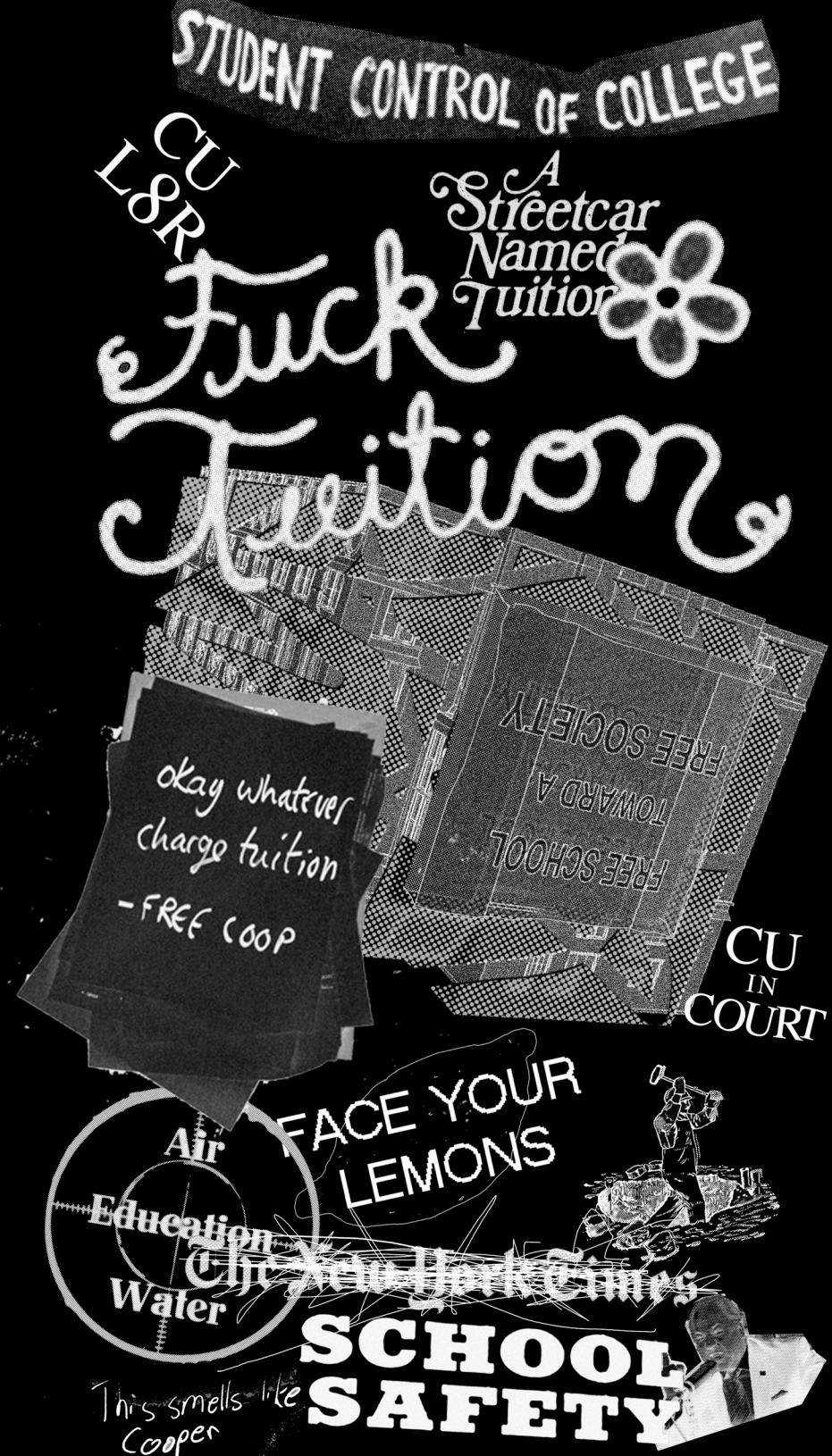




\*MAY 2015, FCU



Free Cooper Union

# *dis***ORIENTATION**

This is the second-and-a-half edition of Disorientation published by Free Cooper Union.

Disorientation is a counter-orientation intended to introduce YOU to the real story of Cooper's dense internal politics, as well as larger community issues.

Why is institutional memory so short? To maintain systems of control. Disorientation is a rejection of the administration's rewriting of history, the systemic underpinnings of financialized realism, and the way that our communities are strategically disempowered.

We must constantly be disorienting ourselves.

Disorientation is a brick,  
a ping-pong ball,  
a barricade,  
a vote of no confidence,  
an infinite dream.

What follows is a very focused history of what's happening at Cooper, and in no way adequately addresses all of the broader intersectional struggles that continue to shape and support our movement. We'd like to acknowledge all of the past and present groundwork, in hopes that we can achieve paradigm shifts together through our continued campaign building.



p.s. Forgive us our typos, this edition was updated over the course of three nights as the administration's schemes finally imploded. We're 30 minutes past our print deadline! Thanks and love to the community for funding a last-minute print run.

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Additional Online Essays: [www.freecooperunion.org/disorientation](http://www.freecooperunion.org/disorientation)

Save CU & You Can't Just End An Era  
School of Engineering alumni Sangu Iyer's exhaustive research on the events leading up to Jamshed Bharucha's appointment as President.

The Tragedy of Cooper Union (a Six-Part Series)  
In a series of six blog posts written for Reuters between 2011 and 2013, financial analyst Felix Salmon wrote what many consider to be the canonical account of a collapse in leadership at Cooper Union.

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# JAMSHED IS FIRED

On April 9th, 2015, the news broke that Cooper's Board of Trustees had voted to not renew President Jamshed Bharucha's contract. In effect, he was fired.

Bharucha paved the way for the corporatization of Cooper Union. Not only has he been incapable of leading the school since day one, but his agenda has thwarted any attempt to uphold the mission of free education to all.

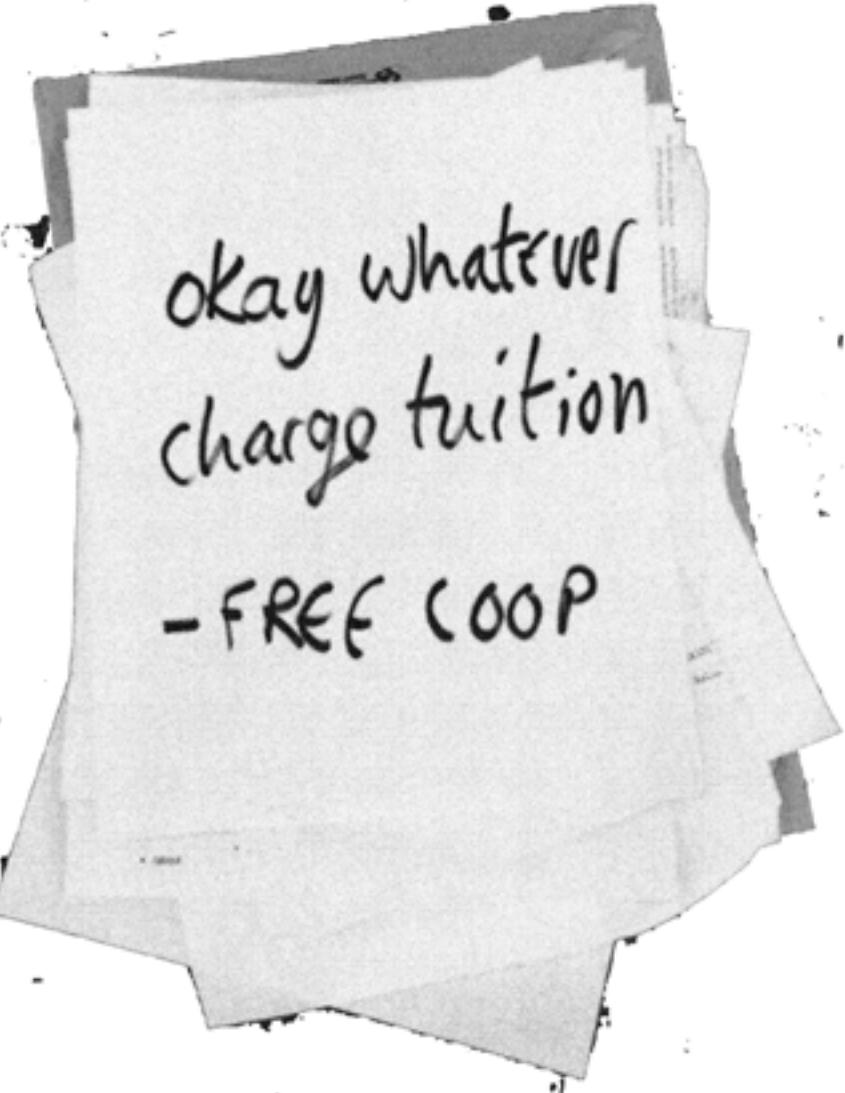
His firing is a milestone, but the problems are not solved. Facing the pressures of relentless community activism, a Supreme Court lawsuit, and a New York State investigation, the Board and Administration attempted to save face by throwing each other under every bus rolling down Third Avenue. It backfired on them.

Now is the time to imagine new futures for Cooper Union: A school with no president. A president whose job is to eliminate the idea of a president. A community empowered to govern itself.

Rejecting the Board's growth model and ideology will require more than just getting rid of key players. It will mean developing a model for a debt-free college, to shine bright like a diamond in the middle of a national student debt crisis.

In 2012, a year into Bharucha's term, eleven students locked themselves into a room, demanding the President step down. Here we are three years later. Direct action gets the goods, even if it takes a while.

So hang in there. Familiarize yourself with the situation by reading this book, and anything else you can get your hands on. Channel your energy and ideas into developing, demanding, and fulfilling a Free Cooper Union. And don't stop there. We want everything. So can you.



# **VISION PLATTER DELUXE**

**INSTITUTIONS:** Institutions are full of shit. Are we the Drain-O? Is there Drain-O strong enough? Is education like washing our hands in a sink? Is the sink the absence of a pipe? Is water money?

[The omnivalent narrator loses their mind]

In the beginning there was debt, bloat, and free education. Since we began, years ago, we've come to zest many more interconnected systems. This is not a debate about "tuition," it's a practice of building resistance, dismantling oppression, and fostering shared principles.

This might make no sense, but keep reading. Come back to *the platter* as you learn more throughout the rest of the book. These concepts have congealed over years of campaigning for a Free Cooper Union, and they will continue to glob.

Behind every tactic is a crazy vision platter deluxe.

**• FALSE DICHOTOMIES:** It behooves them to financialize us. Beware of false choices. Being for and being against both reinforce the terms of a debate. Are you sure you don't want to switch tabs?

**• TIME SCALES:** Don't forget: short, middle, and long. But now is always the time for principled action. Organize as if social relations matter.

**• DELUSIONAL REALISM:**  
The way to oppose a system of financial realities is to stop making sense. A different kind of sense. Jokes. Tuition may have been the answer but what was the question?

**• CONSTITUTIONALISM:**  
There is a big difference between respecting the still radical ideas of Peter Cooper and feeling like we have to hold a seance to consult him on every action. Keep digging past the boring conventional history of Cooper that people fight over and you will find literal founder cults. Don't be a stupid constitutionalist. Be ashamed to die until you've won some small victory for humanity.

**• SYSTEMS:**  
Systems don't just touch, they are sugar cookies tied in a knot. Their change is driving us and perpetuating itself. We continue to maintain that we're in control. lol. We're deciding to burn all this stuff? No! It's the glitchy artificial intelligence of wickedly entangled systems. We can't read it even when we're not being too stupid to see it.

**• RUBBERBAND:** A form of organization. If an immediate response is needed we're on the ground. Other times we're circling back to archive recent history. Other times we're just lying in a junk drawer.

**• POSITIONAL ETHICS:**  
When we ask to be a part of a committee to find a security firm, that doesn't mean that we're not also trying to demand that there not be a security firm. Hypocrisy is a paradigm. If you have to ask, it's not mutually exclusive.

**• REMEDIATION:**  
Fixing Cooper's relations with the broader community. Being actively good instead of having to circle back and make amends.

**• DELICATE SENSIBILITIES:** Friction. Rubbing. Discomfort. He's choosing to focus on one small thing. For people looking at that whole spectrum the friction is like a fire and it's burning and it hurts and it makes everything impossible to ignore. You're compelled to act. The masking of the intersectionality of things and the privileging of invisible systemic forms of violence on indigenous groups, people of color, minorities. And what of the violence imposed by the state? All of these organizations propose that we care about human rights when in reality the capitalist framework infringes on human rights in order to provide some people with a comfortable lifestyle.

**• FAILURES OF LANGUAGE:**

We've bumped up against the limits of language. ASFhgjskhdljadkvsfjhjd. Prefixes and suffixes denote oppositional things, but sometimes they're not opposites. The idea of a position as a coordinate in a grid system is like a statistic: you can make it mean anything you want by putting words around it. There's no essential grid. If you think about people on an axis from liberal to conservative, then reorder that axis in terms of insurrectionists to institutionalists, Rush Limbaugh will suddenly be next to Obama and Tea Partiers will be next to anarchists. You can attribute ethics to a position, but ultimately there are no fixed positions because the grid is a concept in relation to positions.

**• PARADIGMS:**  
Paradigms are paradigms. Everyone who has managed to entertain that idea, for a moment or a lifetime, has found it to be the basis for radical empowerment.

**• VISION vs. NOSTALGIA:**  
A lot of "visions" are actually just nostalgia: a weird security-blanket baba goo Cooper 20 years ago 10 years from now. Free wasn't perfect. Say it over and over because nostalgia for free is only going to get hotter. What should a university should be like now? In 100 years? Fight the nostalgic with the prophetic.

**• COMMUNITY:**

Is this even a fight with the community? What community? The community has been erased, destroyed, disarmed, dissolved — if there ever was one. Could a community with no say have ever been one?

**• GOVERNANCE:**

Problems: duress, cronyism, monoculture, middle management.  
Proposals: require structurally that board composition be different, no board, self-governance, Sunset Clause (see glossary), leadership teams, horizontality, decentralization, open source, cooperative, small, within our means. We're not afraid to not have a president. The only school that should have tuition is a school that is self-governing and decides to charge itself.

**MERITOCRACY:**

In most cases a thin guise for the perpetuation of privilege. The more spent on tutors and special schools, on extracurricular activities and educational trips, on satisfying every need outside of study — the more appealing a student becomes to a meritocratic institution. If you don't have to do anything all day but swim in a pool and take piano lessons, meritocracy wants YOU. The School of Art, for its part, showed one way through this mire in the form of its hometest: dissolving gameable charts of grades and accomplishments with debate about what constitutes a class.

**AUSTERITY:**

Recontextualize the public perception post-recession that individuals and institutions in financial straits are solely responsible for getting themselves into their problems. And out of them. These problems are systemic and are the result of an intersectional complex of issues: corporate, public/private, race, class, gender.

**ADMISSIONS:**

Why are there so many students from Florida? What is the magnet school pipeline really about and do we want to be part of it? What if admissions counselors had the time and resources to rove around like Morpheus trying to find Neo, instead of heading in a direction of calculating yield from partner schools.

**SOCIAL JUSTICE:**

How can we have a section called Social Justice? And yet we must. If only as a reminder that we too often opt-out, and that shouldn't be an option.

**PHILANTHROPY:**

You can't have philanthropy without a system that relies on charity to make amends for incredible disparity. Reinforces the gap between the rich and the poor. We don't want the end of philanthropy but the beginning of a society that it would make no sense to.

**PEDAGOGY:**

How can we have a section called Pedagogy? What happens here makes no sense, but it's the least stupid thing we know how to do.

**RISK MANAGEMENT:** The administration's approach to risk is capitalist: the minimization of risk. We integrate risk. Aversion to risk is the link between a growth ideology and faithfulness to profit. If you want to minimize risk the surest way is to balloon everything around you infinitely. It's sometimes hard to understand how things can keep getting worse and worse, but risk aversion provides a lens through which all the bad things that happen here have to happen to keep minimizing risk.

**NICE ≠ RIGHT:**  
For god's sake.

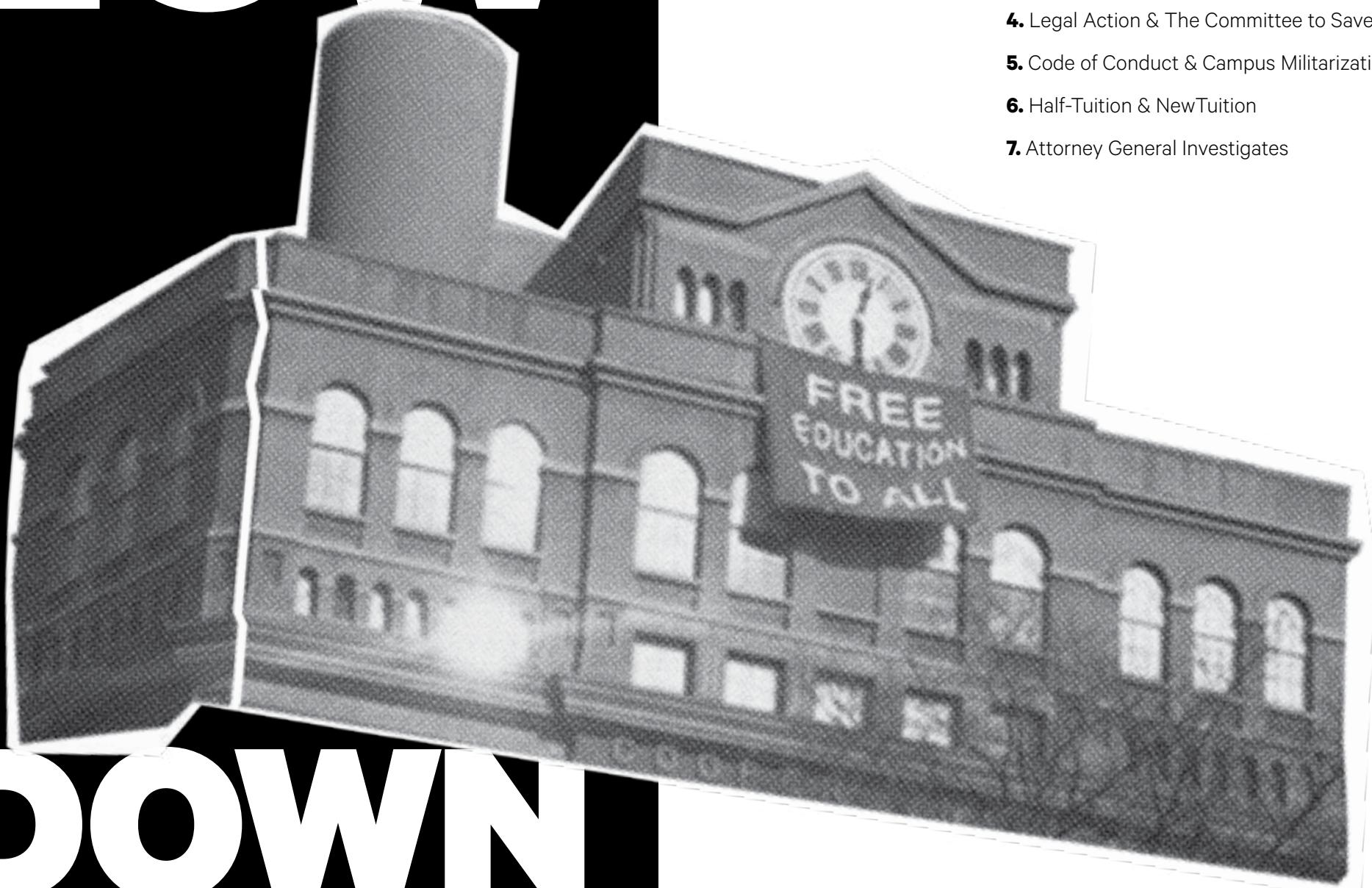
**EDUCATIONAL INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX:**

There's a whole industry that manufactured your desire to go to school and feeds off your plight once you're there. Access! Means nothing. People fall through the cracks of financial aid over and over again everywhere all the time. Debt forgiveness legitimizes sticker prices. Elizabeth Warren and others are on the reform beat, and it's important — but it's also important to remember what reform misses. Dismantling euphemisms. Test prep. Textbooks. Common App. Kaplan. College Board. Rankings. Fake scholarships taken away in a second-year bait-and-switch,

**ACCREDITATION:**

People flip a shit about losing accreditation but why should we care? Except that it's tied to financial aid. A degree means nothing in a world completely saturated with degrees. If you get your education for free, nobody can lord a certificate over you.

# LOW



Brief introductions to the things you need to know: recent developments, active groups, and ongoing issues:

- 1.** Direct Action & Free Cooper Union
- 2.** Ivory Tower
- 3.** Working Group
- 4.** Legal Action & The Committee to Save CU
- 5.** Code of Conduct & Campus Militarization
- 6.** Half-Tuition & New Tuition
- 7.** Attorney General Investigates

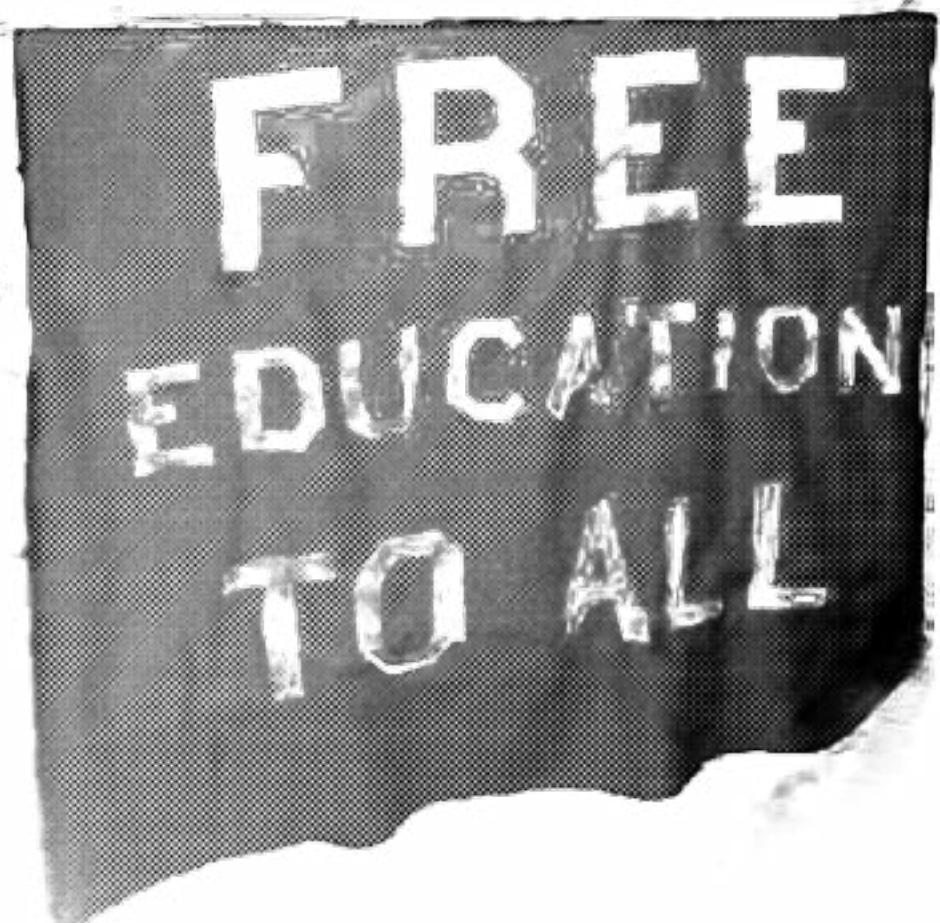
# **DIRECT ACTION & FREE COOPER UNION**

Free Cooper Union, founded in Fall 2012, is a group of students and alumni working towards free education to all.

We affirm:

- Tuition is a betrayal of Cooper Union's radical mission, in addition to the fact that it isn't a sustainable financial model.
- Higher education around the world is in dire need of a paradigm shift.
- The debate about "tuition" at Cooper must engage broader dialogues about student debt, educational reform, alternative models of governance, and social justice.
- This is not a financial scandal, it's a cultural crisis.

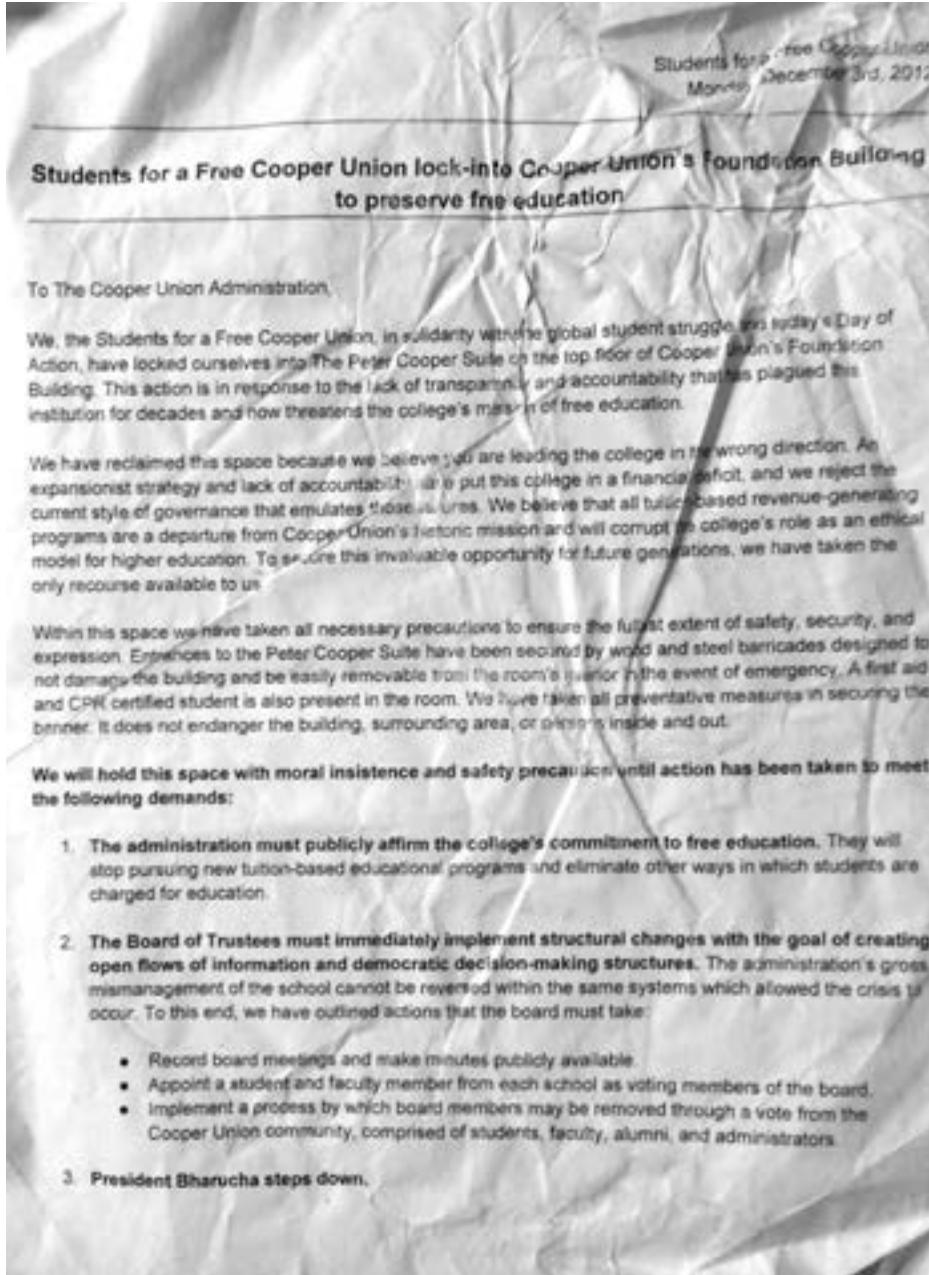
To this end, we have employed a wide range of tactics including but not limited to: *drafting petitions, holding walk outs, hosting summits, igniting memes, building satirical websites, mounting art exhibitions, creating music videos, leading parades, staging historical reenactments, authoring publications, posterbombing, culture-jamming, breaking into meetings, leaking documents, dropping banners, talking to press, building barricades, occupying, and envisioning futures and possibilities.*



\*\*\*\* ONLINE \*\*\*\*

Interactive list of 198 Methods of Action  
[freecooperunion.org/disorientation/198](http://freecooperunion.org/disorientation/198)

In December 2012, eleven students and an embedded reporter barricaded themselves inside the clocktower of the Foundation Building, dropped a gigantic banner reading “Free Education to All,” and issued the following statement:



A set of principles was also issued, expanding upon larger systems:

## Principles

### Higher Education Bubble

The over-inflated costs of higher education have placed more than a trillion dollars of debt onto the backs of students. Higher education should be a means of social mobility and intellectual liberation, but it has devolved into an industry that exploits students for profit. Inevitably this bubble will burst and what appears to be a healthy and growing educational system will be revealed as a model that was always doomed to fail.

### Grow Down

The administrators who have grown us into this mess are trying to grow us out of it. Investing in the higher education bubble is short-sighted and uncreative. Playing a larger role in one's community provides strong roots. If we refuse to invest in a growth model and reaffirm our mission, we stand to see the principles of free education bring life back to our own community and other institutions as well.

### Structures for Transparency and Integrity

Bloated and visionless administrations have become an epidemic threatening institutions of higher education all across America. We must rebuild the governance of these institutions with open flows of information and democratic decision-making structures. Carrying a mission such as free education will require principled, rather than self-sustaining, leadership.

## Direct Action

Isn't the world so messed up? There are different ways to go about changing things: exposing an existing problem, highlighting an alternative, or demonstrating a possible solution, are some examples. Imagine two categories of action: *indirect* and *direct*.

Indirect Action	Direct Action
<b>Asking</b> somebody to make the change you wish to see	<b>Acting</b> to create the change you wish to see
<b>Sharing</b> an important news article with friends	<b>Teaching</b> a "Know Your Rights" workshop to high-schoolers
<b>Signing</b> a petition for a cause you support	<b>Planting</b> a garden to remediate local soil
<b>Voting</b> for a representative	<b>Blockading</b> a road to prevent work on a gas pipeline
<b>Writing</b> a letter to your elected official	

We're raised to view indirect action as the most respectable way to create change but it's not. Direct action breaks through delicate sensibilities with a massive and highly effective breadth of tactics.

### The Futility of Bureaucracy

Bureaucratic institutions, such as Cooper, are so internally complex and inefficient that they defy change from within. This is why working primarily within the structures of an institution is less effective than the tamest actions taken outside of them. If you look deeply into almost any type of institution, you will find hidden histories of direct action being used by communities to turn perceived inevitabilities into self-determination.

Following the announcement of Cooper's "financial crisis" in October 2011, the community spent an entire year attempting to work with the administration. It soon became apparent that the administration had no real intention of listening to community concerns. The community had no real agency: Bharucha's approach turned out to be a way of manufacturing buy-in for tuition and Q&A forums with Trustees created false dialogues which left tough questions unanswered.

The community moved towards indirect action, but petitions and walk-outs failed to garner attention beyond local blogs, and community summits produced brilliant talk but few results.

The decision to take direct action against the administration was complicated by the fact that up until April 2013 the entire administration repeated again-and-again that, "tuition will be implemented only as a last resort."

The plausible deniability of tuition created an air amongst the student body that things might work out for the better if everyone attended enough Q&A sessions and emailed the administration with creative money-making schemes:

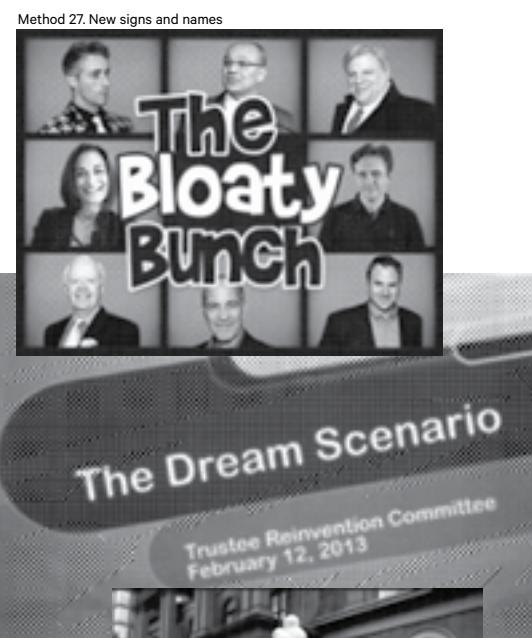
Three years later, documents were leaked revealing that the administration's messages about "sustainability" and inclusion were crafted by consultants to minimize conflict. Plans for tuition had been in the works since before Bharucha was hired by the Board to "Reinvent" Cooper

\*\*\* Cue fight music \*\*\*

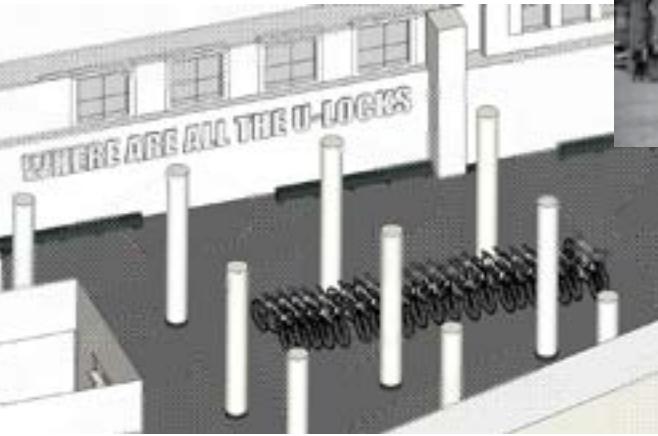
Method 173. Nonviolent occupation



Method 194. Disclosing secrets



Method 164. Ride-in



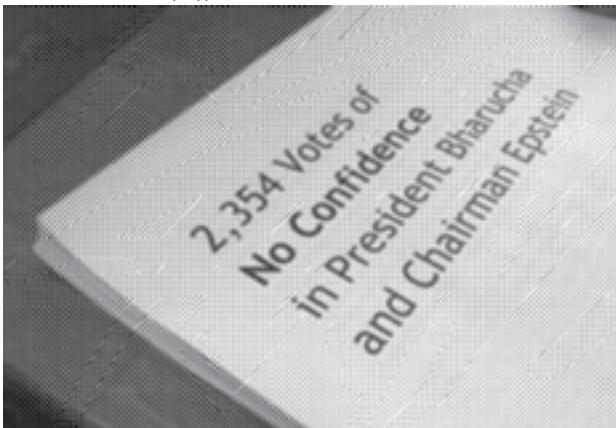
Method 32. Taunting officials



Method 48. Political mourning



Method 131. Refusal to accept appointed officials



Method 27. New signs and names



Method 146. Judicial noncooperation



Method 8. Banners, posters, and displayed communications

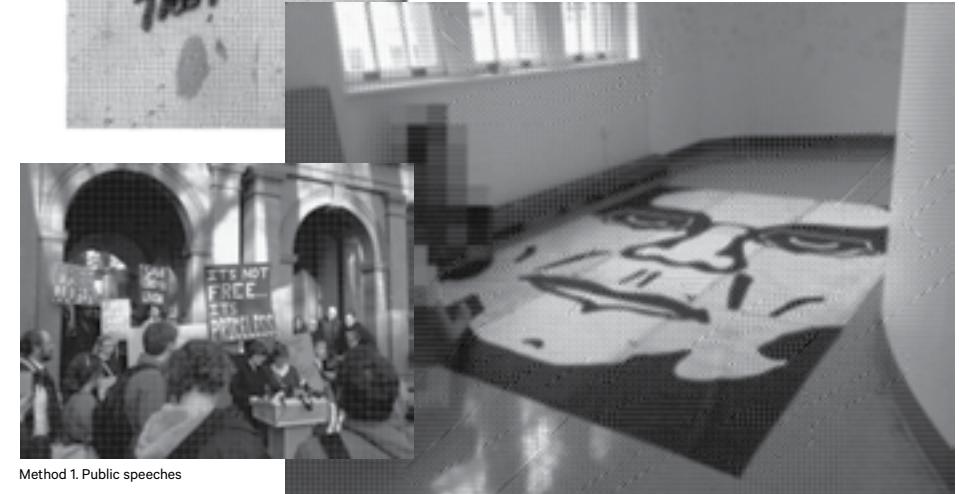
Method 35. Humourous skits and pranks



Method 162. Sit-in



Method 1. Public speeches



Method 25. Displays of portraits

## Direct Action Gets the Goods

In November 2012, to accuse the administration of intending to charge tuition was to be pigeonholed as a conspiracy theorist, a reactionary, a pessimist, and an uninformed kid. Nonetheless, students began quietly organizing action planning meetings. 14 secret late-night meetings were held between a rotating crew of about 50 students. Discussion ranged from the big picture of educational and financial systems, to logistics about “food, water, and shit” in an action scenario. These meetings resulted in the founding of Free Cooper Union, and the first major direct action known as the Lock-In.

The Lock-In (December 3rd - December 10th, 2012) was an action in which eleven students barricaded themselves into the Foundation Building’s clocktower to draw attention to an upcoming Board about tuition. This catalyzed the community, leading to a barrage of actions in a single jam-packed week: an early set of tuition models leaked to the public, students on the ground broke into the Board meeting and livestreamed as they disrupted a discussion about implementing tuition, a city-wide rally on education erupted outside the Foundation Building, and Cooper’s struggle received national and then global mainstream media attention.

On April 23, 2013, the Board finally announced that they intended to charge tuition, implementing a “half-scholarship” model starting with the incoming class of 2018. The announcement underscored to the entire community how severely out of touch and deceitful the Board is.

After The New York Times reported that the announcement of tuition marked the “End of an Era,” students sought to prove that Cooper’s future isn’t up to The Times or even the Board to decide. In May 2013, a group of over one hundred students took the office of President Bharucha to deliver a Vote of No Confidence. Bharucha refused to meet with the students to discuss their concerns — having caught wind of the action, he fled campus.

In the space of the action, The Times changed their tune, reporting that students had incited, “a running debate about how to alter history.” The Occupation lasted for 65 days (May 8th - July 12th, 2013) placing it among the longest student occupations in US history.

## Le Rêve Infini

During 2012’s monumental student strikes in Quebec, a play on words emerged in which the “general strike” (grève infini) was crossed with the idea of an infinite dream (rêve infini). The space of an action is not unlike an infinite dream: realities based on limitation are transformed — in an instant — into a boundlessness of time, space, and possibility. The action itself ends, but everyone in its path remains changed, retaining a boundlessness within themselves.





# IVORY TOWER

In Summer 2013, the students occupying President Bharucha's office were approached by a team of documentary filmmakers led by Andrew Rossi (director of *Page One: Inside the New York Times*) about participating in their upcoming project *Ivory Tower*, an exposé on higher education across the country. The filmmakers followed the campaign through the entire summer and into the fall, documenting meetings, actions, and ongoing organizing.

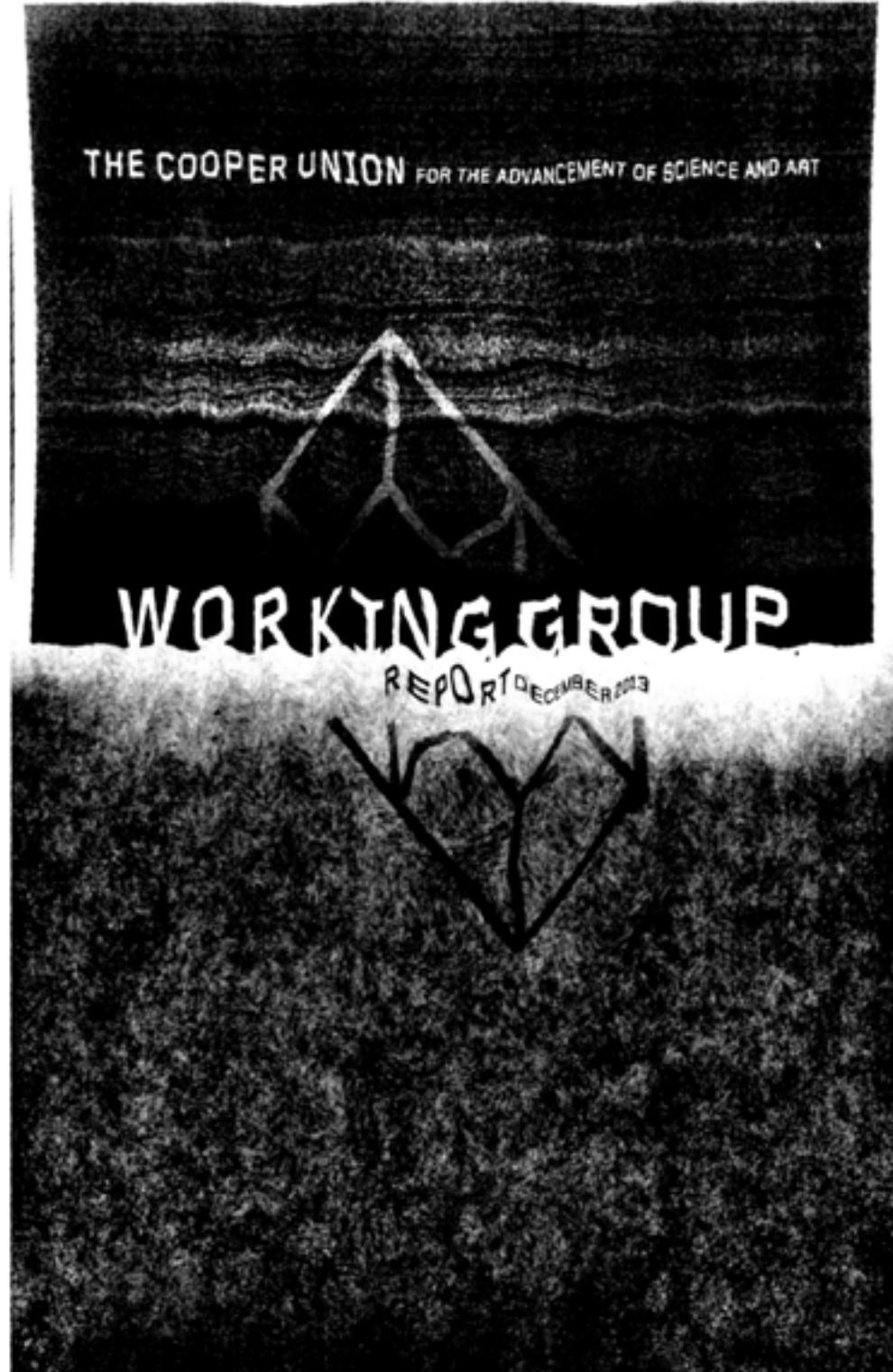
*Ivory Tower* premiered in spring 2014 at Sundance Film Festival, providing context for the struggle for free education at Cooper as part of a larger national crisis in education. The film also includes Harvard, California's UC system, historically black Spelman College, Deep Springs, and many more. Featuring the voices of Cooper Union's faculty and students, *Ivory Tower* exposes the self-serving hubris of the administration and honors the community's principled opposition. The film opened in theaters around the country in summer 2014, and in fall 2014 aired on CNN. Students and alumni organized a screening in the Great Hall that was almost thwarted by the admin, and the film also screened at Pioneer Works, The New School, and NYU."

# **WORKING GROUP**

The Occupation of President Bharucha's office ended in a negotiation brokered by students, alumni, and trustees Jeff Gural and Mike Borkowsky. The occupiers were informed by Gural and Borkowsky that the administration was planning to have NYPD end the protest by removing and arresting the occupiers.

The terms of the negotiated agreement included the creation of a "Working Group" made up of students, alumni, faculty, staff, and administrators with the sole purpose of researching a financial model that could reverse the Board's decision to charge tuition. This was to be the first time that students and alumni would be granted complete access to Cooper's financial information and fiscal models, including the model used by the Board to determine that tuition was "necessary." The negotiation also included amnesty from disciplinary action for those involved in the Occupation, as well as the creation of a "Community Commons" space, and the appointment of a student representative to the Board. The administration and Board ultimately reneged on providing complete access to financial documents, the creation of a Community Commons, and nearly succeeded in blocking the appointment of the student representative to the Board.

The administration also postponed the Working Group's start for a month by delaying the appointment of their representatives and firing T.C. Westcott, Cooper Union's then Vice President of Finance and Administration, who would have been key to providing records, explaining the school's finances, and obtaining approvals needed from the faculty union to allow them to



participate in the Working Group. Her firing meant that financial documents had to be requested through interim consultants, which proved to be another form of obstruction. The community also took issue with the fact that the administration appointed their members, while every other constituency held direct elections.

Despite multiple setbacks, at the end of eight weeks, the Working Group produced a report to be presented to the Board. These efforts were undermined the night before the Board meeting by the release of a “Minority Report” authored in secret by the administration’s Working Group representatives: Teresa Dahlberg, Lawrence Caciato, Sue McCoy, and Catharine Hill. Instead of bringing their issues to the Working Group for discussion and resolution before the presentation, they took it upon themselves to remain silent about their grievances throughout the process and then air them in a line-by-line refutation of the group’s report designed to derail the agreed-upon process.

On January 10th, 2014, the Board voted against the Working Group plan. The breakdown of votes has never been disclosed. The Working Group stipulated that their recommendations were only to be implemented as a complete package (sharing sacrifice and effort across all constituencies) not cherry-picked along with the imposition of tuition as an à la carte menu of cost reductions. Despite that stipulation, the Board has begun to charge tuition as well as implementing austerity measures, perverting the intention and good-faith effort of the Working Group.

- NO TO TUITION BHARUCHA
- NO TO JAMSHED BLOAT
- NO TO ADMINISTRATIVE BOARDS
- NO TO UNACCOUNTABLE DEBT
- NO TO THE NEW CODE OF CONDUCT
- NO TO THE NEW CLASSES
- NO TO STUDENT COMMITTEE
- NO TO CUTTING THE ALUMNI
- NO TO THE EXECUTIVE ADJUNCTS
- NO TO BLAMING COMMUNITY MEMBERS
- NO TO UNDERPAID CONSULTANTS
- NO TO FIRING EPSTEIN
- NO TO WASTEFUL EXPANSION
- NO TO MARK CONSULTANTS
- NO TO EXPANSION
- NO TO DEVELOPING CHARAS
- NO TO TERESA DAHLBERG
- NO TO NEW ADMINISTRATIVE FACULTY
- NO TO NEW STUDENTS MEETINGS
- NO TO COERCING CACCIATORE
- NO TO INTIMIDATING CAMPUS FOR FREE
- NO TO LAWRENCE OFF CAMPUS MANAGEMENT
- NO TO LAWRENCE DOOR FISH CENTERED
- NO TO CLOSED IN THE MISSION
- NO TO LIVING IN THE MISSION
- NO TO RESPONSIBILITY
- NO TO CHANGING TABLES
- NO TO PING PONG SECURITY
- NO TO PING PONG SECURITY
- NO TO ARMED SECURITY

[campus-notice@cooper.edu](mailto:campus-notice@cooper.edu)

I am troubled.

SUPREME COURT OF STATE OF NEW YORK  
COUNTY OF NEW YORK

THE COMMITTEE TO SAVE COOPER UNION, INC., by its president and alumnus, ADRIAN JOVANOVIC, MICHAEL ESSL, TOBY CUMBERBATCH, ISABELLA PEZZULO, and CLAIRE KLEINMAN.

Petitioners,

v.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF THE COOPER UNION, JAMSHED BHARUCHA, ROBERT BERNHARD, JEFFREY GURAL, MARK EPSTEIN, RICHARD S. LINER, FRANCOIS DE MENIL, BRUCE PASTERNAK, THOMAS DRISCOLL, CHARLES S. COHEN, DANIEL OKRENT, RAYMOND G. FALCI, LEE H. SKOLNICK, JOSEPH B. DOBRONYI JR., RACHEL L. WARREN, JEREMY WERTHEIMER, EDGAR MOKUVOS, CATHARINE HILL, JEFFREY HERSH, ERIC HIRSCHHORN, MALCOLM KING, JOHN LEEPER, KEVIN SLAVIN, JOHNNY C. TAYLOR, JR., and MONICA VACHIER.

Respondents.

Index No. \_\_\_\_\_

PETITION

Petitioners the Committee to Save Cooper Union, Inc., by its president and alumnus Adrian Jovanovic, Michael Essl, Toby Cumberbatch, Isabella Pezzulo, and Claire Kleinman ("Petitioners"), by and through their attorneys Emery Celli Brinckerhoff & Abady LLP, for their Petition allege as follows:

#### INTRODUCTION

1. As he laid the cornerstone of his new school, in 1859, Peter Cooper explained to those in attendance his belief that in "the golden rule of doing unto others as we would that others should do unto us, rests all our hope for the future progress and improvement of mankind. Believing thus," he explained, "I am determined to secure to our country a *perpetual course of*

# **LEGAL ACTION AND THE COMMITTEE TO SAVE COOPER UNION**

Seeing a clear pattern in the way the administration had sabotaged community efforts in the past, alumni and faculty met in parallel with the Working Group to develop an alternative course of action in the event that the Board decided to ignore the community and implement their tuition scheme. The Committee to Save Cooper Union (CSCU), a not-for-profit organization, was founded to keep Cooper free through legal efforts and political outreach. The group is co-founded by Art professor and alumnus Mike Essl, Engineering professor Toby Cumberbatch, and Engineering alumnus Adrian Jovanovic.

At the 2014 Commencement ceremony, CSCU announced their intention to file a lawsuit against Cooper's Board in the New York State Supreme Court. The petition calls for five points of action:

1. An independent accounting of the college's finances
2. The creation of an oversight body known as the Associates of
3. Cooper Union (as called for in the college's Trust and Charter)
4. A declaratory judgment that charging tuition is not permitted by the college's Trust and Charter.
5. An injunction to halt the charging of tuition
6. The removal of trustees who voted to implement tuition for "breach of fiduciary duty"

CSCU successfully crowdfunded \$260,000 from over 1,000 donors to fund the litigation. During the fundraising period, the Board's lawyers attempted to have the case reassigned to the court's corporate division but were denied. In an attempt to stall litigation, trustees Mark Epstein and Jeremy Wertheimer refused to be served their court papers.

Following these delays, the court date was held on August 15th, 2014. Lawyers for the Committee, the Board, and Wertheimer delivered arguments before Justice Nancy Bannon. While no trustees or administrators were in attendance, supporters of Free Cooper Union and the CSCU (including a handful of incoming students) packed the room.

*CSCU attorney Richard Emery speaks at a press conference outside the New York State Supreme Court.*



# **CODE OF CONDUCT AND CAMPUS MILITARIZATION**



There are many ways in which a direct action can be successful, but one thing all major actions have in common is that they rip open a power vacuum: people who normally control a narrative, like Cooper's administration, are pushed to the back; while suppressed voices, like those of the students, become amplified. At Cooper, the administration attempts to learn from each action in order to prevent it from happening again.

The administration is on a constant offense, so having a thorough understanding of how they respond to actions is one your best defense strategies. The admin has tried everything from changing Cooper policies on the spot, to cracking down on community meetings, to sabotaging events, to flooding campus with armed security.

## Due Process

After the Lock-In, the eleven students received letters from the Director of Buildings and Grounds, informing them that he had filed a formal charge against them, subjecting them to disciplinary proceedings. Charges of violating the Code of Conduct are handled by a group known as the Student Judicial Committee, which is comprised of one student from each of the three schools, one faculty member, and one administrator. Peter Cooper himself wanted the students to be the arbiters of their own conduct, writing in a letter to the Board of Trustees on April 29th, 1859:

"Desiring, as I do, that the students of this institution may become preeminent examples in the practice of all the virtues, I have determined to give them an opportunity to distinguish themselves for their good judgment by annually recommending to the Trustees for adoption, such rules and regulations as they, on mature reflection, shall believe to be necessary and proper, to preserve good morals and good order throughout their connection with this institution."

There being no grounds in the student-authored Code of Conduct to file a complaint based on politics oppositional to the administration's, the complaint focused on obstructing regular classroom use of the Peter Cooper Suite and the round elevator. As the students explained to SJC, they had actually taken the pre-emptive measure of working with faculty to make sure they wouldn't disrupt classes. Further, they were able to make the case that the action was intended to engage the community at a pivotal moment.

SJC issued a symbolic punishment that the eleven students be forbidden from using the round elevator for a week — the same amount of time that they had occupied. The administration was thwarted in their attempt to punish students for engaging in ac-

**"SCHOOL"  
SAFETY**



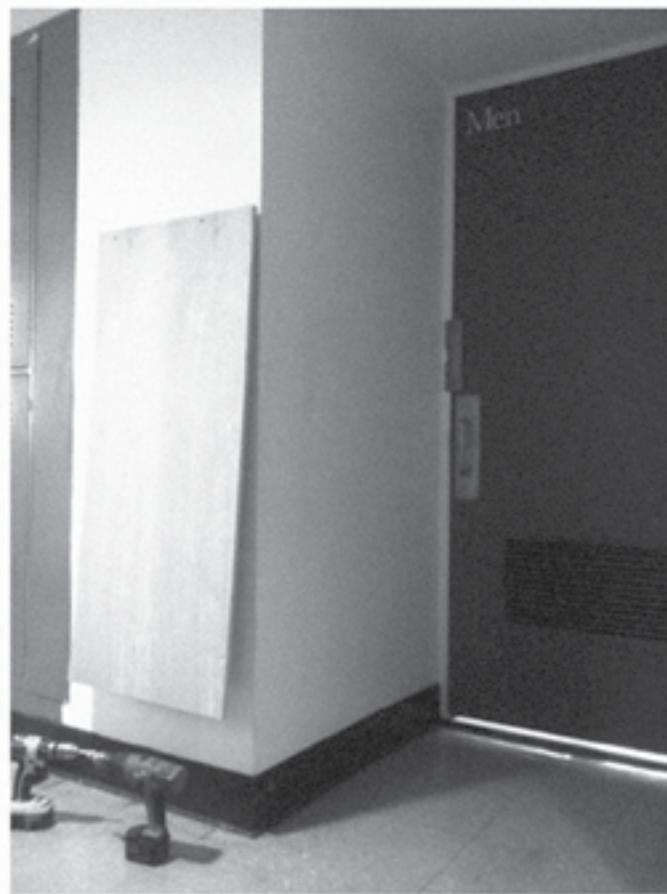
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tivism. By the time another action came around, it would be revealed that the administration had actively been exploring ways to circumvent due process.

### Private Security Gone Wild

During the first week of the Occupation of Bharucha's office the administration attempted to intimidate students with an escalation of private security on campus. In a sudden, unannounced lockdown ordered by the admin, armed guards — who refused to identify themselves — held elevators, obstructed all stairwells (including fire stairs), boarded up bathrooms and water fountains, and physically blocked students from reaching their peers on the 7th floor.

The community and media responded in outrage to the administration's willingness to endanger students, faculty, and staff who were actively communicating their intent to non-violently uphold the college's mission. The backlash forced the administration to concede to the students, who occupied for the next sixty-three days, despite being constantly monitored by additional security personnel, who at times outnumbered the students in the office.

### Firings in Retribution

Before exiting the Occupation the students negotiated with the Board to have amnesty from disciplinary measures. The administration was forced to find circuitous ways of showing the community it would not tolerate dissent.

Longtime Dean of Students Linda Lemiesz had visited the Occupation on several occasions to deliver messages from the administration. When prompted by students, Lemiesz admitted that she had no confidence in Bharucha. Several weeks later he sent a terse campus-notice that Lemiesz had "left her position." In fact, Lemiesz had shown up for work but was denied entry to

the building. In her twenty-three years at Cooper, Lemiesz had been an unabashed advocate of students' rights, helping to design and uphold the Student Judiciary process, as well as overseeing the Student Residence, Career Development, Financial Aid, and Athletics.

Lemiesz's firing came to mark the beginning of a complete restructuring of the administration by Bharucha. He now had an excuse to aggressively hire and promote new administrators with no institutional memory or relationships to the community.

### Code of Conduct

Bharucha's next project was to dismantle the Student Judiciary process entirely. Stephen Baker, formerly Dean of Athletics — at a college with almost no athletics — was awarded Lemiesz's title and immense responsibilities. Baker, having no relevant experience, subsequently promoted Chris Chamberlin, then Director of Residence Life, to Acting Associate Dean of Student Affairs. Within the year, Baker would be promoted again to Vice President of Student Affairs and Community Relations as well as Dean of Athletics, and Chamberlin would be bumped up to Dean of Students.

On November 19th, 2013, Chamberlin emailed a document titled "Code of Conduct Review" to the Student Council Administrative Chairs. Chamberlin had revised the Code of Conduct in consultation with "professionals" to "reflect the modern era in which we live." Chamberlin had revised not only the Code of Conduct, but also the history of the Student Judicial Committee at Cooper. The role of students had gone from authoring the code themselves, to an administrator "considering" students' comments on a document they had not authored.

The community sprung into action. All three student councils launched petitions unilaterally opposing the new Code of Conduct. The Student-Faculty senate convened an emergency

meeting passing a resolution advising the board not to adopt the changes. Student representative Devora Najjar reiterated the faculty and student body's opposition at a board meeting. Finally, the Board conceded that they would undertake the process in consultation with JSC at a later date.

There have been no changes to the Code of Conduct since, making this appear to be a successful indirect action. However, indirect action often fails in spite of itself, because the administration refuses to play by its own rules.

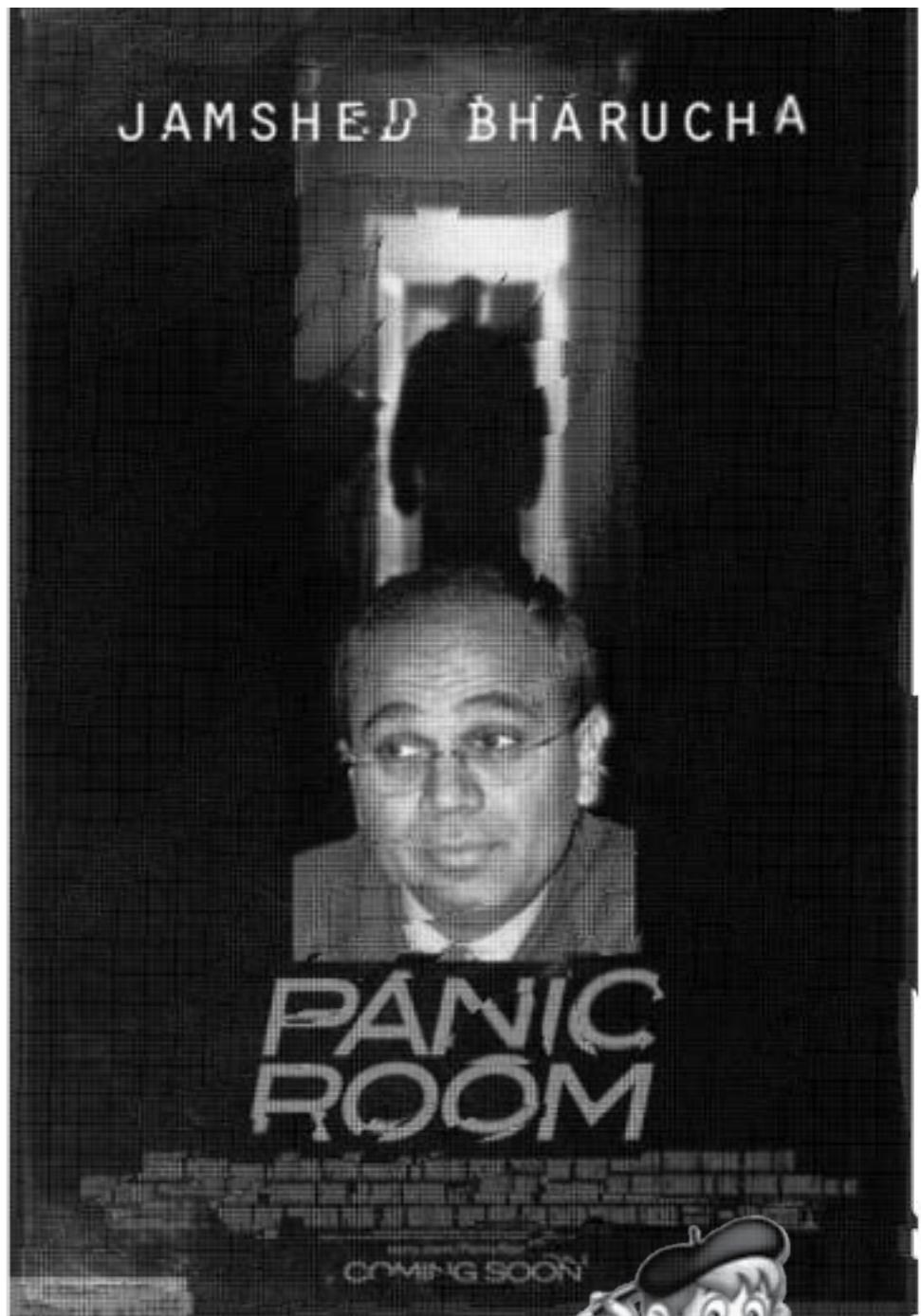
In May 2014, Vincent Hui, a student instructor with the Saturday Program, refused to shake Bharucha's hand at a public event. Hui was soon informed that he had been kicked off his sports team and barred from teaching in the Saturday Program going forward. When Hui tried to bring his case before SJC, Baker responded that it was a "private matter," effectively denying him due process.

Four different administrators privately bullied Hui to drop the matter. When details of the incident were publicized, administrators pulled an about-face, claiming that no formal complaint had been issued, and no punishment had been enacted. The administration's damage had already been done, by harassing a student for weeks and then pretending nothing had transpired. These events, which came to be known as the "Vincident," are a reminder that when protocol gets in the way, the administration will circumvent it with impunity.



## FJC, BDA, and SOS: Changings of the Guards

JAMSHEDE BHÁRUCHA



Following the Occupation, Bharucha refused to return to his office, which sat empty for a year. Meanwhile, he had the 7th floor outfitted like a panic room: installing keypad locks, seven security cameras, and instituting a ban on using the lobby for art exhibitions.

Two weeks before the start of the fall 2014 semester, a campus-wide email announced that the school's security firm FJC would be replaced by a new firm, Beau Dietl & Associates. In typical administrative style, there was no search process, no job posting, and no disclosure of the budget.

Despite promises made that employees would be retained, many longstanding employees from Cooper's front desks and halls were fired. Key among the firings was Owen Solomon, a security supervisor who had sat at Cooper's front desk for almost 30 years. The community continues to demand his reinstatement. In the middle of a national crisis over violent, racist policing centered on events in Ferguson, Missouri, BDA's founder Bo Dietl appeared on Fox News to support the officer who shot unarmed teenager Michael Brown, claiming that multiple shots to the head and arms were to be expected as, "bullets go that way." Equally troubling were Bo's repugnant comments in support of racial and religious profiling.

By hiring BDA, Cooper's administration funded a company whose brand is built on incendiary, right-wing politics. Ironically, Cooper hosted the founding of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People in 1909, only to hire BDA in 2014. On September 20th, 2015, newly hired Vice President of Finance and Administration, William Mea, sent out a campus-notice stating that he had, "not anticipated the sensitivities of the community" and would be "transitioning" to another firm, SOS Security.

**STUDENT CONTROL OF COLLEGE**



# **HALF TUITION & NEW TUITION**

For years the administration insisted that tuition was a last resort. It was believed that if tuition had to be implemented it would be temporary, with an emphasis on getting back to free. Instead, the board bait-and-switched the community, introducing a narrative that it is irresponsible to return Cooper to being free, and that being free was never intrinsic to the college's mission.

On the same day that CSCU's supreme court hearing took place, the first tuition payments for incoming students were due. There exists a general sentiment of confidence that the court case will repeal tuition, but the law works on its own timeline and a decision has not been reached quickly enough to prevent the administration from collecting payments. Despite talk amongst parents and students about putting tuition money into escrow, paying in truckloads of pennies, or not paying at all, overwhelming pressure forced everyone to simply pay up. A \$20,000 tuition hike was explained away by the school's PR team as 50% discount on an imaginary \$40,000 sticker price.



The administration continues to coerce the faculties, discourage the students, alienate the alumni, fire longtime employees, make non-consensual policy decisions, violate protocols for new hires, and restructure admissions. Simultaneously, the school has begun to pump money into recruiting and marketing, taking out an additional \$55 million dollar "bridge loan," and overhauling public relations to be more aspirational than ever in the darkest time in the history of this institution.

In April 2015, the first post-tuition tuition hike was casually announced. Dean of Engineering and Chief Academic Officer Teresa Dahlberg communicated to students by email that the Board had approved a "new tuition" whereby students taking more than 19.5 credits would be charged for each "overload" credit.

Immediate student backlash, especially in the Engineering school, forced the administration to concede that they won't start charging for overload, at least until next year. Dahlberg and Mea scrambled to placate enrolled students, while displaying their willingness to throw incoming students under the bus.

# ATTORNEY GENERAL INVESTIGATES

On March 24th, 2015 the *Wall Street Journal* broke the news that New York's Attorney General Eric Schneiderman is pursuing an investigation into Cooper Union's Board of Trustees.

For years, the Board has publicly insisted that they are on good terms with Schneiderman. Administration spokesperson Justin Harmon commented to press that the administration is, "cooperating fully."

Leaked board minutes from September 2012 reveal a different story. Former trustee Peter Cafiero tells his colleagues, "[The Attorney General] could basically make our lives hell by going through every dime spent on everything here."

Days after the investigation was announced, the administration crumbled. In a bungled attempt to de-escalate mounting pressure from all sides, President Bharucha was fired. "The laissez-faire approach to nonprofit governance is over," reported *The New York Times*.

## Nonprofits on Notice



Lack of Leadership Financial Dealings Shady Financial Scandals Erupts

These selected essays dig into why Cooper matters, what's going wrong with education everywhere, and how we might fix it.

**Printed Essays:**

- 1.** The State of the Cooper Union by Mike Borkowsky
- 2.** An Open Letter to President Bharucha by Walid Raad
- 3.** The Loss of Cooper Union by Jordan Bowen
- 4.** Why Cooper Union's Tuition Fight Matters for the Future of Art by Ben Davis
- 5.** Organizing As If Social Relations Matter by Cindy Milstein
- 6.** Academy Fight Song by Thomas Frank
- 7.** Why Cooper Union Matters by Litia Perta
- 8.** Removing Barriers Mobilizes Resources by David Gersten
- 9.** An Appeal to the Cooper Community, Fall 2013 by Sam Rosner
- 10.** Two Educations for the Price of None by Jakob Biernat

**Online Essays:** [freecooperunion.org/disorientation](http://freecooperunion.org/disorientation)

- 11.** Save Cooper Union by Sangu Iyer
- 12.** You Can't Just End An Era by Sangu Iyer
- 13.** The Tragedy of Cooper Union (a Six-Part Series) by Felix Salmon



Former trustee, Working Group co-chair, and Engineering alumnus Mike Borkowsky debunks myths propagated by Board Chair Richard Lincer.

# THE STATE OF THE COOPER UNION

Originally published on July 24, 2014

*Former Trustee Mike Borkowsky's statement to the Board of Trustees in response to Board Chair Richard Lincer's email dated July 18, 2014.*

From the beginning of his presidency, once he grasped the severity of the financial situation, Dr. Bharucha poured a great deal of his energy into building a rationalization for imposing tuition. He thoroughly reviewed the history of the school and the writings of Peter Cooper to find support for the preconceived "vision" that tuition was the only solution to the financial problem.

**While Bharucha talked of tuition being the "last resort", his actions proved it was the first resort.**

The same amount of energy was not put behind the cost reduction alternative. The prime example of that is the creation

of the Cost Reduction Task Force. It was created ostensibly to solve the deficit problem, but given the charge that it could not consider any cost reduction which would involve union negotiations. Since the vast majority of costs would involve the unions, it had no chance to provide a viable cost reduction alternative. The second major example was the effort of The Working Group. It was authorized by Dr. Bharucha as one of the negotiated agreements to end the occupation of his office. Yet, it was not only not supported by him or the members of his administration who were appointed to the group, it was obstructed at every point. And its findings were rejected out of hand without any discussion with members of the Working Group.

That is the fundamental issue here. This is not a battle between The Committee to Save Cooper Union and The Cooper Union's Board of Trustees. It is a battle between The Cooper Union as a unique and extraordinary institution of higher education and The Cooper Union as just another college. A majority of the students understands that. A majority of the faculty understands that. A majority of the alumni understands that. A majority of the Board of Trustees does not.

The Charter and the Deed of Trust give great latitude to the Board of Trustees to preserve and manage the institution. Whether or not it binds them specifically and legally to maintain free tuition is a debate for others to have. But I believe that they are bound, as are all college trustees, to at least maintain if not improve their institution's standing within the very competitive framework of American higher education. The full scholarship and pure meritocracy that has defined Cooper Union for the past 100+ years may not be precisely aligned with Peter Cooper's original vision, but it has become unequivocally essential to the school's high standards of excellence in both reputation and academic performance. It is on that measure that Cooper Union's current Board of Trustees has not fulfilled its fiduciary responsibility. It has not done all that was possible to maintain

the unique character and heritage of the institution. Instead of a conscientious and disciplined effort to live within its means—to bring operating costs in line with its projected revenue stream it has jettisoned Cooper's unique competitive strength for the expedient alternative of a tuition revenue stream.

The communication of July 18, 2014 to the Cooper Community from Board Chair Richard Lincer outlines the rationale for its motion to dismiss the Committee to Save Cooper Union's lawsuit. It includes three major points:

- new plans of action under the tuition plan which, in the Board's view, actually enhance the school's competitive standing
- the historical nature of the financial challenges that the school has faced
- the apparent "success" of the new plan in terms of the results achieved with the entering class of 2014

There are issues with many of the statements made in the letter.

**Having served on the Board for 17 years and having authored a financial history of the school at Dr. Bharucha's request, I cannot allow misstatements to be circulated throughout the Cooper community without challenge.**

#### Financial Support Under the Tuition Plan

The letter states, "...the new plan retains the basic principle of admissions based solely on merit and provides for supplemental need-based aid..." The fact is that President Bharucha committed to the meritocracy for only the first year, until the school generated experience with the impact of the tuition plan on admissions and student body quality. That hedge will allow the pure meritocracy to be abandoned whenever the tuition revenue falls short of projections. As is the practice in many colleges, admissions policy incorporates "ability to pay" as an

important criterion for applicant selection. As the meritocracy is abandoned, the quality of the student body will diminish. The combination of tuition charges and a decline in the school's reputation will further diminish the number of applicants and, therefore, the school's reported selectivity. This is the beginning of a downward spiral that is inevitable. The imposition of tuition has no chance of improving Cooper Union's reputation or its academic quality. In fact, it is guaranteed to do exactly the opposite.

The promise of increased access for the economically disadvantaged was a unique and important one when Peter Cooper founded Cooper Union. It is still important but certainly no longer unique. Cooper Union evolved to a pure meritocracy as other colleges began increasing access to the economically disadvantaged. It is both the full scholarship and the pure meritocracy together that created and sustained Cooper Union as a unique and extraordinary institution. Now one of those pivotal characteristics has been lost and the other is doomed to follow.

#### The Cooper Union's Financial Challenges Are Not New

They certainly are not. But they do not go back 50 years as the letter states. They go back 150 years. There were deficit years and surplus years. Revenue varied depending on donations, bequests and market fluctuations which are difficult to project with certainty. In fact, in the Autumn, 1964 edition of "At Cooper Union" (page 15) then president Dr. Richard Humphreys discussed the financial issues. I quote him: "It is a startling fact that in the 67 years between 1859 and 1926 there were 35 deficit years—in effect, in one year out of every two the income was insufficient to meet the expenses." So, while deficits were a consistent historical problem, they were of short-term duration until the early 1990's when a drop in revenue from the Chrysler building created a chronic operating deficit gap. The gap needed to be filled each year by pulling funds from the

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OFF OUR  
COMMUNITY  
ASSETS**



endowment, a disastrous issue if done year in and year out. The failure of the administrations and boards of the past 20+ years to respond adequately to the lost revenue by reducing costs has been the fundamental cause of the financial crisis. That was compounded by the failure of an unrealistically ambitious \$250 million capital campaign and the impending failure of a heritage-destroying imposition of tuition.

President Bharucha has repeatedly claimed that cost reduction was a failed strategy and that the school had to sell off properties in an effort to sustain the full-tuition scholarship. That is misleading in its lack of completeness and in its implications. The truth is that there were often other considerations in the decision to sell off properties. And a more realistic interpretation of those actions would be that historically the Trustees of Cooper Union have truly considered tuition to be a last resort and did everything they could to sustain the full scholarship because they recognized the devastating impact tuition would have on the reputation and unique qualities of the school.

The reality is that cost reduction is not a failed strategy because it has never been implemented or even tried to be implemented on a level significant enough to eliminate the structural deficit that originated in the early 1990's.

**There has not been an administration or a board of trustees willing to take on the challenge of creating a well-thought-out change in the operating cost structure that was significant enough to eliminate the structural deficit.**

Jay Iselin, while a capable and very well-liked president, was rarely inclined to turn down spending requests. George Campbell's enthusiasm and unbridled optimism produced a wholly unrealistic fund-raising goal and a presidency dedicated primarily to getting the new academic building built. Campbell committed to a significant operating cost reduction (10%) in the Cy Pres document in 2006, but he never accomplished it. Jamshed Bharucha has also chosen the path of generating revenue rather than the more difficult but more certain path of living within our means. But he has chosen to pay the most serious price for that decision—the destruction of the mission, the excellence and the uniqueness of Cooper Union.

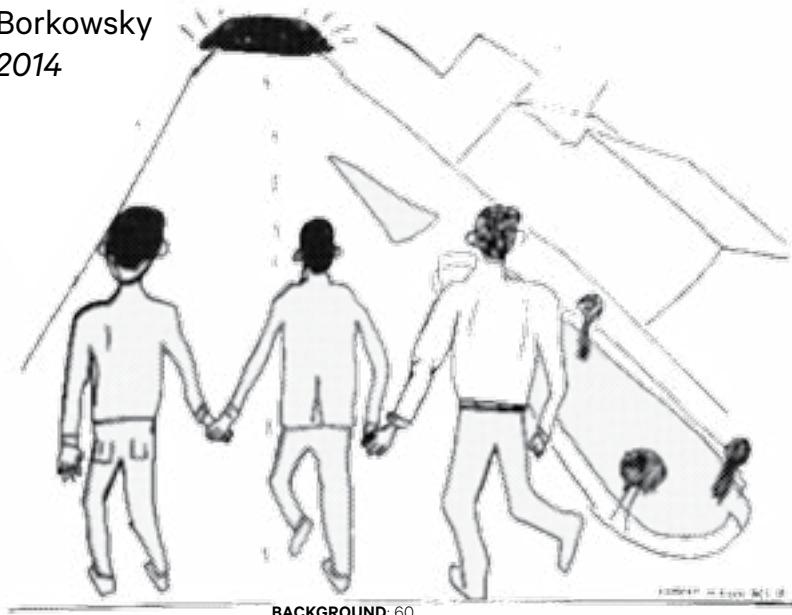
### The Future and the Class of 2018

A classic strategy when engaged in an inevitable lost cause is to declare victory and go home. The Board has carefully selected some data to support its declaration of victory even before the first class to pay tuition has enrolled. There is no mention of the fact that the number of applicants for this class declined significantly. An earlier communication added the phrase, "as was expected", as if that made it a non-problem. But it is a problem because as the school's standing among the top tier of colleges on selectivity declines, it will negatively impact the application decision of the top high school students in future years. So that downward progression has already begun.

The yield percentages, particularly in Art and Architecture have also declined. Clearly the decision to attend Cooper if admitted is no longer a virtual certainty in those schools. And what will happen when the students who are required to pay the full tuition amount arrive on campus and realize that there is no campus? No gymnasium...no cafeteria....virtually no amenities at all. While that fact may not have been critical to Cooper students in the past, it is less than certain that it will not be an issue to those who are paying a significant amount of tuition to attend.

The letter concludes with the statement by Mr. Lincer that he is "absolutely confident that we have acted in the best interests of the institution". That confidence is not shared by students, alumni or faculty, the three most important constituencies of the institution. It is not shared by all current board members or by many former board members. But this board has chosen to plunge ahead with its decision because the president has no interest in attempting any alternative and the board has no interest in seeking a president who would be. This was clearly demonstrated by the reaction to the Working Group plan. If tuition was viewed as a last resort rather than a direction of choice, there would have been a willingness to support the Working Group effort and thoroughly review specific elements of the plan with members of the Working Group. Cost reduction and change are extremely difficult things to accomplish, particularly in an academic environment. But there was unprecedented support within the institution to reduce costs and to effect change because so many realize the damage that will be done to this institution by the tuition decision. It seems to be only the Administration and the Board of Trustees that has failed to grasp the legacy of destruction that their action will bring.

Michael Borkowsky  
July 24, 2014



BACKGROUND: 60

In an open letter to Jamshed Bharucha, School of Art faculty member **Walid Raad** challenges the idea that Cooper cannot live within its means.

# **OPEN LETTER TO PRESIDENT BHARUCHA**

Dear Jamshed,

As promised, here are my comments to your note. You were forthcoming in your email with your views about The Cooper Union and its future, and as such, I try below to be equally forthcoming.

As I go over the events, situations, reports, and positions of the year, a few things begin to crystallize for me. Today, I find that I am one of those who oppose that The Cooper Union can become a place that will one day generate revenue from academic programs (any academic programs, including those that The Cooper Union already charges for).

I have also spent the last few months reading Peter Cooper's biography (as well as that of Adam Hewitt)—primarily to figure out what New York in the early 1800's might have been like. It is clear to me today that one can find in Peter Cooper's papers a number of statements that can support this or that ideological position (be it to support those who oppose the current administration's plans or those who support it). As such, I also wish that we can all stop the "Peter Cooper said and wrote and meant" bit to justify our outlook, and move to think of how we

can even outdo what Peter Cooper initiated over 150 years ago.

We are a school that is—to an extent—guaranteed \$40 million a year. It is very difficult to think that we are not able to build the most progressive academic program anywhere for this kind of money (and I understand all of what you say about the rate of inflation, health care costs, and the Chrysler revenue steps, etc.) We have certainly lived beyond our means for years, and those who have consciously and unconsciously, strategically or inadvertently permitted the deficits to go on for decade after decade seem to me to have acted in as reckless and foolhardy a manner as the financial wizards responsible for the 2008 crash. While some of the Cooper Union culprits and panjandrums are gone, others remain here and I doubt that their advice will serve us well anytime soon.

You make some convincing arguments about why the current situation is unsustainable—and as such, you note that our financial sustainability cannot be cured by cuts alone. Yet the question that comes back to me is: What kind of Cooper Union can one build today for \$40m?

**Shouldn't we reverse the familiar propositions and instead of saying that \$40 million is not enough for today's Cooper Union, ask what kind of Cooper Union we can build for \$40m?**

My sense is that this can and will be a fantastic opportunity to re-imagine every aspect of The Cooper Union, from its infrastructure to its administration, its curriculum to its faculty. Why can't this kind of re-invention begin today?

Much has been made of whether rising Faculty and Administrative salaries and benefits are also to blame for

our ongoing financial troubles. It has been said time and time again that The Cooper Union's major costs are people. In this regard, it has been generative for me to look at the various charts that tracked how many faculty and/ or institutional support and/ or administrative positions were created in the past decade. It was equally interesting to look at the various 990's and see who has been paid what over the same period. All I can say about this is that I, like many others in the art school, am certainly not here because of the salary, benefits, teaching load, and research opportunities. I came to Cooper precisely because I identified with its history, its mission of merit-based scholarships, and because it was hierarchically flat. I soon discovered that this mission was shored up not by returns on investment, alumni donations, nor by brilliant financial planning from above, but by the selfless dedication of its staff, students, faculty (who it turns out were mostly adjuncts and whose salaries were far from proportional to their loyal dedication to The Cooper Union.) In other words, generation after generation of faculty and staff have demonstrated that their commitment to this institution's ideals by far exceeds what their salaries and benefits reflected. We work here not only because we believe in the mission, but we also wish to expand its progressive spirit. It was also refreshing to work somewhere where I never heard the pathetic justification for higher compensation: "Why shouldn't I get this much? Do you know what my salary on Wall Street (at Morphosis or Yale or Apple) would be?" But I am sad to say that I am starting to hear such views in meetings and hallways. They usually follow the equally un-imaginative: "Why should The Cooper Union grant scholarships to the kids of millionaires?" My internal monologue usually responds with: "What we can all use right now is an allopathic dose of Peter Cooperism."

All this to say that I am convinced that most of The Cooper Union's staff, librarians, students and faculty are willing to live within the School's means provided that we are treated as partners as we deal with The Cooper Union's financial health.

And I am sorry to say that last year's various task forces, instead of being genuine opportunities to define priorities and open alternative possibilities for action, resulted in simply rubber-stamping more-or-less delimited solutions. Prior to your arrival, decisions about our fate were made from afar, with as little transparency as possible. Faculty, students, librarians and staff were treated as spoiled children whose excessive whims needed to be kept in check. Until you arrived, clearly no one trusted us with the facts. My sense remains that your administration has done a tremendous job of identifying our problems and making them known to us. The trouble is with your administration's solutions, particularly that of generating revenue via tuition from academic programs.

One more point troubles me as well in what you outline: When you say that we cannot fundraise our way out of this, I find myself asking: Why do we have a President who, instead of saying "given Cooper Union's historically unprecedented story, I will go out and raise a billion," says, "I cannot raise \$300m." We have the most remarkable story to tell, and yet this story can supposedly only get us \$160m in the coming few years? This, to me, seems short-sighted and timid. I, for one, will certainly help in any way I can with raising the necessary funds provided that the story we are telling is the one that I believe in wholeheartedly. But the story that is being formed at the moment is frankly one that I would discourage people from supporting. I also know that you can cite all kind of historical facts about the impossibility of fundraising our way out of this, to which I will say: We have to not only imagine but also accomplish the impossible here. And fundraising our way out of this is one option. Another would be to truly rethink the entire meaning of higher education in America today (from our governance, to our curricula, our division of labor, etc, etc.) But as long as we cannot tell ourselves (let alone believe) in the uniqueness of The Cooper Union, this will certainly remain a fantasy.

As an aside: Three years ago, and along with some friends in Beirut, we started an art school called the Home Workspace. We were dispirited by the lack of critical arts programs in the Arab world, and instead of waiting to be invited to join any of the existing and mostly reactionary universities, we started our own program. My model was The Cooper Union, and we decided on a similarly progressive merit-based scholarship to every admitted student. We recruit heavily in the Arab world, and take in around 15 students a year for 11 months. Granted our program is small and does not cost \$60m to run. Still, we take in rich and poor Kuwaitis, Syrians, Lebanese, Egyptians, and others. Some can most likely afford the \$35,000 cost per student of the program. Still, we decided to initiate the merit-based full-scholarship education because of our experience with how debt and dependence on family funds (especially in the Arab world) can affect the risks we take as artists, writers, and thinkers. We fundraise with mostly conservative Arabs who have to be introduced to the idea of merit vs. need. And I cite time and again The Cooper Union as a beacon of progressive thought, and as an example of what has been and can be possible. 1850 New York reminds me quite a bit of 2013 Abu Dhabi, Doha and Beirut. An amazing amount of wealth is being generated, and incredible infrastructures for culture are emerging. Most emerging cultural institutions in the Arab world are, I am sad to say, conservative, reactionary, timid, and lacking in substance and vision. I keep thinking: Just as Peter Cooper believed he can do better, so can we. And we are trying in Beirut. But what a sad day for us in New York, and in Beirut, it would be were The Cooper Union to become yet another expansionist NYU or VCU (who must now flock to Abu Dhabi and Doha, begging autocrats for yet more Petro-dollars to fund ever-growing expansion plans) while burying every admitted student in New York under a mountain of financial and psychological debt. Whose example can we still cite in Beirut then? I hope that you find something generative in these words. And needless to say, this is but the beginning of an exchange of ideas. —Walid Raad

**Jordan Bowen** reflects on the role Cooper plays in the changing face of New York.

# THE LOSS OF COOPER UNION

Originally published on *Kinja* in April 2013

This was a long time coming, and like the destruction of the Chelsea Hotel, marks the end of a certain kind of city, one that can sustain a viable, non-commercial creative culture. We live now in a city of unpaid internships and backbreaking rent and tuition, where hopeful young settlers must one after the other face the hard reality of a real estate and job market that has been sealed up in advance by those who got here first. As Patti Smith answered, when asked her advice to young people: don't come to New York. They took it from you. It's over. Manhattan is turning into Geneva, a city of great poverty and great wealth, without a middle class. A homogenous, crowded, tourist-infested, expensive, and rather dull capital of the world.

Cooper Union's flagship is the Foundation Building, an Italianate brownstone that was once the crown of the wide expanse of Astor Place. Abraham Lincoln gave a famous speech in its Great Hall. The school was founded to offer free classes to the illiterate masses boiling up from the slums of the Bowery; Peter Cooper was himself illiterate.

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Change has been tearing apart and rebuilding New York since it was a Dutch colony. There's no point crying about it. But there is a poignant loss to Cooper Union, which woefully mismanaged its money and generously rewarded the upper echelon of its administration even as the ship began to sink. This culminated in a new spaceship of a building, built to enhance the school's prestige and reviled by students and faculty alike, which it constructed while boasting the institution had weathered the economic storm of 2008 in sound financial health. That was either an illusion or a lie, and within two years the situation had become unsustainable. The new president of Cooper tried to break the news softly that Cooper was insolvent, that it might give up its non-profit status and 'explore' the option of tuition. Like all politically sensitive fiats, the Board of Trustees made a show of community involvement just to soften the blow, but the decision itself was final. The school was shocked, then erupted into a bitter and futile protest.

Cooper Union, because it was free, was anything but dead. That leverage is, after all, the point of higher education. When Cooper becomes more like Columbia, an exclusive brand sold to those who are expensively prepped for admission and able or willing to pay, it will be yet another rung in the ladder lost to those still on the lower rungs. It will be another once free space in the city taken over by wealth, another desirable amenity in the luxury conclave of New York.





Written during his tenure as Executive Editor of *ArtInfo*, **Ben Davis** explains how tuition at Cooper will ripple through the art world.

# WHY COOPER UNION'S TUITION FIGHT MATTERS FOR THE FUTURE OF ART

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*People should be angry about what has happened at Cooper Union. Trouble has been looming at the historically tuition-free New York institution for years. Faced with ongoing deficits, administration figures have floated trial balloons about charging admission, always insisting ritualistically that they were exploring all other options. Last year, a student occupation anticipated the current turbulence.*

In the weeks since, there have been protests, symbolic actions, and scathing exposés. Just yesterday, a transcript of a Cooper board meeting was released (and promptly turned into a student play), revealing a body dangerously insulated from the values of the community it was charged with leading, dismissive of student protest as “performance art,” hostile to the unionized faculty, and capable of using the threat of closing the school entirely to make staff fall in line. Last week, video game guru and MIT professor Kevin Slavin—who once had a team of forensic accountants look at Cooper’s 990 forms, only to have them declare that, in his words, “they haven’t seen anything this fucked up from anyone who wasn’t being deliberately obstructive”—won an election for alumni trustee as a write-in candidate on a transparency platform.

The nine full-time art faculty—Dore Ashton, Robert Bordo, Christine Osinski, Mike Essl, Dennis Adams, Walid Raad, Sharon Hayes, Day Gleeson, and Margaret Morton—have very publicly signed a letter of “No Confidence” in the administration. Finally, and most visibly, a fresh occupation of the President’s Office continues to this moment.

Occupations are important but symbolic affairs. After initially sending in armed guards, the administration is likely waiting for the ruckus to die down and peter out. A lot depends on how the issue of tuition gets translated to a broader public—and I realize not everyone sees this as the burning issue of the day. Cooper Union is, after all, a very small school, with just 12,000 alumni and 1,000 or so students a year. It has evolved a long ways from its origins as a college meant to train working-class New Yorkers, and is widely known these days as an elite institution.

Which is natural: In a culture as ruthlessly market-driven as ours, founder Peter Cooper’s dictum that education should be as “free as air and water” is not exactly going to go mainstream. But what I think is important to highlight is how the issues at stake here form an almost perfect crystal of the forces buffeting art and

education in the woebegotten 21st century. Felix Salmon has done yeoman’s work detailing the ways in which Cooper Union’s managers bear much of the blame for the current sorry state of affairs. Go read his series of angry, thorough blog posts on the mess for a sense of what’s at stake. I can’t add to them, only draw out what I think should make them resonate well beyond Astor Place:

1. Those who follow the art world will know that its heroes over the boom years have been hedge-fund millionaires. In the disaster of Cooper Union’s finances, the hedge-fund complex stands squarely on the side of the villains: The school finds itself in dire straits in part because its masters, faced with deficits, sunk its endowment heavily into such investments, believing in their healing wizardry. Instead, the funds underperformed the market, while still extracting huge fees. So, in a kind of serpent-eating-its-own-tail representation of finance at its most socially corrosive, you have a perfect symbol of a system that funds the consumption of art by undercutting the basis for its actual production.
2. Some of Cooper Union’s problems stem from the need to pay down the giant \$175-million loan it took out to build its flashy Thom Mayne-designed engineering building in 2006. In constructing the facility, Cooper was simply joining in on the craze for flashy new buildings that overtook cultural institutions throughout the United States in the last decade. By now, it has been established that this starchitect boom was not based on need, but rather something more troubling: the competition to attract wealthy donors, whose egos could only be flattered by being attached to something new and shiny. The grim result has been that U.S. museums are disastrously overbuilt, saddled with increased expenses based on only tenuous real rewards.

The Cooper Union affair represents the awful logical climax of this trend: The school got the expensive new building and its associated costs, justified by the need to attract a major donor.

**In a literally monumental act of institutional incompetence, its bosses built it before bothering to get any sponsor to put a name on it—and that sponsor never showed up.**

3. Anyone following the austerity debate will recognize, in mutated form, the pattern of narrow-minded or even destructive ideology masquerading as hard-nosed realism. Cooper Union has one real income-generating asset, its claim on the land below the Chrysler Building. (Indeed, in 2018, the terms of that deal are set to change in a way that will improve the school’s finances). The fact that New York City, in effect, subsidizes an elite private school has been historically controversial. By jettisoning the one thing that gives the school a special, progressive claim on the public’s imagination—free tuition and merit-based admission—the board has made a decision that sounds like pragmatism, but could easily help cut its last leg out from under it.

4. Cooper is a private institution which makes it all the more striking that the pattern here resembles one which we've lately become familiar with in the greater economy: A crisis stoked by short-sighted gambling, which will be solved by shifting the burden onto the public, in this case onto the families of the next generation of students.

The school's board members have said that its alumni need to step up and give more for the school to flourish—after having pursued the one strategy guaranteed to alienate those potential donors. "The great schools in the U.S. are all too often just places that make rich families richer. Cooper Union was the exception," artist and alum Zak Smith told Molly Crabapple in the first days of the recent occupation. "Not anymore. If it wasn't for Cooper, people like me wouldn't get to be artists."



Lifelong activist and organizer **Cindy Milstein** writes about the merit of patient organizing and community-building.

# **ORGANIZING AS IF SOCIAL RELATIONS MATTER**

Originally published on *Outside the Circle* in February 2013

This evening, February 20, 2013, several hours after standing around outdoors in chilly winter weather at a rally beneath the clock tower of Cooper Union and a giant "free education for all" red banner high above, a young Egyptian revolutionary, an active and articulate organizer these past couple years in Tahrir Square, said that freedom isn't just a word; it's how one practices it and tries to enact it.

I couldn't walk away from Cooper Union, even though my toes began to feel numb. The 1:00 p.m. rally was about the deferral of early-decision applicants by the school's administration, which is trying every trick in the book to tear asunder the founding mission of free education, paying particular attention to the pesky art students.

There's an aspirational quality—or “hope,” as one prospective student noted—in imagining that education could indeed be free for all, not only monetarily, but also in terms of freedom. That no tuition, even within a hierarchical and select structure, still manages to engender a tangible freedom to imagine social goodness, and the freedom (of thought and financial constraints) to organize in more imaginative as well as qualitative ways, seems distinct in relation to other US student organizing in places that cost tens of thousands annually.

**When people, students or otherwise, are freed up from the burden of struggling to survive, it creates space for a different kind of human being, with time to pursue one's dreams alongside others.**

It supplies a sense of already-there promise and possibility. Fighting for lower or no tuition is—or at least could be—a path toward opening up minds to critical and creative thought, which is essential in moving us humans toward forms of social goodness, thwarted as that is by a commodifying structure/system that does its best to inculcate uncritical and uncreative thought at every turn, or just make us so damned tired and dispirited that we don't have the energy for envisioning and organizing toward better communities and better tomorrows. That Cooper Union is one of the last remaining “free schools” in the United States also underscores how pivotal this battle is in terms of siding with increasing public goodness or squashing it still further.

Aspirations, however, aren't enough. What is noteworthy and compelling about the Cooper Union resistance beyond the already-extraordinary sense of a common good embedded in all its slogans is how, when you take freed-up art students and give

them a cause they are personally and collectively passionate about, well: watch out! They will unleash their imaginations, in the same way that a plethora of upward-spiraling imaginative interventions marked the Quebec spring and summer. Yet there also seem to be twists in the cultural production for this rebellious campaign to keep education free, such as transparent banners asking for transparency from administrators even as they reveal how transparent the student, alumni, allied teachers, and community supporters are being in this contestation. Or an oversize Cooper Union student ID for one of the now-deferred prospective early admissions, with a cutout indicating their potential absence come fall 2013 (happily filled in, for a photo-op moment, by a probable current Cooper Union student).

There's a way in which the spectacle and end-run maneuvers that the administration keeps trying to make just get outspectacled and outrun by the dynamism of the art students conjuring up new visuals, new visions, new strategies—again only underscoring the “value” of free and freeing education.

Perhaps most important, though, I was reminded today of what good organizing looks like. Or to be more precise, I was reminded of what organizing—versus activism—is all about. There's aspirations, imagination, and also substance backing up these students' resistance, and the substance is all about both winning and doing so by forging increasingly widening and deeper circles of social relations, and social relations that appear, from my outsider vantage point, to be far more comradely and nonhierarchical than those in many social struggles. That's not to say that this cold afternoon's rally was large; it wasn't, attracting maybe a couple hundred folks at most. But as now-deferred prospective student after student got up to read their varied, often-eloquent remarks, or have them read by a current Cooper Union student or an alumni, for upward of an hour, it became clearer and clearer how much work went into finding,

educating, involving, and gaining the support and participation of these frequently far-afield potential students. In fact, one of the statements mentioned how current Cooper Union students, faculty, and alumni had reached out to the current higher schooler applying for early admission to explain the deferral (an administration tactic and, as several prospects noted, “betrayal”) and draw them into this cause—a cause, as several of the prospective students mentioned, that wasn’t about them necessarily getting into Cooper Union but instead about extending the idea that education should be free and available, sustaining people’s self and social exploration in a life of the mind and arts, and thus bettering our world.

**Organizing, good organizing, is to my mind the slow, steady, 1 on 1 building of relations and interconnections that are at odds with how people are treated under capitalism.**

Instead of instrumentalizing people for what they can give us or do for us, we look to each other as having worth unto ourselves, and for how we can cement relations of sociability, collaboration, and solidarity—as some of the speakers observed today.

Expedient activism falls apart under its own flimsy weight; there’s little there to sustain it, especially when the going inevitably gets rough or disappointing. Here, patient and what appears to be joyful organizing might just have a fighting chance of leaving something in its wake: a win for free education perhaps, or if not, a yardstick of how we can reignite our imaginations and rekindle qualitative social relations.



# ACADEMY FIGHT SONG

Originally published by *The Baffler* in January 2014

The university deals in dreams.

Then several years pass, and one day we wake up to discover there is no Santa Claus. Somehow, we have been had. We are a hundred thousand dollars in debt, and there is no clear way to escape it. We have no prospects to speak of. And if those damned dreams of ours happened to have taken a particularly fantastic turn and urged us to get a PhD, then the learning really begins.

## College and Mammon Both

Go to college, or else your destiny will be written by someone else. The bachelor's degree that universities issue is a "credential" that's "a prerequisite for 21st century jobs," says the White House website. Obama himself equates education with upward mobility—more schooling equals more success—as well as with national greatness. "The kinds of opportunities that are open to you will be determined by how far you go in school."

The higher education mantra is possibly the greatest cliché in American public life.

And so the dreams proliferate. Education is what explains income inequality, chime the economists, and more education is what will roll it back. In fact, education is just about the only way we can justify being paid for our work at all; it is the only quantifiable input that makes us valuable or gives us "skills."

No one really knows the particular contents of the education that is supposed to save us. It is, again, a dream, a secret formula, a black box into which we pour money and out of which comes uplift or enrichment or wish-fulfillment.

Maybe college is able to work its magic because college grads hire only college grads, and after decades of "networking"—which everyone knows is more important than book-learning—they have managed to colonize the entire economy. No one knows for sure how it works, but everyone can see that it does work, and that's good enough.

We don't pause to consider that maybe we've got the whole thing backwards—that the big universities expanded in their heyday to keep up with industry demand, not to build the middle class. Instead, what everyone agrees on is this: higher education is the industry that sells tickets to the affluent life. In fact, they are the only ones licensed to do this. Yes, there are many colleges one can choose from—public, private, and for-profit—but collectively they control the one credential that we believe to be of value. Another fact: This same industry, despite its legal status as a public charity, is today driven by motives indistinguishable from

the profit-maximizing entities traded on the New York Stock Exchange.

The coming of “academic capitalism” has been anticipated and praised for years; today it is here. Colleges and universities clamor greedily these days for pharmaceutical patents and ownership chunks of high-tech startups; they boast of being “entrepreneurial”; they have rationalized and outsourced countless aspects of their operations in the search for cash; they fight their workers nearly as ferociously as a nineteenth-century railroad baron; and the richest among them have turned their endowments into in-house hedge funds.

Now, consider the seventeen-year-old customer against whom this predatory institution squares off. Either he goes to college like the rest of his friends, or he goes to work. All he needs to do is sign a student loan application, binding himself forever and inescapably with a financial instrument that he only dimly understands and that, thanks to the optimism of adolescence, he has not yet learned to fear.

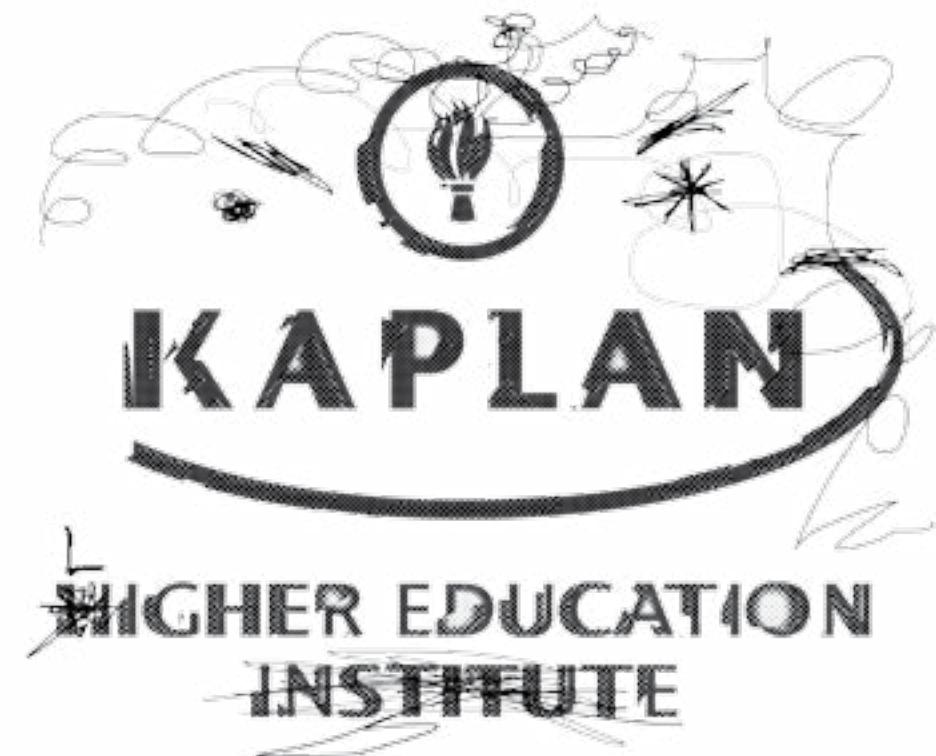
Grant to an industry control over access to the good things in life; insist that it transform itself into a throat-cutting, market-minded mercenary; get thought leaders to declare it to be the answer to every problem; mute any reservations the nation might have about it—and, lastly, send it your unsuspecting kids, armed with a blank check drawn on their own futures.

It is the same lesson taught us by so many other disastrous privatizations: in our passion for entrepreneurship and meritocracy, we forgot that maybe the market wasn’t the solution to all things.

#### An Accounting of Sorts

The truth is that rip-offs like textbook publishing abound in academia—that virtually every aspect of the higher-ed dream has been colonized by monopolies, cartels, and other unrestrained predators—that the charmingly naive American student is in fact a cash cow, and everyone has got a scheme for slicing off a porterhouse or two.

Consider the standardized testing industry and its shadow, the test-prep industry. One of them is supposedly charitable, the other ebulliently profit-minded, but both of them have raked it in for years by stoking a pointless arms race among the anxious youngsters of the nation, each one fearful lest her dream be



cancelled out by someone else's. The testing companies, each of which holds a monopoly over some aspect of the business, charge students hefty registration fees, pay their executives fantastic salaries, and scheme endlessly to enlarge the empire of the standardized test.

Consider the "enrollment management" industry, which helps colleges and universities acquire the student body they desire. Since what this means in many cases is students who can pay—the opposite of the "inclusiveness" most universities say they treasure—enrollment management is a job best left to quiet consultancies, who use the various tools of marketing to discover a student's "price sensitivity."

Consider the sweetheart deals that are so commonplace between university administrations and the businessmen who happen to sit on the university's board of directors. Consider universities' real estate operations, which are often thuggish and nearly always tax-free. Consider their army of Washington lobbyists, angling for earmarks and fighting accountability measures. Consider their massive investments in sports. Or their sleazy arrangements with tobacco companies and Big Pharma and high-tech startups.

And lastly, consider the many universities that have raised their tuition to extravagant levels for no reason at all except to take advantage of the quaint American folk belief that price tags indicate quality. From this faith in price correctness the nation apparently cannot be moved—there is simply no amount of exposure or reporting that will do it—and so the university inevitably becomes a luxury good, like a big Armani label you get to wear through life that costs a fortune but that holds no intrinsic worth at all.

### Where the Money Goes

The most poignant educational scandal of the moment concerns

Cooper Union. The reason everything had to change is that Cooper Union, like...well, like every other institution of higher ed in America, decided a few years back that it needed to think big and embrace change and build the brand. The first step in that process: erecting a fantastically expensive bit of trophy architecture across the street from its main building. (There was also a growing corps of administrators, and a departing president who needed to be paid close to \$1.1 million, but we won't go into that now.) Unfortunately, Cooper Union couldn't pay for this glamorous new tower, and so it had to borrow an enormous sum, like other corporations do. The "free education" thing was collateral damage.

**Better to be known for "vibrant" architecture, I guess, than for some old-fashioned nonsense about uplifting the non-wealthy.**

The story of Cooper Union is a typical anecdote of the age of collegiate capitalism, and it's easy to come up with other examples of the lavish, unnecessary spending that characterizes American academia nowadays, that makes it "the best in the world." It's not just the showy new buildings, but the sports teams that give the alumni such a thrill, the fancy gymnasiums and elaborate food courts that everyone thinks you have to have if you want the cool kids to choose your diploma mill over all the others. It's the celebrity professors everyone has decided they must furnish sinecures for regardless of whether those celebrities know anything about the subject they are hired to profess.

But what has really fueled the student's ever-growing indebtedness, as anyone with a connection to academia can tell you, is the insane proliferation of university administrators.

Political scientist Benjamin Ginsberg tells the sorry tale in his 2011 book, *The Fall of the Faculty*. Back in the day, Ginsberg tells us, American universities were governed by professors, who would take time out from their academic careers to manage the institution's business affairs. Today, however, the business side of the university has been captured by a class of professionals who have nothing to do with the pedagogical enterprise itself. Administrators: Their salaries are generous, their ranks expand year after year, and their work requires no peer review and not even much effort. As Ginsberg reminds us, most of them don't teach courses, they don't squabble like English professors at the MLA, and no one ever suggests replacing them with adjuncts or temps. As tuition balloons, it is administrators who prosper. In fact, their fortunes are an almost exact reverse image of the tuition-indebtedness of the young.

Naturally, an ugly new class conflict has begun to play out amidst the leafy groves. Administrators, it seems, have understood that the fortunes of their cohort are directly opposed to those of the faculty. One group's well-being comes at the expense of the other, and vice versa. And so, according to Ginsberg, the administrators work constantly to expand their own numbers, to replace professors with adjuncts, to subject professors to petty humiliations, to interfere in faculty hiring, to distill the professors' expertise down to something that can be measured by a standardized test.

That the people who hold the ultimate authority at our institutions of higher learning are dedicated to a notorious form of pseudo-knowledge is richly ironic, and it is also telling. The point of management theory, after all, is to establish the legitimacy of a social order and a social class who are, in fact, little more than drones. The grotesque top-heaviness of the American corporation is an old story: we have more supervisors per worker than any other industrialized nation, and quite naturally we have developed an extensive literature of bogus social theory assuring those supervisors of the rightfulness of

their place in the world—a literature that also counsels everyone else to acquiesce to their subordinate station in the Great Chain of Free-Market Being.

### Professors, Of Course

The de-professionalization of the faculty is another long-running tragedy that gets a little sadder every year, as teaching college students steadily becomes an occupation for people with no tenure, no benefits, and no job security. These lumpen-profs, who have spent many years earning advanced degrees but sometimes make less than minimum wage, now account for more than three-quarters of the teaching that is done at our insanely expensive, oh-so-excellent American universities. Their numbers increase constantly as universities continue to produce far more PhDs than they do full-time, tenure-track job openings, and every time cutbacks are necessary—which is to say, all the time—it is those same full-time, tenure-track job openings that get pruned.

## **There is zero solidarity in a meritocracy, even a fake one.**

### We Have Only Words Against

The system can't go on this way. It is too obviously a rip-off on too many levels, with too many victims. One of these days a breaking point will come, just as it did with Enron and the dot-coms and the housing bubble, and all the fine words spoken by our thought leaders will once again be recalled to make them look like imbeciles. The means by which cosmic justice will make itself felt is not clear just yet: free online courses, maybe, or a national tuition strike, or the debt-driven failure of a prestigious U or two, or maybe a right-wing backlash that finally figures out how the university's economic logic corrodes its social liberalism.

What ought to happen is that everything I've described so far should be put in reverse. College should become free or very cheap. It should be heavily subsidized by the states, and robust competition from excellent state U's should in turn bring down the price of college across the board. Pointless money-drains like a vast administration, a preening president, and a quasi-professional football team should all be plugged up. Accrediting agencies should come down like a hammer on universities that use too many adjuncts and part-time teachers. Student loan debt should be universally refinanced to carry little or no interest and should be dischargeable in bankruptcy, like any other form of debt.

And so we end with dystopia, with a race to the free-market bottom.

**The only way out is for students themselves to interrupt the cycle.**

Maybe we should demand the nationalization of a few struggling universities, putting them on the opposite of a market-based footing, just as public ownership reformed the utilities in the last century. Maybe the college-aged should forgo the annual rituals and turn their eyes to German or Argentinian universities, in the same way that their grandparents use Canadian pharmaceuticals to hitchhike on a welfare state that hasn't yet been completely compromised. Maybe it's time for another Free Speech Movement, a nationwide student strike for tuition reform and debt relief. Whatever we do, it's time to wake up from the dream.

# A Streetcar Named Tuition

Former humanities adjunct professor **Litia Perta** recalls one of the first community summits following the announcement of Cooper's financial problems.

# WHY COOPER UNION MATTERS

Originally published by *The Brooklyn Rail* in December 2011

On a clear night in early November 2011, hundreds of people filed into the Great Hall at Cooper Union. By 7:00, the auditorium's 900 seats were full and hundreds of people crammed into standing room at the back. The event was not open to the public and security guards in the lobby were checking everyone for some form of Cooper ID. The current student body is counted at 918, so it only took a quick glance around to see that the event had drawn far more than just current students. Both faculty and alumnae had also come out in great numbers for the emergency meeting that had been called with Cooper Union's [then] Chairperson of the Board of Trustees, Mark Epstein, and his much quieter fellow Board member [and now Chair] Richard Lincer.

At issue was the recently leaked information that the Board of Trustees was considering charging tuition to Cooper students—a move that many believe radically undermines the philosophy that is at the institution's core. Financial newspapers and business journals have reported widely in the last few years on the safety of Cooper's endowment and on the wisdom of many of its investment strategies, and so the news

that the school carried a deficit of over eight million dollars during the summer of 2011 year sent shockwaves throughout the community. When, only some months later, that deficit was recalculated and announced to be over 16 million, it sent people reeling. The late October leak that the Board seemed to have decided that converting Cooper Union to a tuition-based institution may be the only way to keep the school solvent was met with bewilderment by students and faculty members alike, who demanded to know what, exactly, was going on.

While financial transparency was unfortunately not one of the results of the November meeting, what did become clear was a paradigmatic divide between the representatives of the Cooper Board and the people who actually comprise the institution.

In the current educational climate where astronomical tuition and routine hikes are the norm, Cooper's policy is both unusual and unique. It may be a rapidly receding notion, but the students at Cooper are engaged in nothing less than the pursuit of knowledge and thinking for their own sake. The philosophy that courses through the institution is that education is a higher good, one that enriches the individual and, in so doing, enriches the human community. In this framework, education has its own value—and this is what makes Cooper Union radical and worth saving, perhaps even worth imitating: It is operating on a fundamentally different idea of what education is, and what it can be. So unfamiliar has this notion become, so fully has it been absented from current educational discourse, that it now rings of privilege or luxury—some kind of Enlightenment-era credo available only to the patriarchal elite. But when did it become okay to think that if an idea or a theory does not have an immediate, measurable, quantifiable economic use value it is a privilege to learn about it? When did such complacency develop around this kind of argument, enabling it to become the silent and seemingly obvious norm?

Since the 1980s, universities have responded to the pressures of economy by increasingly commercializing themselves, selling their educations as a product. That education has faltered as a result of this is evident all around us. The discourse has become one of investment: Exorbitant loans are justified on the grounds of the value of the product they purport to put out—namely, students that generate income (which then, in theory, enables them to pay off their educational debt). This model keeps education squarely in the place of an instrument within a distinctly capitalist frame, and it has far-reaching consequences. It has already shaped the way schools prioritize disciplinary weight inside the curriculum so that humanities and arts budgets have dwindled to almost nothing. It has limited the nature of discussions in the classroom and the priorities of the students so that it has become commonplace for students to demand higher grades for mediocre work, because of an over-concern with their own marketability once they pass through the institution's walls.

The danger of losing Cooper Union to the privatized, tuition-based educational model is not simply that we would lose one of the last bastions of non-instrumentalized education. The danger lies also in the fact that it would be like jumping out of the frying pan and into the fire, as even tuition-based institutions are faltering everywhere. And we are only now beginning to conceive of the economic impact that six billion dollars of collective student loan debt will have for generations to come.

At a time when conventional structures are failing all around us, this seems like the moment to re-invent, re-imagine, re-conceive of what education is, and so what a school like Cooper might be—perhaps even how other schools can follow its model.

Instead, the current Board of Trustees threatens to revert to examples that arguably don't work. Both the new president, Jamshed Bharucha, and the Board of Trustees repeatedly talk about needing to generate more revenue in order to sustain the school. There are students of wealthy families at Cooper Union who could conceivably afford to pay tuition fees but as soon as the institution ceases being need-blind, it would find itself in the same strange boat as so many other schools that tend to have two admissions lists: those for the students they actually want and those for the students who can afford it.

Perhaps more concerning is that if Cooper entered into the tangle that would inevitably ensue by trying to charge tuition, it stands to jeopardize the peculiar tax status it now enjoys. In 1902, Cooper Union acquired the land that the Chrysler building now stands on. Each year, the owners of the building come up with property tax that would usually be paid to the city of New York but, in a strange series of contested court proceedings stretching back to 1931, that property tax gets paid directly to Cooper Union. This tax equivalency status is one of the institution's major sources of revenue. While President Bharucha has dismissed the idea that charging tuition could undermine this agreement, the precedent is one that has been historically difficult to defend—and it seems to hinge on the argument that the institution is of direct benefit to the city. In many ways, Peter Cooper's intention to provide an education specifically for underserved communities—for the working classes and poor women—is a mandate to which it would be wise to recommit.

In all of these discussions, the emphasis tends to be on the need to generate more revenue. What goes unmentioned or obfuscated are the institution's itemized expenditures.

Of the commonplace tuition fees, how much goes to what are known as “administrative costs” and how much is direct instructional expense? It seems that in the turn towards privatized education, a Wall Street mentality has slipped into the

mix: If you deliver a product and you do it well, you get a bonus, and that bonus—that administrative cost—is shouldered by the students you supposedly need more tuition from in order to educate.

## How much does it really cost to educate someone?

The annual operating budget at Cooper Union has been quoted at 61 million dollars per year. While numbers have been bandied about that show total expenses, they are slippery at best and a clear picture of how much it costs to run the institution has yet to be released. Some information is available in the public tax record that Cooper, along with any other institution of higher learning, is required to file with the state. And these documents reflect a very disturbing trend. In the last 10 years, administrative costs at Cooper have doubled. Payments to the officers of the institution (the president and the various administrative and academic deans) have also doubled in a decade. This does not seem to have any direct relationship to an increase in the duties of these officers, nor does it seem to have a logical relationship to the number of students for which each officer is responsible.

Similarly, while full-time faculty salaries have gone up only 2.5 percent per year, as is regulated by their union, salaries of the administrators have increased at much higher rates. In 2009, then President George Campbell's total compensation package was \$668,473—which included a cash bonus (for what, exactly, it is unclear) in the amount of \$175,000. I have had a somewhat illustrious career as a second-class faculty member—i.e., an adjunct professor—teaching at some of the country's most esteemed institutions: Wesleyan University, Bard College, U.C. Berkeley, and Cooper Union among them. I was hired to teach at Cooper in 2006 when I was a doctoral candidate and my semester's fee for 14 weeks was

\$4,500. Sometime later, after completing my Ph.D. and spending a year as a post-doctoral fellow at the Center for the Humanities at Wesleyan University, I returned to Cooper Union. It was the fall of 2009 and I was re-hired by the college's dean of the humanities at the exact same rate I was paid in 2006. I was told at the time that the budget could not accommodate any fee



increase for having received my Ph.D., nor could it afford paying any increase for the standard annual rates of inflation. That same year, the dean who hired me received a compensation package valued at \$239,724.

Seventy percent of Cooper Union's classes are taught by people like me: non-tenured faculty. For the most part, we have no job security, no health insurance, and no hope for a salary increase; moreover, we are generally considered expendable in that, if we won't work under those conditions, the school can easily find someone who will. I find it troubling that the institution now justifies the need for more revenue without making public its detailed expenses.

The vast disparity between the value Cooper assigns to my work as a teacher and to a dean's work as an administrator makes questionable the idea that it costs a lot to educate someone. Exactly where is the money going?

That there is a need to re-evaluate our educational priorities seems clear. Something that has gone unmentioned during the discussions around charging tuition at Cooper is the fact that student loan debt is the only kind of debt that can never be forgiven. Even a declaration of bankruptcy will not absolve you of it.

Of all the many places I have taught, Cooper Union is the only place where the openness of thought, the eagerness around intellectual exploration, the transformative nature of a liberal—a liberating—education is both palpable and electric. If the institution is now in trouble, let all that are a part of it see the numbers so that everyone is part of the solution. Now is the time to re-think and re-structure, to move toward a future model: one that chooses to protect future student generations from the kind of debt peonage that is everywhere. A question worth asking is whether the current Board of Trustees is up for this kind of re-imagining. Is it wise to entrust those who got the school into this predicament with the task of getting it out?

What is needed now is a vision: a way of seeing long down the line to a time when perhaps there will be many all-scholarship schools, when the value of a free education is once again understood, proclaimed, protected. This debate does not only affect the community of Cooper Union. If you believe that all people should have the chance to broaden their minds, if you hope to engage in higher education, if you have children you want to send to college, if you struggle under the weight of student loan debt—then this is your fight, too.

School of Architecture Faculty, **David Gersten** answers the question what do elevators, undersea cables, democracy, and Cooper have in common?

# **MOVING BARRIERS MOBILIZES RESOURCES**

Originally published by *The Brooklyn Rail* in October 2012

*This is the text of an address delivered by David Gersten in the Great Hall of the Cooper Union on December 5, 2011. I think we all recognize that our Cooper Union faces an existential crisis.*

I for one, have been blessed with...a moment in education...where I have had...a Social Contract and many of the people sitting today in this audience, have made my life...more understandable, because of their understanding of the Social Contract. —John Hejduk

It is not that: The Cooper Union holds up free education, but that free education holds up The Cooper Union. It is not that: we can no longer afford to: freely educate, but that we cannot afford to break the promise of Free Education

The largest single financial asset that the Cooper Union currently holds is its promise of free education: TO ALL. The value contained within this promise far exceeds our

current endowment as well as the physical properties held by the institution including the land under the Chrysler Building.

Our challenge and obligation, our social contract, is to comprehend and make more understandable how to mobilize the resources contained within this promise.

Peter Cooper was directly involved in countless inventions. There are three specific inventions that offer direct lessons to the questions we face. When this Foundation Building was constructed it was one of the tallest buildings in New York City. It contained an elevator shaft that waited four years until Elisha Otis invented the “safety elevator,” an elevator containing a mechanism that secured the elevator cab if the cable was cut. This securing mechanism mitigated the risk of injury or loss from collapse and created the credibility necessary for the elevator to be widely used by the public.

The safety elevator removed the vertical barrier of walking above eight stories and the city EXPLODED upwards, creating an entirely new geography of human inhabitation. Removing the vertical barrier mobilized the resources that fueled the 150-year vertical rise that is: New York City.

Peter Cooper was also directly involved in pulling the Transatlantic Telegraph Cable between the two continents, compressing weeks into seconds, in the exchange of: information and ideas. The Transatlantic Cable removed the communications barrier of shipping speeds and the exchange of ideas EXPLODED between the two continents, creating an entirely new geography of human interaction and exchange. Removing the communication barrier mobilized the resources that fueled the 150-year continuous transformation of Global communications.

The massive resources invested in creating each of these transformations were mobilized as a direct result of removing barriers and articulating a credible vision of the consequences

of their removal. Peter Cooper’s years of struggle in pulling the Transatlantic Cable were overcome by his clarity of vision, that through this connection, “Knowledge shall cover the earth as waters the deep.”

Articulating this vision, keeping this promise, required the third invention, I believe, Peter Cooper’s greatest invention: the removal of barriers to education. Education is by definition a transformative pursuit, individuals come together and engage in transformative interactions and experiences: Knowledge evolves. Creating circumstances of proximity and interaction among a great multiplicity of ideas and questions, leads to mutual transformation and new forms of knowledge. Peter Cooper invested in the profound idea that removing the barriers to education creates a dynamic crucible of free thought where a great diversity of people and their questions can interact and co-evolve, developing new linkages, new thought processes, and new questions.

**Peter Cooper understood that the barriers to education were not only unjust to those that they excluded, but those barriers impoverished the internal life of an institution. Barring any segment of the population creates a diminished geography of human knowledge and experience within the educational community.**

Like the vertical barrier removed by the safety elevator, the invention of the Cooper Union removed the artificial age limit above which people could freely participate in the transformative interactions of education. Like the Transatlantic Cable, the removal of the financial barriers to education collapsed the

distances within the vast and uneven geographies of resource distribution and accumulation, bringing into direct proximity those who would otherwise have an ocean between them. Removing the barriers to education creates an entirely new geography of human: proximity, interaction and transformation, a new geography of knowledge and imagination. The value and meaning of the Transatlantic Cable and the global communications revolution that it unleashed is found in the exchange of: knowledge and ideas that pass through it. The Cooper Union is Peter Cooper's greatest transformative invention, because it creates transformation itself. It is the invention that sustains invention and contributes to the continuously expanding universe of knowledge that elevates mankind.

There are many forms of interaction where the introduction of a financial barrier to participation dramatically alters the meaning of the interaction. I would offer the example of participatory democracy. While the process of participatory democracy requires the mobilization of vast resources, gathered together from all of the participants, requiring an individual fee to participate in voting would alter the meaning of the process, to such an extent, that it would collapse the value of participation, it would no longer be participatory democracy.

In fact, the ultimate safety device, the mechanism that secures individual agency and gives credibility to all forms of collective judgment, is the: Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Each and every Right guaranteed by this United Nations declaration requires the mobilization of resources. These rights are of such fundamental value to mankind that the burden of these resources must be borne by US ALL. Assigning an individual fee to those who are the supposed beneficiaries of these rights is to collapse the value of all of our rights. I imagine this principle was in mind when crafting:

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Article that designates education as a Human Right and specifically says: "higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit." They must have been quoting Peter Cooper.

This institution is a shining demonstration of the transformative powers of removing the barriers to education. We have been pulling this cable for 150 years and now we face the risk that we are out of resources, that our debt load is too heavy and the only way to keep moving forward, may be to "cut the cable" and introduce the barrier of tuition. This would not be moving forward at all, this would be a collapse in the value of the entire endeavor. For, in this journey, there is no other shore to reach; we are pulling the continuously expanding geographies of knowledge and imagination. We must invent and construct the safety mechanisms that secure the continuous evolution of knowledge without barriers. We must articulate a credible vision of the value and consequences of removing the barriers to education, and this WILL mobilize the resources to continue the journey. As a way-finder at sea uses the force of the storm to out-run the storm we must keep the promise of free education to all, in order to secure the many promises of free education to all.

In moments of existential crisis, time has a tendency to collapse, whole chains of events that may usually require years and decades to unfold suddenly happen overnight. If we can get this right, the transformative consequences will far exceed those of the "safety elevator" and the Transatlantic Cable. We will have shifted the trajectory, unleashing new geographies of knowledge beyond our wildest imaginations.

In an editorial published in the school newspaper in Fall 2013, then freshmen **Sam Rosner** addressed the danger of willful ignorance amongst the student body.

# **AN APPEAL TO THE COOPER COMMUNITY**

Originally published by *The Cooper Pioneer* in December 2013

Stop what you're doing. Take a good look around. Look out the window and look out into the hallway. Have you spoken to anybody outside of your school today? If you're an engineer, have you talked to an artist today? Artists, have you spoken to an engineer today? Architects, have you left your studio today?

BACKGROUND: 100

The school has been crumbling at our feet. It's been slower in the past, albeit, but things seem to be deteriorating at an accelerating speed. I feel as though relations between the schools are more estranged than ever. In times of strife, it's easy to withdraw into our comfort zones. It's easy to decide to focus on your work, to say "fuck the school I'm going to just do me and get the hell out." It can't possibly fail, it's been standing for 155 years, why not 155 more? This passivity will be the death of the Cooper Union.

What do you want to look back on in five years? Will you be ready to look back? How about 10 years? 20? 30? How about 50 years? Let's look back.

What are you most worried about right now? Is it your calculus final? Completing a model? Finishing your sculpture? Is it that HSS essay that's due the day before break? Understandably, present obstacles seem the most pressing. They're easy to look at, to face, to conquer. You can count on the power of a single individual and you have the skill-set necessary to complete the task. That's what you go to school for. To gain the necessary skill-sets in order to be successful and innovative in the field of your choosing.

But how do you fix a school? Do you know how to do that? How would you even start? Sign your name on a petition, make a meme, say "I know it's bad and I don't like it but it'll work itself out."

What will this school be like once we have a paying class? We will no longer be the Free School. There's the New School down the street, but somehow the Free School has a better ring. Now we will be the "School That Was Once Free". The melodrama of our situation will resound in the nomenclature.

So come next year, assuming that indeed, we are charging tuition, Cooper will be caught in a divide. It will be both the

## Can a school divided stand?

But you go to the Free School, so it's all cool. Those kids who go to the School that was Once Free won't be here till next year and that's practically a lifetime away.

Your inactivity is perpetuating the cultural shift which will eventually destroy the Free School. You are a frog sitting in warm water, not noticing that it's getting hotter. You're sleepy, drifting away, but you're slowly, degree by degree, boiling away.

Jump out.

So what do you see yourself leaving behind? You'll eventually leave this school. You personally won't have paid a dime towards tuition and you'll be patting yourself on the back for having escaped the binds of throttling student debt. But what will be left? A school that is but a shell of its former self. The seniors will graduate, the current juniors, the current sophomores, and last, the current freshmen. And who will be left? The Free School will have been abolished, its ideals forgotten, its legacy diminished, its future dismal.

And how is your class going to be seen? Will you be the class that sat quietly, twiddling their thumbs, letting the Board destroy 155 years of tradition? Or will you be the class that stood up, and said "This is a Free School and it will stay Free!" Will you be the class that enabled destruction? Or will you be the class that took action, unified, and changed the paradigm of student empowerment?

Think about what you're leaving behind. Think about your legacy.

**TWO  
EDUCATIONS  
FOR THE  
PRICE OF  
NONE**

Originally published in May 2013

It is often written that the crisis and scandal of Cooper Union is a crystallization of a national and global struggle in higher education, most recently in ArtInfo's article by Ben Davis:

The attack on education in our era of austerity is a nationwide—rather, worldwide—phenomena. Without changing the larger picture, the same forces that are affecting institutions of higher learning everywhere are going to continue to press Cooper. Turning the tide of policy towards respecting the value of education as a public good is the only real sustainable solution for everyone. Conversely, accepting the inevitability of the situation at Cooper without anger only helps further set the limits of what is “realistic” to expect from the system—which right now isn’t working very well, saddling young people with ever-greater levels of debt in return for pursuing their dreams. One way or another, Cooper Union will end up being a symbol—either of an ideal to be reached for, or of the terrible present-day wisdom that says that ideals only matter for those who can pay.

I firmly believe this to be the case. If you’ve ever yearned to be an actor in history rather than just a member of its audience, there is hardly a more exhilarating place to be as a college student than here at Cooper, here in a small, swiftly-beating heart of something much larger and more long lasting than each of our singular educations, whatever that means for each of us. This is an opportunity to act, to do excellent things, to serve and protect a tremendously worthy and fragile ideal.

It is also a responsibility...you all know you’ve been given an amazing gift, an unbelievable chance. Your lives will be changed forever, I guarantee it.

**Cooper’s gift must be repaid in citizenship, in contribution to our small community. It will be difficult, extraordinarily so, to juggle your work and your participation in the politics of the school and your personal growth, but you have to try.**

By responsibility and citizenship, I mean a responsibility to try to confront that anxiety head-on rather than avoiding it, to do the research, to look at the history of the school and particularly the history of the last two years, the problems facing the school, the

divisions, the range of possible solutions, the actions, the words, the politics, all of it.

A lot will be asked from you: good faith to your fellow classmates, who are just as much your teachers as anyone else will be; good faith to yourself and your work. You will make until you can’t make any more. Then you’ll make more. Get sleep, try to eat well. You’ll need it to get used to sleepless nights and constant stretching of your capabilities. You’ll be taken apart, laid bare, and empowered to build again with new clarity. Your classrooms will take the diffuse light of you and your fellow students and refocus it into something shockingly coherent, collectively, a light that lets you see further into your work and into each other as a community of learners, a light that makes the paths we all must take more visible.

This is an urgent moment, a historic moment, but please pay attention to yourself as well. Your responsibility is not to act rashly, but rather to develop your understanding, to be critical, to pay attention deeply. Read. Think. Reflect. But whatever you do, don’t ignore things. Be a member of the school, in all the ways that the factors of physical location (little scraps of land in the deep of Manhattan) and situation (ideological, vast, complex, widely implicating) and people (dedicated, remarkable, nourishing, challenging, sometimes adversarial, healing, empowering) exist and create a school. Whatever results of the attention I ask that you pay — whether or not you agree with x, y, or z — what is essential is that you have thought about things.

Don’t waste this chance.

# TOOL



# KIT

Reference documents that translate confusing jargon; highlight important events, key people, and groups; and provide links to media coverage, ideas for action, and further reading.

**Print Resources:**

- 1.** Glossary
- 2.** Spectrum of Allies
- 3.** Social Barometer
- 4.** Tactic Star
- 5.** Movement Stages
- 6.** Admin Org Chart
- 7.** Names & Faces
- 8.** Relevant Institutions
- 9.** Further Reading
- 10.** Tools for Organizing

**Additional Online Resources:** [freecooperunion.org/disorientation](http://freecooperunion.org/disorientation)

- 11.** 198 Methods of Direct Action
- 12.** Timeline
- 13.** Jamshed Bharucha: Step Down
- 14.** Frequently Asked Questions
- 15.** Solidarity Map
- 16.** Press Log

# GLOSSARY

## A

**Abbreviation for School of Art alumnus.**

## AAUP

American Association of University Professors. A standards body for higher education that defends academic freedom and tenure, advocates collegial governance, and develops policies ensuring due process.

## ABET

Accreditation Board for Engineering and Technology. Accredits School of Engineering.

## Adjuncts

Part-time, non-salaried, non-tenure track faculty who are paid for each class they teach. Adjuncts have no office, materials, or supplies, limited technology and administrative support, are not paid for office hours, and have little to no job security.

## Administrative Bloat

A term used for inflated ratios of administrators to faculty. In the past decade, at a time when tuition and student debt are skyrocketing, the ratio of administrators to faculty has more than doubled.

## Administrators

College employees responsible for the maintenance and supervision of the institution separate from the faculty. Administrative responsibilities can include academic affairs, school finances, fundraising, public affairs, and press.

## Affinity Group

A small group of people that share common goals and philosophies that work together to organize and take part in direct action. Each affinity group acts autonomously but can choose to work with a network of similarly allied groups. Key concepts are autonomy both as a group and for the individuals that make up the group, and consensus.

## Affirmative Action

The practice of improving the educational and job opportunities of members of groups that have not been treated fairly in the past because of their race, sex, etc.

## AG

Attorney General. The chief lawyer of the state who represents the government in legal matters, and key to Cooper's situation, oversees trusts.

## Alumni Affairs

The Cooper Union Office of Alumni Affairs & Development is the administration's vehicle for raising money from the alumni. Formerly the CUAA was charged with heading alumni relations, but ties have been severed and the administration has reclaimed all resources to it including contact lists and website access.

## Alumni Pioneer

A website analyzing and commenting on Cooper politics founded by Engineer alumnus and Working Group member Barry Drogin.

## AR

Abbreviation for School of Architecture alumnus.

## ARSC

Architecture Student Council

## ASC

Art Student Council

## ASSE

Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (Association for Student Union Solidarity). A temporary coalition to counter tuition hikes and coordinate 2012 Quebec student protests.

## Associates of Cooper Union

A yet to be formed organization called for in the college's charter which has several functions, most crucially providing oversight to the Board's decisions and having the authority to remove trustees. CSCU lawsuit calls for its formation.

## B.Arch

Bachelor of Architecture degree

## BA

Bachelor of Arts degree

## BDA

Beau Dietl & Associates. Private security firm hired by Cooper's administration in 2014 to replace FJC, but fired following backlash.

## BHQFU

Bruce High Quality Foundation University. Alphabet City based extra-curricular art school with free night classes, founded by Bruce High Quality Foundation, an anonymous art collective composed largely of Cooper alums. Served as a space for Free Cooper organizing in Fall 2013.

## BOT

Board of Trustees. Governs the college by establishing broad policies and objectives. Cooper's board is composed of about twenty unpaid members that meet about four times a year. The board appoints the President, and the President is also currently a voting member.

## BSE

Bachelor of Science and Engineering degree

## Bureaucracy

A hierarchical organizational structure that has many complicated rules and ways of doing things. See also: Lemon

## Capital Campaign

A plan of action, typically by a non-profit organization, to raise a large amount of money over a given period of time. An organization may implement a capital campaign if they need to raise funds for a significant purchase, such as \*cough\* a new building \*cough\* or simply to help take care of normal budgetary items. The money is often raised through donations or fundraising events.

## CHARAS

East Village community center founded in the 1960s that is controversially being redeveloped into a luxury dormitory. Cooper's administration signed a deal with developer Gregg Singer to be an anchor tenant. In 2013, Free Cooper marched with the CHARAS community against the redevelopment.

## ChE

Chemical Engineer

## CivE

Civil Engineer

## Civil Disobedience

The public act of willfully disobeying the law and/or the commands of an authority figure to make a political statement.

## Community Commons

A space for organizing on campus that was promised as part of the Occupation negotiation, which the board later reneged on.

## Conflict of Interest

The situation in which a person exploits their relationship with an institution for personal benefit, typically financially. For example: a board member's son getting awarded a big construction contract (as it happened at Cooper). Conflicts of interest are sometimes considered acceptable with appropriate disclosure, oversight, and agreement by all parties in advance, but often this is not the case.

## **Consultant**

An expert in a specific field who gives professional advice or services to companies, organizations, or institutions for a fee. Consultants provide deeper levels of expertise than would be feasible for an institution to retain in-house, and an institution may purchase only as much service from the outside consultant as desired. Cooper's administration has spent millions on outside consultants, often cycling through them.

## **Cooper Exceptionalism**

A dangerous cultural attitude that because Cooper has a low acceptance rate, our students and faculty are patently superior to others. Don't be this way.

## **CSCU**

Committee to Save Cooper Union. Founded in late 2013 by alumni and faculty to preserve the mission of free education through legal and political efforts.

## **CUAA**

Cooper Union Alumni Association. An elected body of volunteers who meet on a monthly basis, as well as in subcommittees to make motions, organize events, and communicate with alumni.

## **CUFCT**

Cooper Union Federation of College Teachers. Full-time faculty union.

## **Cy Pres**

A process by which the court can re-interpret the terms of a trust to authorize a decision that would otherwise be illegal.

## **DASNY**

Dormitory Authority of the State of New York. Approved \$11.5 million in financing to build Cooper's dorms in 1999.

## **Debt-Free Education**

A model beyond tuition-free, that scarcely exists, in which an institution makes sure no members graduate with debts for cost of living or materials while pursuing their education.

## **Development**

The fundraising department of a not-for-profit organization.

## **Direct Action**

The use of strikes, demonstrations, or other public forms of protest rather than negotiation to achieve one's demands.

## **Egalitarianism**

The principle that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities.

## **EMT**

Emergency Management Team. A group of appointed administrators which was supposedly put together to deal with events like natural disasters, however the only time the group has been officially convened was to deal with the Occupation.

## **Endowment**

Funds or property donated to an institution, individual, or group as a source of income. Cooper's endowment includes the land under the Chrysler Building.

## **Enrollment Management**

Enrollment Management is a term coined by Maguire Associates, a consulting firm hired by Cooper's Board. It describes an organizational concept and a systematic set of activities to give administrators more influence over student enrollments. Tactics include marketing, reshaping admission policies, retention programs, and financial aid awarding. Enrollment Management is heavily informed by the collection, analysis, and use of data to project successful outcomes. Activities that produce measurable improvements in yields are continued and/or expanded, while those activities that do not are discontinued or restructured. Competitive efforts to recruit students is a common emphasis of enrollment managers. In 2014 Mitchell Lipton was promoted from Dean of Admissions to Vice President of Enrollment Services. Enrollment Management stands in contrast to the fact that Cooper's admissions, up to last year, has largely been decided by faculty sitting around a table.

## **EOYS**

End of Year Show. At the end of each school year, students and faculty from all three schools push furniture into storage areas and convert the entirety of campus into an exhibition. In 2012, students organized to give a large portion of the works away for free to attendees. In 2013, Free Cooper took over the 7th floor for an unauthorized exhibition in support of free education.

## **ERTF**

Expense Reduction Task Force.

See also: Task Forces

## **ESC**

Engineering Student Council

## **Escalation**

A rapid increase in the intensity or seriousness of something; an intensification. Escalation can be used as a tactic or it can be observed as part of an opponent's strategy.

## **EVT**

East Village Thai. Delicious food on 7th street between 2nd and 3rd Ave.

## **FAFSA**

Free Application for Federal Student Aid, to determine eligibility for student financial aid including Pell Grants.

## **FCU**

Free Cooper Union

## **FFC**

Fuck Free Cooper Union, an ongoing counterculture-inspired reflection on political organizing, influenced by the San Francisco Diggers.

## **Financial Aid**

Governmental and private funding in the form of grants, scholarships, and loans that are intended to help students pay education-related expenses including tuition, fees, room and board, books, and supplies for education.

## **Financial Realities**

Something that is often referenced as the reasoning behind unpopular decisions. (E.g. "we were forced to take out the loan because of financial realities") This phrase is usually a red flag representing the evasion of a sufficiently detailed answer to a question, or the reframing of a non-financial question in financial terms.

## **FJC**

Former private security, replaced in August 2014 with BDA (Beau Dietl & Associates).

## **FOCU**

Friends of Cooper Union, founded 2011, is a coalition of students, faculty, staff, alumni and friends dedicated to Cooper's mission. The group is most widely known for publishing The Way Forward, hosting community summits, writing open letters, and launching an online Vote of No Confidence in Epstein and Bharucha with 2,300+ signatures. <http://friendscooperunion.org>

## **For-Profit Education**

Also known as the "education services industry" or "proprietary education" refers to educational institutions operated by private, profit-seeking businesses. Though they exist for primary schools in the form of charter and private schools, another major category of for-profit schools are post-secondary institutions which operate as businesses, receiving fees from each student they enroll.

## **Free Since 1859**

A fundraising campaign done by alumni where people were encouraged to donate multiples of \$18.59 and include a note about free education. In the end all the money went to the administration, rendering the campaign ineffective.

## **FY**

Fiscal Year, in accounting terminology.

## **GOLF BALLS**

A way to call out incorrect and exaggerated claims about protests, referencing the administration's gross overreaction to when ping-pong balls were released down the grand staircase of the NAB. In a campus-wide email condemning the action, the administration misconstrued the online comments of one professor's dad as a threat that 'the drop' would be repeated in the future with golf balls, never apologizing for the invasion of privacy or confusion they had caused.

## **Governance**

Establishment of policies, and continuous monitoring of their proper implementation, by the members of the governing body of an organization. It SHOULD include the mechanisms required to balance the powers of the members (with the associated accountability), and their primary duty of enhancing the organization.

## **HBCU**

Historically Black Colleges and Universities. Institutions of higher education in the United States that were established around or before 1964 with the intention of serving the black community.

## **Hedge Fund**

A fund, usually used by wealthy individuals and institutions, which is allowed to use aggressive strategies that are unavailable to mutual funds, including selling short, leverage, program trading, swaps, arbitrage, and

derivatives. Hedge funds are exempt from many of the rules and regulations governing other mutual funds, which allows them to accomplish aggressive investing goals. Unless, that is, they flop — as in the case of Cooper. Notably, Cooper's board invested in hedge funds administered by board members themselves, which presents a potential conflict of interest.

#### **Huron Group**

Financial consultants hired by the Board throughout Bharucha's Reinvention process. Credited with popularizing the controversial "Responsibility Centered Management" style. Huron principals Robert Spencer and John Curry were appointed as interim financial leadership between Bharucha's firing of T.C. Westcott and hiring of William Mea.

#### **IE**

Interdisciplinary Engineering

#### **Indirect Action**

Asking or pressuring an existing authority to make the change you wish to see.

#### **JAC**

Joint Activities Committee, student body that administers club funding.

#### **JB**

Jamshed Bharucha (current president)

#### **JSC**

Joint Student Council. All student councils come together on a regular basis to pass resolutions on common issues.

#### **Kicking the Can Down the Road**

Phrase used by the administration to discredit any efforts to obstruct or prolong the decision to charge tuition, claiming it was post-poning the inevitable.

#### **Lemon**

Something you buy that turns out to be no good, or breaks down and costs you money.

#### **ME**

Mechanical Engineer

#### **Meritocracy**

A political philosophy which holds that power should be vested in individuals according to merit, advancement in such a system is based on intellectual talent measured through examination and/or demonstrated achievement in the field where it is

implemented. Some consider meritocracy to be integral to Cooper's mission.

#### **MOA**

Memorandum of Agreement. A deal between the CUAA and the administration that traded organizational autonomy for several alumni seats on the board. The contract is available

#### **MOOC**

Massive Open Online Course. Ivory Tower takes a critical look at several of the for-profit companies behind these courses including Coursera and Udacity. Bharucha was in secret talks to launch MOOCs with a partnership between Cooper and The Minerva Project but the deal fell apart. In 2014 Cooper's administration announced they would be launching engineering MOOCs in partnership with Ed-X.

#### **MSA**

Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. A voluntary, peer-based, non-profit association which conducts peer evaluation and accreditation of public and private universities.

#### **NAAB**

National Architectural Accrediting Board.

#### **NAB**

New Academic Building, 41 Cooper Square

#### **NASAD**

National Association of Schools of Art and Design

#### **Need Aware**

A need aware, or need sensitive, policy means that that university makes most of its admissions decisions without considering the student's need for college money. In other words, they may reserve some spots for students who are able to meet the college program's full cost of attendance (COA) without the need of loans, grants or scholarships.

#### **Need Based**

Need-based means that your family's financial resources, as measured by a formula established by the federal government, are not sufficient to cover your educational costs. This formula analyzes a family's income and assets to determine its Expected Family Contribution (EFC) toward the cost of college.

#### **Need Blind**

Colleges and universities with a need blind, or full need, admissions policy do not consider your financial situation when deciding whether to admit you as a college student. In most cases, the majority of college aid will go to students who prove financial need, but the school may also award scholarships, such as athletic scholarships.

#### **NYSED**

New York State Education Department

#### **Paradigm**

Paradigms are a society's unstated assumptions and deepest set of beliefs about how the world works. "Paradigms are the source of systems," writes Donella Meadows. Two examples of cultural paradigms include "growth is good" and "one can own land."

#### **Pell Grant**

Money the U.S. government provides for students who need it to pay for college. Federal Pell Grants are limited to students with financial need, who have not earned their first bachelor's degree, or who are not enrolled in certain post-baccalaureate programs, through participating institutions.

#### **PGP**

Preferred Gender Pronoun. The practice of asking individuals what pronouns they use for themselves in an effort to respect the diversity of gender identities beyond male and female. Some pronouns are: I, we, he, she, all, it, they, their, etc. Gendered pronouns are those that indicate gender: he, she, him, her, hers, his, himself and herself. All others, like "it," "one," and "they," are gender-neutral.

#### **PILOT**

Payment In Lieu Of Taxes. Because Cooper owns the land beneath the Chrysler Building, all of its tenants' taxes go to support Cooper. (This is a sum of 10s of million of dollars per year, which jumps up every decade.) It's a rare and historical tax exemption granted by the city to Peter Cooper because the college was founded for the benefit of New York's working class. Tuition damages the argument that Cooper is still providing the city with such a benefit, therefore jeopardizing the continued existence of the PILOT agreement. The Board went through several sets of lawyers until they found what they wanted to hear: that charging tuition wouldn't jeopardize the PILOT, so now they flaunt this myth.

#### **PLT**

Presidential Leadership Team.

#### **POC**

Person of color (plural: people of color, persons of color) is a term used primarily in the United States to describe any person who is not white. The term is meant to be inclusive among non-white groups, emphasizing common experiences of racism.

#### **Private College**

A college or university not operated by the government, although many receive tax breaks, public student loans, and grants. Not all private institutions classify as non-profit, some are for-profit, and depending on their location may be subject to government regulation.

#### **Public College**

A college or university predominantly funded by public means through a national or subnational government, for this reason all public colleges are non-profit.

#### **RA**

Residential Advisor, helps out in the dorm.

#### **RCM**

"Responsibility Centered Management" is a model theorized by the administration's consultants The Huron Group. RCM has since been disproven as an ethical style of leadership, because of the way it can be misused to claim that all parties participated in the creation of a pre-determined plan. By delegating increasingly specific tasks down a chain of command, RCM creates an appearance of stakeholder agency and collaboration at all levels of a bureaucracy, when in fact it simply fulfills directives set by top-level administrators. Crucially, RCM leaves no room for dissent or challenging the bounds of a problem.

#### **Red Clock**

Building off of the 2012 Quebec student movement against tuition hikes, symbolized by the carré rouge (red square), student occupiers at Cooper illuminated the clock tower with red lights. The red clock has since been a symbol of Free Cooper Union supporters.

#### **Rose for Democracy**

Slang for a facetious victory, or a poetic moment that means nothing.

**RTF**

Revenue Task Force. See also: Task Forces

**Salty Cookies**

A terrible mistake at the 2014 freshmen Disorientation. Some students insisted they liked the cookies, while others acknowledged that they may have been too salty.

**Shared Governance**

A delicate balance between faculty and staff participation in planning and decision-making processes and administrative accountability. The phrase “shared governance” is so hackneyed that it is becoming what some linguists call an “empty” or “floating” signifier, a term so devoid of determinate meaning that it takes on whatever significance a particular speaker gives it at the moment.

**Sisu**

Sisu is a Finnish word generally meaning determination, bravery, and resilience. However, the word is widely considered to lack a proper translation into any other language. Sisu is about taking action against the odds and displaying courage and resoluteness in the face of adversity. Deciding on a course of action and then sticking to that decision against repeated failures is Sisu. It is similar to equanimity, except the forbearance of Sisu has a grimmer quality of stress management than the latter.

**Son of a Surgeon**

A straw-man argument used by some trustees in reference to students at Cooper whose families could afford to pay the cost of tuition. e.g. “Why should we give a scholarship to the son of a surgeon?”

**Stigmergy**

A mechanism of indirect coordination between agents or actions. The principle is that the trace left in the environment by an action stimulates the performance of a next action, by the same or a different agent. In that way, subsequent actions tend to reinforce and build on each other, leading to the spontaneous emergence of coherent, apparently systematic activity. Stigmergy is a form of self-organization. It produces complex, seemingly intelligent structures, without need for any planning, control, or even direct communication between the agents. (For more, read Heather Marsh’s “Binding Chaos”)

**Sunset Clause**

A proposed administrative structure in which

Cooper would bring on a final president whose job is to bridge the institution from a structure of hierarchical bureaucracy to that of a self-governing community, and then eliminate the very position of president by the end of their tenure. It has nothing to do with Santa Claus.

**Sustainability**

In its most basic definition, sustainability means having the financial resources to continue operations into the future. However, sustainability has come to mean almost nothing, having been thrown around by administrators and trustees for years to justify their decision to implement tuition. In August 2013, the Board published a document on sustainability to which the Working Group was asked to conform. See also: Financial Realities

**TAP**

Whereas Cooper used to not have a price associated with its education, President Campbell established “tuition” at Cooper in order to become eligible for Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) funds for needy students. This “tuition” was automatically refunded upfront in the form of full-tuition scholarships for all admitted students. While this may have opened the door to additional funds, it also marked a conceptual shift in which a monetary value—supposedly based on comparable institutions—was assigned to Cooper’s education. This paved the way, linguistically, for the Board to be able to call what they’re charging now “half-tuition.”

**Task Forces**

At the same time that Bharucha announced Cooper’s “fiscal crisis,” he launched two “Reinvention Task Forces” devoted to Expense Reduction (ERTF) and Revenue Generation (RTF). These were framed as community efforts, but it quickly became apparent that their results had been pre-determined by Bharucha. An online forum was launched to collect community input, but all posts were moderated by a Cooper administrator, and the entire site has since been deleted. Taskforce members initially sought to look around tuition, but Bharucha manipulated the process and appointed members in such a way that tuition became a major part of the Taskforce’s recommendations. Several Taskforce members, including faculty member Christine Osinski, later publicly spoke out against the document and the process. The most egregious fact about the taskforces is how Bharucha spent an entire year to fake the appearance of

community buy-in, wasting time and money that the community did not have to lose.

**TC**

Theresa C. Westcott, former Vice President of Finance and Administration, fired by Bharucha in Summer 2013

**Tenure**

A senior professor’s contractual right not to have their position terminated without just cause. In 1975, 57% of all college professors had tenure or were on a tenure track, in 2007, that number had fallen to 31%.

**The Pioneer**

Cooper’s student newspaper. The first issue was printed in 1921.

**Transparency**

The full, accurate, and timely disclosure of information related to the institution’s finances and governance.

**TWF**

The Way Forward is a document by Friends of Cooper Union putting forward a holistic alternative to the Board’s agenda, including recommendations on finances, community, and academics. Leaked board minutes showed trustees openly discussing ways to avoid meeting with members of FOCU, as well as sharing strategies to diffuse their questions. When FOCU’s financial modeling was obstructed by a lack of access to Cooper’s detailed financial information, the group went through the trouble of engaging an independent financial analyst. Still, Bharucha deemed this document a “laughing stock.”

**Umbrella, Flipping of**

Colloquialism for witnessing a paradigm shift within an individual. “Your umbrella just flipped! I saw it with my own two eyes!”

See also: Paradigm

**Unions**

Unions are an organization of workers that have banded together to achieve common goals such as protecting the integrity of their trade, achieving higher pay, increasing the number of employees and employer hires, and bettering working conditions. Unions in general are in decline in the United States, academic unions in particular are under attack, and a large majority of faculty members hold part-time, nontenurable jobs that benefit from collective bargaining power. Some campuses have made it difficult for faculty and staff to

organize and have a voice as decisions have become more centralized within institutions.

**Vincident**

In May 2014, Vincent Hui, a student instructor with the Saturday Program, refused to shake Bharucha’s hand at a public event. Within several days, Hui was informed that he had been kicked off his sports team and barred from teaching in the Saturday Program going forward, over a vague and unspecified recent allegation of incivility. The events, which came to be known as the “Vincident,” are evidence that when protocol gets in the way, the administration will circumvent it with impunity.

**Vote of No Confidence**

A statement or vote that a person in a superior position—be it government, managerial, etc.—is no longer deemed fit by the signatories to hold that position. Bharucha and Board members have ignored multiple Votes of No Confidence numbering in the thousands of signatures.

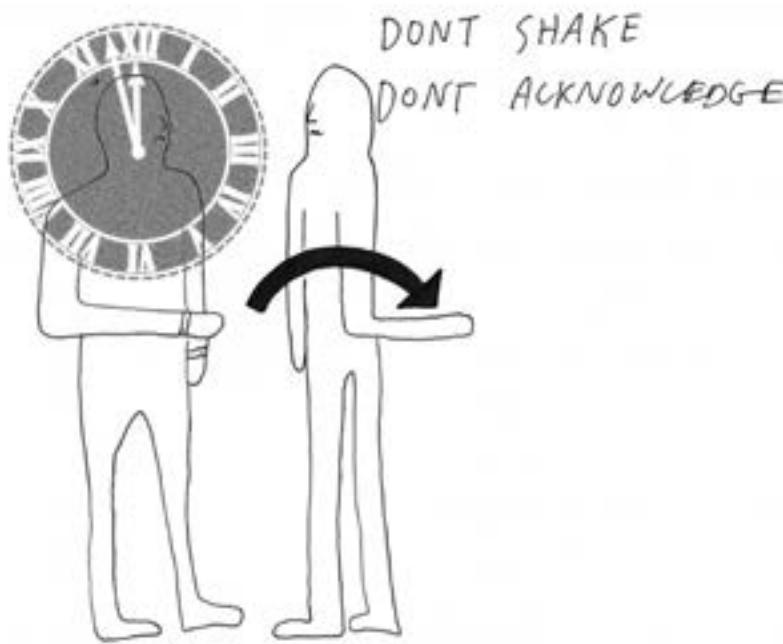
**WG**

Working Group. See the earlier section in this reader for more!

**Womp Womp**

A two-word response accidentally sent from an admissions administrator at Cooper to a prospective student, in response to their impassioned appeal that they couldn’t afford to attendw. The administrator intended to forward the message to their colleague, but instead CC’d the applicant themselves.

# SPECTRUM OF ALLIES



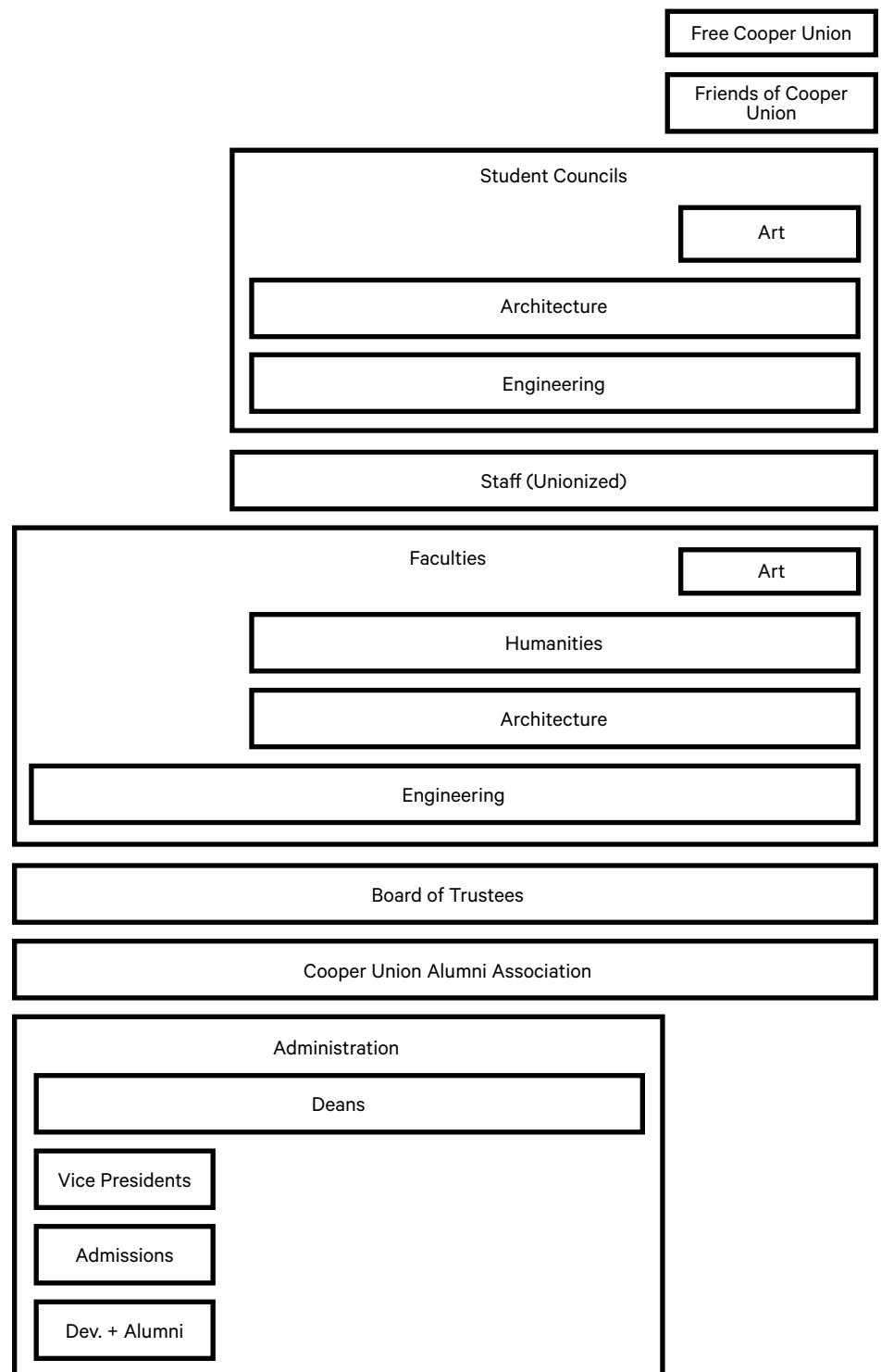
**\* On Perceived Neutrality** Some groups choose to remain neutral, unknown, or undecided on the issue of tuition at Cooper out of fear of retaliation from the administration, because they feel there is not enough information, or that it's not their job to make decisions about the way the institution is run. However, conflict occurs within a larger social context from which aspects of identity and oppression cannot be separated. Neutrality privileges those who are less impacted by experiences of systemic violence and lack of access to power or decision-making. It's our collective responsibility to challenge each other to acknowledge that perceived neutrality reinforces an existing balance of power.

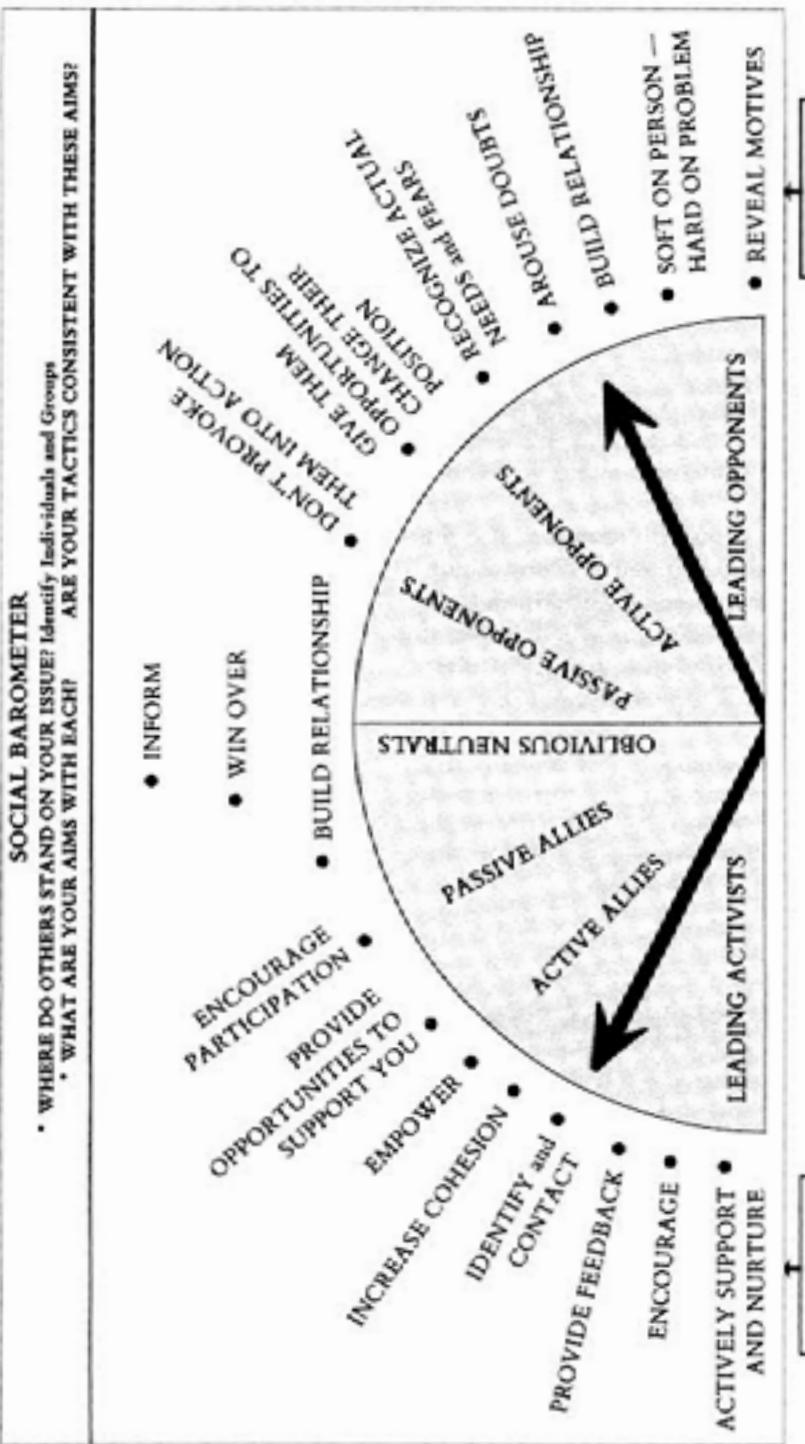
TOOLKIT: 116

TUITION

NEUTRAL\*

FREE





I wish to acknowledge inspiration from David H. Albert: "People Power — Applying Non-Violence Theory" New Society Publishers, Philadelphia, PA, 1985.

Target

What message will the tactic send to the people who have the power to meet our demands? Will it pressure them to capitulate, or enable them to dismiss us or retaliate?

## Resources

Is the action worth our limited time, energy, and money? Can we get more out of it than we put in? Do we have the capacity to pull it off effectively?

Allies

How will the tactic affect our allies or potential allies? How will they receive it? Will it strengthen the relationship or jeopardize it?

## Audience

**Audience**  
Who do we want to reach with our tactic? What response do we want our action to inspire in them?

Tone

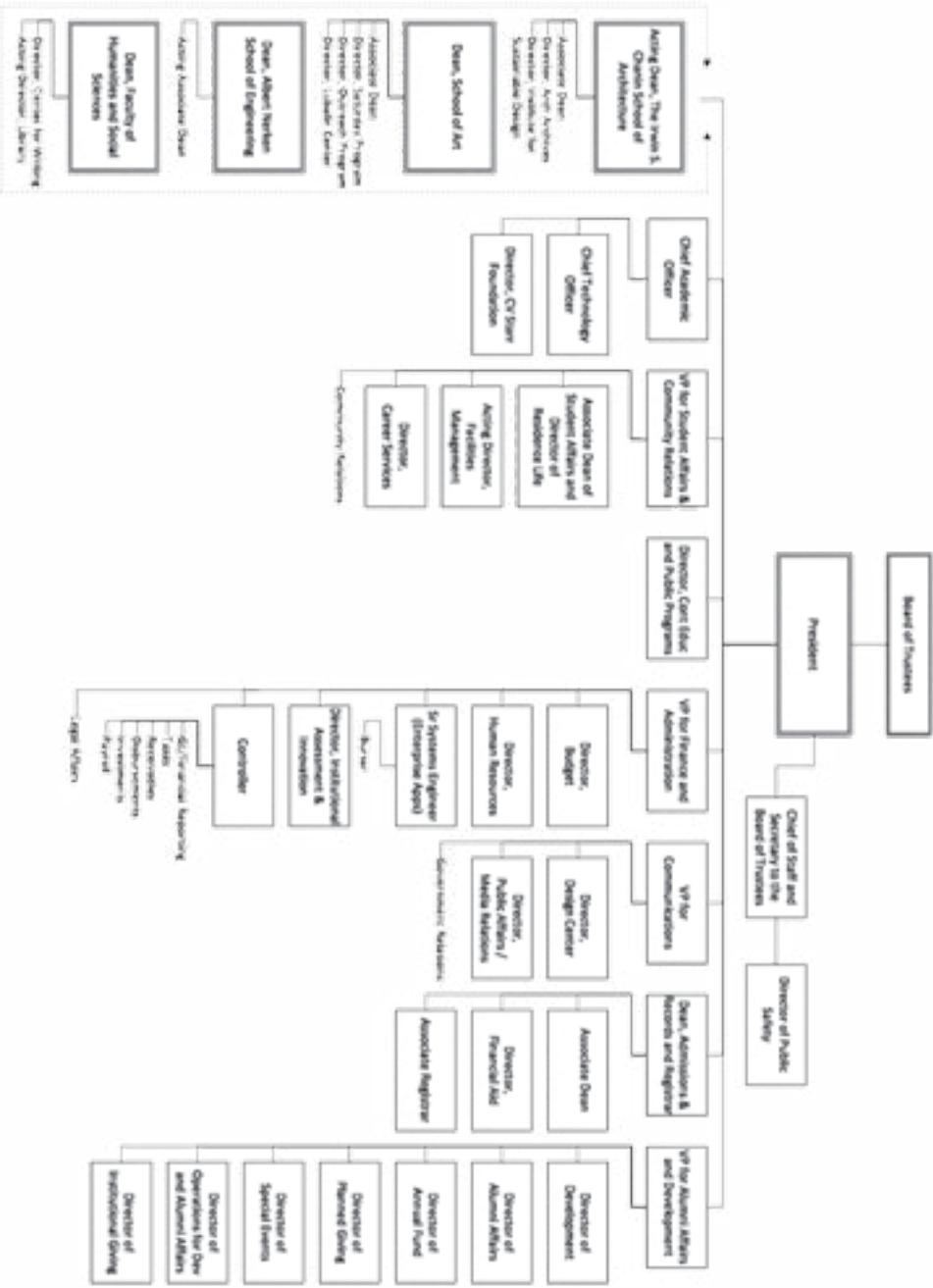
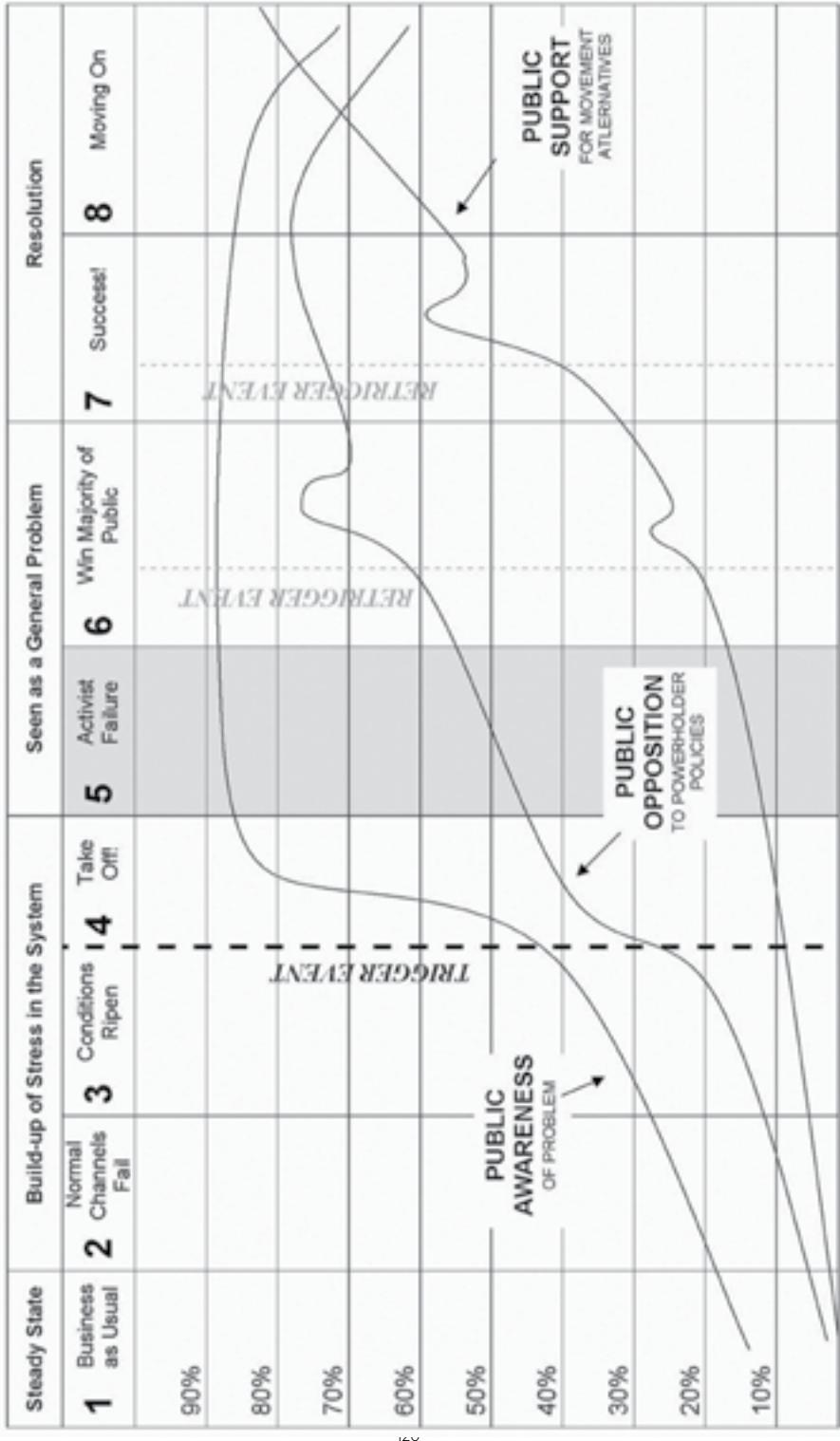
Will the action be solemn, jubilant, angry or calm? Will the energy attract or repel the people we want to engage?

Strategy

How will the tactic move us toward achieving our goal?

Message

What will the tactic communicate?  
What will it mean to others? How  
will it carry a persuasive story?



## A D M I N I S T R A T O R S



Jamshed Bharucha  
President; Trustee



Lawrence Cacciatore  
Chief of Staff and Secretary to the Board



Stephen Baker  
VP of Student Affairs



Justin Harmon  
VP for Communications



William Mea  
VP of Finance and Administration



Mitchell Lipton  
VP of Enrollment Services



Teresa Dahlberg  
Dean of Engineering;  
Chief Academic Officer



Abby Davis  
Assistant Director of Admissions



William Germano  
Dean of Humanities



Saskia Bos  
Dean of Art



Elizabeth O'Donnell  
Acting Dean of Architecture



Chris Chamberlin  
Dean of Students



Elizabeth Diller AR'79  
Trustee



Simon Ben-Avi  
Former Acting Dean, of Engineering



Jeremy Wertheimer EE'82  
Alumni Trustee



Ronald W. Drucker CE'62  
Chairman Emeritus



Milton Glaser A'51  
Trustee Emeritus

?

Carroll L. Wainwright, Jr.  
Trustee Emeritus

?

Clarence Michalis  
Trustee Emeritus



Alex Katz A'49  
Trustee Emeritus

## A D M I N I S T R A T O R S



Robert Bernhard  
Chairman Emeritus



Richard S. Lincer  
Chairman of the Board



Francois de Menil AR'87  
Vice Chairman of the Board



Charles S. Cohen  
Trustee



Joseph B. Dobronyi Jr.  
Trustee



Thomas Driscoll ME'77  
Alumni Trustee



Jeff Gural  
Working Group Co-Chair



Mark Epstein A'76  
Chairman Emeritus



Raymond G. Falci ME'86  
Alumni Trustee



Jeffrey Hersch EE'87  
Alumni Trustee



Catharine Hill  
Trustee



Eric Hirschhorn ME'89  
Alumni Trustee



Malcolm King EE'97  
Alumni Trustee



John Leeper AR'85  
Alumni Association President



Daniel Liebskind AR'70  
Trustee



Edgar Mokuvos EE'78  
Alumni Trustee



Devora Najjar ChE'16  
Student Representative Trustee



Daniel Okrent  
Trustee



Bruce Pasternack ME'68  
Alumni Trustee



Lee H. Skolnick AR'79  
Alumni Trustee



Kevin Slavin A'95  
Alumni Trustee



Johnny C. Taylor Jr.  
Trustee



Monica Vachher  
Trustee



Rachel L. Warren  
Trustee

**TIC-TAC-TOE** 3 firings in a row and you get a full scholarship!

# RELEVANT INSTITUTIONS

## Adelphi

University in New York that became part of a landmark lawsuit in which the Board of Trustees was largely replaced by the courts.

## Antioch

College in Ohio founded by Horace Mann with a radical history and interesting historical ties to Cooper. Board attempted to commercially franchise the school's brand, resulting in bankruptcy. A group of alumni bought the college back and reopened it, granting full scholarships to all for the first several years, and instituting a model of cooperative-based self-governance.

## UVA

University in Virginia at which several trustees engaged in a secret campaign to oust the school's beloved president, who stood in the way of their agenda. The community was enraged, successfully exposing the board's secret dealings and reinstating the president.

## Corcoran

College in Washington D.C., was engaged in a Supreme Court lawsuit over mismanagement, but wasn't awarded standing and is slated to be absorbed into a larger institution.

## Webb

Engineering college in Glen Cove, New York that awards full-scholarships to all students. Cooper's former President George Campbell is on their board.

## Deep Springs

Two year alternative all-male college in California founded by L.L. Nunn, on an extremely secluded ranch with cooperative-based self-governance. Free to all who attend, currently facing a struggle with its board over co-education.

## Berea

Free college in Kentucky where students contribute by working, why studying.

## Olin

Engineering college in Massachusetts that awarded full-scholarships to all for its first several years, and has since fallen back to a partial-scholarship model.

## Cornell

University in upstate New York with interesting structures for making students part of its Board of Trustees.

## Valve

Washington-based software company behind games such as Half Life and game-distribution platform Steam. Known for their structures of self-organization that are unique within their industry.

## Mondragon Corporation

Huge worker cooperative in Spain that also runs a school. Decentralised and self governed, owned by students, faculties, and workers.

## Summer Hill

English school for 6 to 17 year olds that operates in a democratic and self-governing fashion with no set curriculum, behavior codes, or compulsory classes. Over 100 years old, it has consistently proven itself under intense scrutiny to be a working model of education based on the premise that children are eager to learn and remain that way until their curiosity is put down by traditional education structures. Unofficial motto: "Freedom, not Licence."

## Black Mountain

Widely-revered college of art in North Carolina, in operation between 1933 and 1957. Brought Bauhaus to America. Influenced Cooper's art program.

## ASSÉ

Association pour une Solidarité Syndicale Étudiante (Association for Student Union Solidarity). A temporary coalition to counter tuition hikes and coordinate 2012 Quebec student protests. Successful in halting tuition hikes. Operates by direct democracy. Popularized the red square.

# FURTHER READING

## Historical Cooper Documents:

Charter and Trust Annual reports (archived online by Library)

## Working Group Plan

Report. Put together in three months under duress and still better financially and culturally than tuition. Read before you ask if there's an alternative to tuition.

## CSCU Legal Documents

Docket. The Committee to Save Cooper Union's lawyers filed a lot of important evidence with the courts about appearances of insider dealing and mismanagement at Cooper, accompanied by detailed and straightforward explanations.

## Fall of the Faculty

by Benjamin Ginsberg  
Book. History of how faculty used to play a larger role in administration, and the rise of "administrative bloat."

## Leverage Points:

**Places at Which to Intervene in a System**  
by Donella Meadows  
Essay. A great introduction to systems-thinking. How to change systems, with methods organized by effectiveness, up to the transcendence of paradigms!

## Debt: the First 5000 Years

by David Graeber  
Book. An exhaustive anti-authoritarian history of debt as a human phenomenon, from the origins of money to contemporary rent-extraction economies.

## Envisioning a Sustainable World

by Donella Meadows  
Essay. Influential text on visionary thinking that also serves as a how-to.

## Ignorant Schoolmaster

by Jacques Rancière  
Book. French philosopher using the story of historical educator Joseph Jacotot to cover pedagogy, human nature, education, emancipation, and universal intelligence.

## The Coming Insurrection

by The Invisible Committee  
Book. Insurrectionist political text theorizing the end of capitalism: "an entity in its death throes sacrifices itself as a content in order to survive as a form."

## Binding Chaos

by Heather Marsh  
<http://georgiebc.wordpress.com/category/binding-chaos/>  
Blog posts and eBook. Provocations on post-democratic global collaborative methods of self-governance.

## Communiqué from an Absent Future

<http://wewanteverthing.wordpress.com/2009/09/24/communique-from-an-absent-future/>  
Manifesto. Came out of University of California occupations. Details the entanglement of university and capital. They want everything, too.

## Pray for Calamity

<http://prayforcalamity.com/2014/03/08/upward-bound-maintaining-our-collective-clunker/>  
Blog. Anarchism and the End of Civilization. "Crises like climate change, peak oil, deforestation, species die-off, top soil loss – all needed to be addressed decades and decades ago. Talking about them solves nothing....Technology is being used to maintain the status quo as the train of industrial civilization hurtles towards a gorge."

## Seeing Like a State:

### Why Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed

by James C. Scott  
Book. High-modernist tendencies + authoritarian government = dire results. Describes the ways in which states have developed and refined their administrative sense organs and created highly legible populations.

# FURTHER READING

continued...

## University of the Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study

by Fred Moten & Stefano Harney

Book. From the back cover: “[Moten & Harney] draw on the theory and practice of the black radical tradition as it supports, inspires, and extends contemporary social and political thought and aesthetic critique.” Neither for nor against the university, Moten & Harney poetically trash shit and reveal another world.

## Pedagogy of the Oppressed

by Paolo Freire

Book. Theory of the relationships between teacher, student, and society, advocating for an oppositional pedagogy and against the dominant “banking” model of education in the struggle of oppressor and oppressed.

# TOOLS FOR ORGANIZING

## GroupMe

<http://groupme.com>

Private chatrooms that work across smartphones, dumbphones (e.g. text messages), and web browsers. Useful for ongoing banter and during actions.

## Celly

<http://celly>

Mass text message announcements. This is a two-way service but not as good for chatting as GroupMe.

## Google Docs

<http://drive.google.com>

Share documents, spreadsheets, and files. Useful for collaborative writing and resource-sharing.

## Trello

<http://trello.com>

Collaborative to-do list that has been used during actions to coordinate tasks across a large group.

## Github

<http://github.com>

Social network for code, this is where we're hosting the Disorientation website and other code-related projects.

## Hackpad

<http://hackpad.com>

Collaborative text-editor with wiki features like document linking, is public by default, and keeps track of authorship better than Google Docs.

## Facebook

<http://facebook.com>

Social network. Lots of community banter happens on groups like *Save Cooper Union*, private groups are sometimes used for organizing, messages can be a useful way to reach people who don't check their email, events can draw people in to actions or workshops, and several pages (like *Free Cooper Union*) keep people informed or share funny stuff. *Pro tip: if you're setting up an event, get various people to download an “Invite All” browser extension and use it to invite their networks.*

## Twitter

<http://twitter.com>

The other major social network for distributing information, keeping track of banter, and participating in discussion. There is an official @FreeCooperUnion account, and other groups have accounts too. The search function is useful.

## Google News

<http://google.com/news>

Search engine for news. After a press event or announcement you can refresh the search for “Cooper Union” to keep track of articles as they come in. You can also set up alerts that will email you a summary as articles appear.



# TOOLS FOR ORGANIZING

continued...

## Livestream

<http://livestream.com>

Stream live video at a public URL in realtime from your smartphone or computer. Useful to have ready to go before an action.

## Change.org

<http://change.org>

Petition platform. Vaguely spammy, but can be a good display of public support for a position.

## Mailchimp

<http://mailchimp.com>

Collect email signups and send newsletters.

## Vine

<http://vine.co>

Social network for short looping videos. Subsidiary of Twitter. Easier than producing a video and sometimes as effective at conveying what's going on in a clip.

## Sendy

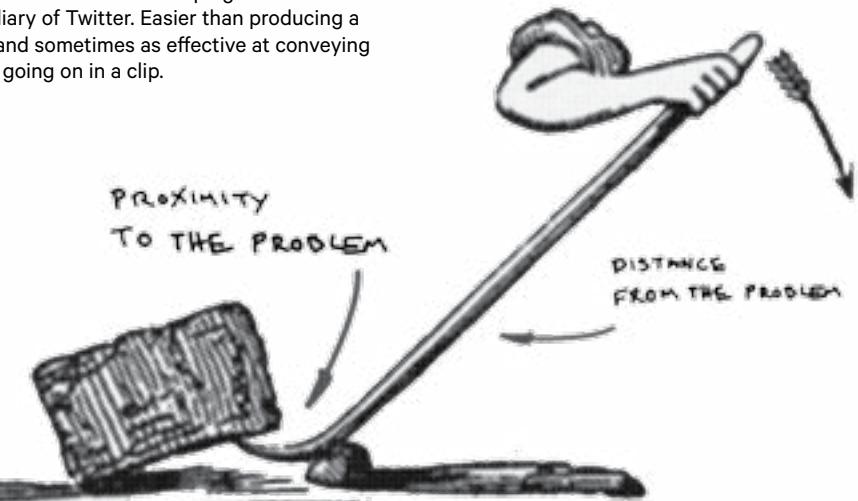
<http://sendy.co>

Self-hosted alternative for email newsletters, less regulation of lists than Mailchimp, and can be cheaper at scale.

## Nationbuilder

<http://nationbuilder.com>

Political organizing platform that can be used to centralize social media, mailing, and fundraising activities.



We looked back at this section 100 years in the future and laughed!

# STAYin *the* KNOW

These channels are all easy to unsubscribe from, so try them all out and drop what doesn't work for you.



Text **@FreeCooperUnion** to **23559**

Moderated text loop for meeting and action announcements.

Follow **@FreeCooperUnion**

This is us on Twitter and Facebook.

Join **FB group SaveCooperUnion**

Facebook group full of lively discussion about Cooper. Great place to ask questions.

Email us **cooperunionsos@gmail.com**

Group email address. Don't hesitate to get in touch with questions.

Visit **freecooperunion.org/disorientation**

Online version of this guide, with extended materials.

### **A note on abridgement.**

Much of the content in this reader has been edited to fit within these pages. You can access unabridged versions of the content—as well as other media like videos and an interactive timeline at our website:  
[freecooperunion.org/disorientation](http://freecooperunion.org/disorientation)

### **Correct us if we're wrong.**

We've been compiling information for three years, and we're still learning. We did our best to fact-check, but we're happy to make corrections. Get in touch at the email below.

### **There are no stupid questions.**

Write us an email and we will get back to you:  
[cooperunionsos@gmail.com](mailto:cooperunionsos@gmail.com)

### **Colophon**

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