

# GOT TUITION?

*The Cost of Attending College is Increasing Faster than most Families Incomes – How will You Pay for College?* LPWF STAFF

Janet Fung is a Junior Equity Sales Trader in Hong Kong. KoShe recently graduated from Middlebury College in Massachusetts with a BA in Economics and Chinese. Janet's mom is a housekeeper at a San Francisco hotel and a member of UNITE HERE, Local 2. What does the union have to do with a college education? It was through the union's Child and Elder Care Plan that Janet was able to take advantage of a free SAT preparation course, held at the union offices, for members' college-bound teens.

## THE UNION STEPS UP

With a diverse membership body, including a majority of recent immigrants from China and Latin America, UNITE HERE Local 2 recognized that many members have little or no experience regarding the U.S. college application process. To change this, the union worked with The Princeton Review to incorporate educational components for parents

including an orientation class that reviews the steps to applying for college and a financial aid workshop. "The financial aid workshop is always well attended," states Lisa Jaicks, Plan staff. "Many members think they have to pay for everything and they are so happy when they find out that's simply not true." The workshop is key to parents seeing college as a reality for their son or daughter. For some, it means looking at universities across the country instead of opting for a local 2-year college.

In the six years that the SAT course has been offered, Local 2 has seen teens go off to top universities including UC Berkeley, Stanford, UC Davis, Middlebury and Yale. Luis Ochoa was accepted at Berkeley, Columbia and Chicago but chose Stanford because it fit more with his character. "I really appreciate the help the union has given to my father," states Luis, whose father is a hotel

chef. "He could not have afforded to pay for an SAT course himself."

Janet Fung appreciates UNITE HERE for providing the SAT course: "It was very helpful. It made taking the SAT a lot less stressful," she said. "If it weren't for the union benefit, I would not have been so prepared or done so well."

## COST OF ATTENDING COLLEGE RISING

For many teens and their parents applying to colleges, the SAT Preparation Course would be prohibitively expensive at almost \$1,000 for the course. Working families struggle with a sky-rocketing cost of living that includes a recent jump in college tuition. Tuition costs at public universities have increased more than 42 percent since 2000. Interest rates on student and parent

For the last ten years, college costs have been rising faster than inflation.



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loans just went up, even as Congress cut \$12 billion out of the student loan funds. While union members work hard to make a decent living to support their families, helping provide the opportunities that come with a college education has become more challenging than ever.

## SO WHAT CAN UNIONS DO?

More unions, like Local 2 in San Francisco, are finding ways to help members' children attend college – from providing free SAT courses to financial aid counseling and scholarships.

The TWU (Transport Workers Union) awards 15 scholarships a year to members' dependents. Other unions including AFT, AFSCME and SEIU, participate in the Union Plus Scholarship Program to provide their members' children with scholarships to attend the university of their choice. Union Plus has awarded over \$2 million in scholarship money since it began in 1992.

Some unions like 1199SEIU in New York help provide more support for kids who will be the first generation in their family to attend college. 1199 joined with New York University (NYU) to provide a year-long program that prepares 14-17 year olds for college with academic support and counseling

## AIDING FUTURE UNIONISTS

AFSCME found a way to help students of color pay for college and get direct experience working in the labor movement at the same time. The union offers the AFSCME/UNCF Union Scholars Program ([www.uncf.org](http://www.uncf.org)) to college sophomore and junior students of color with a grade point average of 2.5 and better. These students have an opportunity to work on the front lines of a real union organizing campaign and talk to workers about having a voice on the job, fair wages and benefits for themselves and their families. While getting this experience, students receive a stipend during the internship and scholarship funding when they complete the program. As one organizer said, "the combination of exposure to union work with a stipend and scholarship is great way to motivate and support students and, for many of them, it's a great way to see what their parents had to go through when they formed their union." Jeannete Barajas, a 2006 AFSCME/UNCF union scholar, said that the best part about the program was "The interaction with a variety of people and knowing that you are making a difference. Also, while meeting all these people, you feel inspired and really believe that we can really change the world."

## UNION SCHOLARSHIPS FOR COLLEGE:

### UNION PLUS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM:

Over \$2 million has been awarded. For more information on union scholarships go to <http://www.unionplus.org/benefits/education/scholarships/>

### Check with your union or state labor federation.

Many unions and federations offer scholarships and programs to help college-bound students. For more information go to your union or state federation website and see what they offer.

### What's in your contract?

Unions have negotiated for tuition assistance for members or their children. Some unions offer SAT classes or other programs for college bound children through a negotiated fund. Check with your union or contact the Labor Project for contract examples.

### Be Creative!

Some unions offer scholarships to teens whose parents are not members – especially students going into human services. Look beyond your own union to see what you can find.

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**“What does labor want? We want more schoolhouses and less jails, more books and less arsenals, more learning and less vice.”**

— Samuel Gompers, 1881  
Co-founder and first president of the American Federation of Labor (AFL)

