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Deborah Tyroler

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## **Costa Rica: Public University Strikes End**

*by Deborah Tyroler*

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On Oct. 17, government negotiators reached an agreement with students, faculty and staff at the nation's four state-run universities ending a two-week strike. The strikes were organized to protest spending cuts and attempts to privatize higher education. Under the agreement, President Rafael Calderon's government promised to restore nearly US\$6.1 million in withheld funding to universities over the remainder of the year, and to add US\$5.6 million to compensate for inflation. Next, the government is committed to a US\$100 million higher education budget in 1992. University administrators pledged to review respective budgets and expenditures. The strikes were the end result of the government's disregard for a five-year agreement with the universities concluded in 1988. According to the agreement, a specified proportion of the national budget would be earmarked for higher education, and subject to inflation compensation. President Calderon said universities cannot be an "island" in the context of the government's public spending cuts. Costa Rican Technological Institute rector Arturo Jofre said the government's ultimate objective is to shift the burden of higher education costs from the government to students and that such objective was reflected in the strike settlement. State-run universities have a combined enrollment of 60,000 students. Over 80% of scientific and technological research in Costa Rica is carried out by these institutions. (Basic data from AFP, 10/17/91; ACAN-EFE, 10/17/91, 10/18/91)

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