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| Dear colleagueTHIS WEEK'S TOP 6:**Applications fall by 4%: UCU calls for urgent reform of university funding**As data from the Ucas admissions service shows UK applicants are down 4% for the 2017 cycle, [UCU has called for an urgent debate on university funding](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4398/1/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTQgSnVseSAyMDE3&x=91c1034b). Speaking on the BBC, [Sally Hunt asked chair of the House of Commons education committee Robert Halfon](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4399/2/) to look at alternative funding models such as a business education tax and corporation tax.**Close the gap: further education (England) pay campaign**The union’s further education committee met last Friday and agreed to run an industrial action ballot of FE members if the Association of Colleges’ pay offer in September is unsatisfactory. This will be proceeded by a ‘get the vote out’ campaign and will include an e-ballot in late summer through September. [Please look out for further details in the coming weeks](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4400/3/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTQgSnVseSAyMDE3&x=bf26821b).**Higher education pay: have you voted in the e-ballot consultation?**UCU members working in HE are being asked to consider whether to accept or reject the employer’s pay offer of 1.7% and [the consultative e-ballot opened last week](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4389/4/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTQgSnVseSAyMDE3&x=68aadb61). If you are a member in HE and haven’t received an email containing a unique voting link, [please click here](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4354/5/).**Tolpuddle Martyrs festival this weekend: ‘we will, we will, we will be free….’**UCU joins trade unionists from across the UK for a weekend of music, comedy and politics at [the annual Tolpuddle Martyrs festival in Dorset](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/3924/6/). Every year trade unions remember the farm workers from Tolpuddle village who were arrested and transported for forming a trade union - subsequent protests demanding their freedom led to the foundation of modern day trade unionism. The festival starts today and look out for the UCU balloon at the procession 2pm, on Sunday 16 July with speakers including Jeremy Corbyn and Frances O’Grady.**Teeside University tells professors to reapply for jobs**[Please add your name to our open letter to Teeside University](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4401/7/) which [hit the news this week](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4402/8/) for telling all research professors to reapply for their own jobs. Management dropped the bombshell as the 27 members of staff were preparing for the summer break and new academic year and say they want to subject the staff to an interview by panel by the end of next month. [UCU is calling on the university to halt the process](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4403/9/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTQgSnVseSAyMDE3&x=b13e9d2e) and instead engage in meaningful consultation over proposals. More [press coverage here](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4404/10/) and [here](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4405/11/).**NEON survey on access, retention and success for BME learners**The National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) is exploring how higher education institutions support black and minority ethnic (BME) learners throughout the student lifecycle. [They have set up a survey](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4406/12/)to identify examples of best practice that can form part of a report and be shared with the wider sector to help improve existing practice. **In the news*** Tuition fee architect’s efforts to abolish tuition fees
* Sally Hunt tells BBC that new Commons Chair must get to grips with student funding
* Troubled Midlands college boss one of best paid in the country

[All this and more here.](https://list.mercury.ucu.org.uk/t/26553/62105/4407/13/?c73c8e04=Y2FtcGFpZ251cGRhdGU%3d&60bc612e=X2FsbC1tZW1iZXJz&560a3889=VGhlIEZyaWRheSBlbWFpbDogMTQgSnVseSAyMDE3&x=1327faa5)Best wishesJustine StephensUCU head of campaigns |

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