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CONTACTS:

- Shannon Steen, Assoc. Professor of Theater, Dance, Performance Studies, UC Berkeley, shannon.steen@gmail.com, 510.407.225
- Richard Walker, Professor of Geography and Chair of California Studies Center, UC-Berkeley — walker@berkeley.edu, 510-525-1969, 295-3108
- Scott Saul, Professor of English, UC Berkeley — ssaul@berkeley.edu, (323) 788-3621.

Hundreds of Educators, Students to Converge at Capitol for March 4th “Educate the State” Rally

On March 4, buses packed with professors, teachers and students will be streaming from Santa Cruz, San Francisco, Berkeley, Davis and around Northern California, converging at the State Capitol in Sacramento for an “Educate the State” rally, part of a statewide day of action in support of public education.

For the first time in California history, all sectors of the state’s education system — K-12, community colleges, CSUs, and UCs — will band together to defend education in a time of severe budget cuts, and to make the case to legislators and the public that education is the best investment in the future that the state can make.

“The education crisis is everywhere,” said Shannon Steen, professor of Theater and Performance Studies at UC-Berkeley and an organizer of the Sacramento rally. “It’s in K-12, where only three other states spend less than we do per pupil. It’s in the Cal State system, where tuition has increased 182% over the last seven years and they’re turning away 40,000 students who desperately want a college degree. And it’s in the UC system, where enrollment is shrinking and tuition is spiking up too. So we’re all acting together to say, ‘Enough is enough.’”

Even Republican Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger has publicly recognized that, with state funding for prisons eclipsing state funding for higher education, politicians

need to take a hard look at their sense of priorities. After all, budgets for all public higher education in California could be restored to 2000-01 levels, with a rollback of student fee increases, for a mere \$32 per average taxpayer in the state, according to the Council of UC Faculty Associations.

“For thirty years, we’ve been underinvesting in public services like education – in all the basic infrastructure of our state,” said Richard Walker, professor of Geography at UC Berkeley and head of its California Studies Center. “And where has the money gone? In no small part, to prisons and tax cuts. The undersupported elementary school student of today is the underprepared college student of tomorrow.”

The March 4 rally will begin at 11 am on the steps of the Capitol and will be structured as a “basic curriculum” in California’s public education system, with lessons in its “History,” “Political Science” and “Economics”. Speakers will represent the various levels of the state’s educational system and will also include Assembly Majority Leader Alberto Torrico and UC Berkeley Professor George Lakoff, who has spearheaded an effort to restore majority rule to state budgeting.

This press release has been issued by SAVE the University, an organization of UC Berkeley faculty dedicated to preserving access to education, excellence in teaching, and transparency of administrative decisions in the wake of the unprecedented budget crisis facing the University of California. For more information, go to: <http://saveuc.org/>