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## Uni staff strike over job cuts

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MELBOURNE University staff have gone on strike to protest against the university's decision to proceed with 220 job losses.

Unionised staff walked off the job yesterday afternoon and about 100 rallied outside the Old Arts building, where a university council meeting was under way.

The university has come under fire for cutting staff when its five-year fund-raising campaign has already received pledges of nearly \$47 million.

The "University Campaign Plan" aims to raise \$250 million by 2015 but will not be launched until next year, with the first two years of the project dubbed the "quiet phase", according to reports in the university's student newspaper *Farrago*.

The campaign, which began in June 2008, has already received \$46.9 million in pledges from donors, the university says.

The university recently decided to axe 220 positions, saying it had lost \$191 million in endowment income because of the global financial crisis and was left with a \$30 million funding "gap".

But critics say the university, which expects a surplus of about \$20 million this year, is sitting on a \$1.2 billion endowment nest egg.

National Tertiary Education Union branch president Ted Clark said the university was entitled to look for sources of philanthropy, but questioned why it had to lose staff if it was attracting extra income.

Minutes from last September's council show the university's pro-vice-chancellor of global relations, Professor Warren Bebbington, told council the university needed to "significantly expand its resource base through increased endowment and philanthropic income".

The university said the campaign had been planned for several years and would include \$80 million in funding for student scholarships.

Spokeswoman Christina Buckridge said it would breach the terms of donor gifts if they were used for salaries.

*This story was found at: <http://www.theage.com.au/national/education/uni-staff-strike-over-job-cuts-20090907-fedl.html>*