

UF's Fola Odebunmi Receives Statewide Union Recognition: CCA WHO Award



The powerhouse leadership of former United Faculty President Fola Odebunmi is well known to NOCCCD faculty. Now, our colleagues statewide have also recognized Fola for her ceaseless work and commitment to faculty rights. The Community College Association honored Fola this month with the prestigious We Honor Ours (WHO) award.

A natural leader, Fola has served as the Cypress College Economics Department coordinator, Cypress Senate president and vice president as well as the United Faculty president, vice president, and negotiator. As UF president, Fola was at the helm during the recession. Still, she managed to organize faculty to stand strong and united against frivolous management hires, including stomping out a new Vice Chancellor position at the district level. Fola protected faculty pay and benefits through these precarious times. As UF president, Fola understood the power of unified voices and organized many protests. The most memorable was a 2010 action against raising student fees that brought hundreds of students and faculty to the streets at Fullerton College. The protest was so impressive that it was covered by TV news and featured on the front page, above the fold, of the *Orange County Register*. This was just one of many articles in a variety of publications about UF under Fola's leadership, including a piece in the *Wall Street Journal*.



After her tenure as UF president ended in Spring 2011, Fola focused her union work at the state level. For the past nine years, she has served as a member of the Community College Association (CCA) Board of Directors—including the past six years as treasurer—a job where she does much more than keep the books. An officer of the association, Fola represents faculty at conferences, meets with statewide union leaders, and lobbies politicians in Sacramento. She has also served as the chair of the CCA Faculty Equity and Diversity Committee—a role that she used to help launch the first statewide conference for the group.

In addition, Fola currently holds the Ethnic Minority Representative at large seat on the California Teachers Association (CTA) State Council. In this role for eight years, she has represented CTA at the 2016 LGBT Anniversary Dinner/Gala in Los Angeles and also attended the Congressional Black Caucus in Washington, DC, five times to lobby for education issues. In recognition of her work for equity and diversity issues at the state and national level and her personal work with minority youth, Odebunmi was awarded the 2011 CCA Mary Ann Pacheco Ethnic Minority Service award as well as the CTA Statewide WHO Award Award.



Although widely recognized at the state level for her leadership that promotes inclusivity and team building by forming relationships, partnerships, and alliances, Fola is first and foremost a teacher. As she said in her acceptance speech for the CCA Ethnic Minority Service Award, she is primarily devoted to "promoting the learning conditions of students and faculty as well as advancing academic achievement of ethnic minority students." She lives up to these words as an active mentor for both the Cypress College Puente Program and Legacy Program. Please join United Faculty in congratulating our fantastic colleague—a true role model for the current and future UF leadership.