means education that is geared toward people of all cultures and abilities. Think of how the ideal university — and the university in the here and now — can serve communities who are systemically denied access to education.

EDUCATION FOR LIBERATION

Education should encourage people to challenge systems of domination that exist in their lives and in the world. It should uphold the humanity of all people, recognize that historical oppression has shaped the lives of everyone in the world, and it should reinforce struggles toward freedom by bringing out the voices of the silenced.

STUDENTS

Students must be in control of their education for them to learn and grow as people. For education to be truly empowering, everyone in the process has to come to the table open to learning and changing their ideas. The system of teacher as possessor of information and student as sponge is not empowering, and it's not effective. While we should respect and seek to learn from

decisions. Delegates should be recallable at anytime by the people who select them so that they can kept in check and in touch. Delegates would be selected at each level of the federation to represent that level in the next one. For example, students in each department would select delegates who would carry out administrative things (administering the decisions of the students) for the Departmental Union. The students in each department would also choose delegates to voice their opinions and communicate their departmental decisions to the College/School Union. The students of each college/school would choose their delegates for the University Union, all the students in the University would choose delegates for the Statewide Student Union. Its important that bodies always select their own delegates and not have that be a task of delegates. Delegates would also be responsible for keeping their people informed about what is happening, acting as a channel of communication from students to decision making bodies, and then communicating back to the students how that process went, what viewpoints were expressed by other students through their delegates. When the administration of things drifts into decision making, unions can easily become bureaucratic bodies serving themselves rather than vehicles of student power, so it's important for rank and file students to be vigilant of their delegates and of the union to keep it in line with the students.

Popular Assemblies

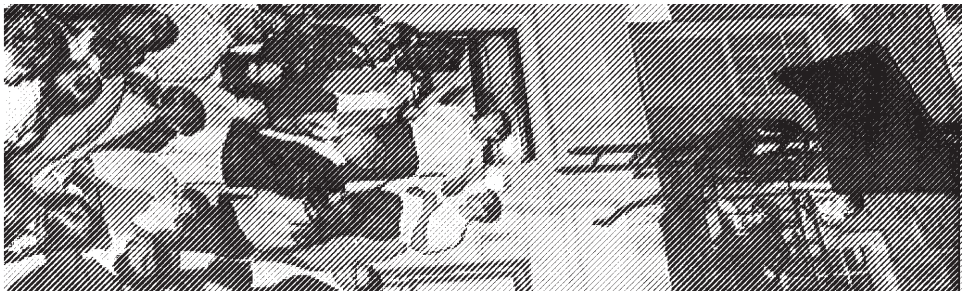
Organizing our Student Unions from the department up is just one possibility. I've offered it as a viable model that has worked well for students up north in Quebec, but there are certainly other ways of building student power through unions. One other way that might be possible, and probably favorable on smaller campuses, would be the Popular Assembly. A Popular Assembly is a simple concept, decisions are made at mass meetings

in which all students are able to make decisions. Often in history, revolts have utilized this model of organizing in order to get the widest participation and input in important decisions. A Student Union run by Popular Assembly would rely on regular mass meetings, these could be university scale mass meetings, or mass meetings for each department.

Like all forms of organizing, this possibility has its strengths and its weaknesses. While it would certainly be impossible to hear the input of every student at the Assembly, it would immediately obvious if students were supportive of ideas via group energy, body language, etc. There would likely be little need for time consuming referenda if half the students in attendance were visibly displeased with an idea. Its very possible to meld these ideas, to have mass meetings regularly at the departmental level where decisions are made about the Department Union, like allocation of funds, its position on a University issue, etc. In creating these structures in our country, we have a lot of freedom to experiment and change things, and we should utilize that space to try out different ideas and figure out what can build and sustain long haul student power that can realize our hopes for a better world. This is no rubric, just some suggestions for places to start from.

WHOA, WHAT ABOUT COMMUNITY/ TECHNICAL COLLEGES?

Anyone who has spent time at a community college knows that these above formulas would require some modification before applying them. Student organizing is a different beast at a community college, and Student Unionism will have to be implemented in ways that address the concrete reality of each campus. I've worked with community college students who tried to organize their campus, but I have not attended one myself so the



Columbia University student takeover, 1968

GLIMPSES OF A FREE UNIVERSITY

There are countless writings out there on what ideal educational institutions should look like, and so my goal is not to lay down commandments of a free university, but rather to hopefully spark your imagination, to help you dream up how an egalitarian institution of learning might work.

Student power is a principle and practice that is as old as the university itself. Out of the Medieval period in Europe the precursors to the modern University were born in two distinct models: that of the faculty and administrative control, and that of the student control. While Lords, Kings, Bishops and Popes all tried to stamp out student power, it has persisted. Stretching behind us in history are millions of students on all continents who have fought — and often won — control over their education and their lives (often toppling a government or two in the process!). They could do it. So can we.

Developing our vision for a better university, or for a better world should not be an abstract ideological process, it should be rooted in the experiences of those living in the current world in order to serve the inter-

find a strategy for a strong and coherent student movement by coming together and evaluating our work.

The truth is that it could take years of solid organizing to turn back the devastation this current capitalist crisis has wrought on students. Rather than operating under the terms of the crisis that they have created, we should organize deliberately with a long haul mindset for this struggle that will continue long after we've payed Sallie Mae our last dime. While we should fight like hell now, seizing the opportunity for change wherever we can, we should also be consciously creating a stronger foothold for successive generations of students. Perhaps the first step in that process is to come together and evaluate our movement, looking for genuine ways to coordinate our work.

following ideas are really just ideas for consideration. Community colleges could organize under the basic principle of federation, but in a different way from universities. There could be a union for each independent vocational program, and those could all federate into a larger Vocational Students Union. This would allow students to address their individual program of study and also allow them to organize with other students who share the common goal of a vocational degree. There could also be a General Union for students pursuing an Associates degree. I apologize for my lack of ideas for how Community Colleges might better apply the above model, but I look forward to including the ideas of Community College students on in any further publication of this pamphlet.

STUDENT UNIONS AND ONGOING CAMPAIGNS

Building Student Unions on our campuses should not mean that we abandon our other organizing work, rather, building Student Unions should be seen as a developing a stronger way to pursue our current projects. University Unions should be building student power to fight for the same social justice issues that our single issue organizations already fight for. Single issue organizing groups could certainly still exist: it's not as if Student Unions preclude other forms of student organizing at all. However, Student Unions will likely have more power on campus and better mobilizing capabilities since they aim to have all students organized into the union (in Quebec, nearly 100% of students are voluntarily in the Student Unions). We should work for a sustainable university, while we fight alongside campus workers for living wages and worker self-management, while we fight to for a safer campus, while we fight to end racist persecution by police on campus, while we fight for universal and democratic education. We know all of these struggles are connected, so it's time we or-

ganize like they're all connected.

Perhaps our unions could form committees to pursue different goals, perhaps there is a better way for our unions to advance these issues. These sorts of things don't need a rigid model though, maybe on some campuses there will be a sustainability committee within the Student Union, maybe in others that push will be from a less formal group of people.

BEYOND THE GENERAL STUDENT UNION

Students should also organize themselves around other common interests. Students could organize dormitory unions to keep police out of their rooms and to maintain healthy living conditions. A dormitory union could model itself after the Tenant Unions that many cities have, but it could also aspire to be a democratic decision making body for the dorm.

On many campuses, formerly political groups like Black Student Unions are now simply social spaces. These and similar groups could be spaces for people with common social experiences to unite and organize for a better campus. These bodies should be autonomous from the Student Union, meaning they should be free to make the decisions that affect only themselves and should not be subject to control from outside. Bodies like this should be respected and included in broader university student decision making as well. All people have the right to organize themselves, and no one has the right to deny that right to others.

FACULTY UNIONS

As we fight for more power on campus, we should ally ourselves with faculty, individually and as a group, when they vie with the administration for power and control over their own lives. Administrators and Trustnize in a way that allows us to easily take on our more lofty goals as we grow stronger as a movement. Again, a National Student Union should not direct the affairs of the States or campuses, but should only be a place for those bodies to coordinate their work. We should federate our unions outward on an as need basis, not just because we're used to having our local work directed from above.

Too often, large scale coordination is successful in the short term, at the expense of long haul organizing. Networks and coalitions spend all of their energy getting students to mass mobilizations and conferences, but don't really support local students in building power on their campuses. Often times, they don't even help those students learn the basics of organizing, and when the event or action is over everything falls apart locally. We need a student movement that will outlive our grandchildren, not one that will see just a momentary eruption. Student Unionism should learn from these mistakes and prioritize the growth of local student power. It should see the development of local student power as the only thing that can lead to a strong statewide or national student movement. Student Unionism should be directed from below, with each campus working on its immediate needs as well as working toward broader change. We must build a Student Unionism that values autonomy as much as it does solidarity.

To meet our dire need to build our power and to eventually transform our educational system and the world, the student movement has to sit down and evaluate itself. All of our organizations have conferences and discussions about our own work but we never sit down at the same table and talk as if we all had the common goals that we clearly do have. We need to undergo a deep evaluation of our strengths and our weaknesses, an evaluation of our strategy and of our goals. Perhaps Student Unionism is irrelevant, but if it is we need to

BEYOND THE CAMPUS

The establishment of local Student Unions would be an amazing accomplishment, but for us to create systemic change, we need a Student Union movement, we need a Student Unionism that spreads throughout the country, building momentum and changing things everywhere for the better. We know that all of our schools are controlled by people outside of our campus administration, and so we need a Student Unionism that can take this into account and push for change on different levels.

In order to ameliorate immediate issues, we need campus Student Unions to federate themselves on a statewide level to resist massive budget cuts that are destroying our education and excluding more and more poor people. So many decisions about our education are made by our state governments and so it's very natural for our Student Unions to federate at a state level to fight at that level. Federating at a state level should follow the same principles as it does on the campus. The Statewide Student Union should be made up of lots of delegates from each university and should exist to coordinate the decisions of local campuses, not to direct them from above.

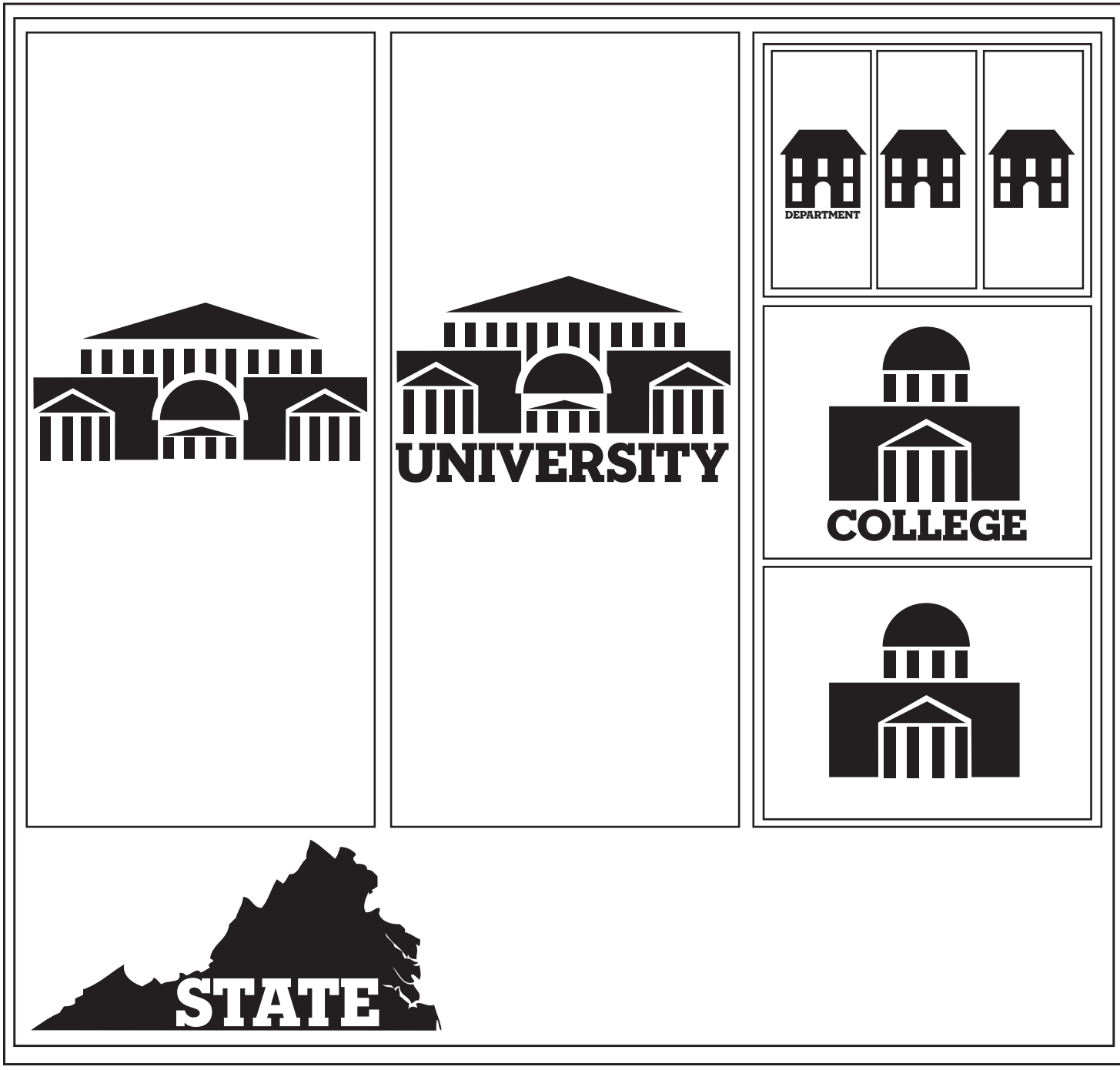
We could also form a National Student Union, federating all of the Statewide Student Unions into a body to coordinate efforts of all the campus unions. This body could be a place to coordinate the much needed fight for better loans (from the government and the banks) in order to help current students come out of college with just a little bit less debt. A National Student Union could also be the body to fight for socialized education, a fight that students in the US have rarely even considered due to our lack of organization. We have to be realistic about where we are at and what issues we are able to win right now, but we should also orga-

ees are a common enemy: while students and professors do the actual work of the college, the wealthy and well-connected are the ones who run the show. Many of our grievances are the same, too. Neither faculty nor students want 100-person seminar classes, nor do any of us want rigid and unfair requirements for tests and grading.

During campaigns and actions, there will be sections of the faculty who will ally with us, some who will be neutral, and some who will take the side of the administration. Our student groups should make common cause with radical and democratic faculty and encourage them to organize among fellow professors, especially adjuncts. We must honor picket lines — and join them! Adjunct professors are at the bottom rung of the academic ladder (in many ways lower than grad students who teach) - severely underpaid and treated poorly in universities that whittle away the number of tenure-track positions down to zero. These highly educated and often passionate teachers are so overworked they can't give the attention to their students — and pedagogy in general — that they wish. Adjuncts are the faculty who most need a union, and are, sadly, the professors with the least unionization in the country.

However there will be times where our interests diverge, and even conflict head-on with those of the faculty, including our allies. Do we modify or scale down our demands to accommodate their concerns? Do we push onward and risk alienating our faculty comrades? There's no cookie-cutter answer. All I can suggest is that you be sure to carefully balance the short- and medium-term needs of the movement with the long-term understanding that burned bridges will linger for long after we have graduated, and be an additional barrier for future student organizers to overcome.

A FEDERATION MODEL



Delegates or Assemblies at every level, for example:

- Department (**Sociology**)
- College (**Humanities and Social Sciences**)
- University (**James Madison University**)
- State (**Virginia**)
- National (**U.S.A.**)