

10-16-1991

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Costa Rica: University Faculty, Staff & Students On Strike

by Deborah Tyroler

Category/Department: General

Published: Wednesday, October 16, 1991

On Oct. 7, students, faculty and staff at the nation's four public universities launched a strike to pressure the government into providing more money for higher education, and covering an \$11 million university budget overrun in 1990 and 1991. In an appeal submitted to the Supreme Court of Justice on Oct. 8, University of Costa Rica administrators charged that the government violated two articles of the constitution by retaining a portion of the national budget allocated to higher education. At a meeting in San Jose, administrators of the nation's three other public universities decided to support the appeal. Spokespersons for President Rafael Calderon's government say the financial support demanded by university administrators is contingent on legislative approval of a bill to eliminate a variety of tax exemptions. The nation's constitution guarantees state support for public universities. At present, 70,000 students are enrolled in the four universities which employ nearly 10,000 faculty and staff. On Oct. 10, 3,000 students demonstrated in front of the national legislature complex. In addition to calling for more spending on university education, they called for the resignation of Treasury Minister Thelmo Vargas, described as responsible for budget cutbacks and attempts to privatize higher education. (Basic data from ACAN-EFE, 10/08/91, 10/10/91)

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