



CWA 9119
AFL-CIO

Contract Action Watch

reporting on tech & researcher bargaining at the University of California systemwide ★ March 2008

Gains in contracts for other UC workers

UPTE members prepare for possible strike

Some nine thousand nurses who work at the University of California were able to win a new contract in late January. Working in the income-generating UC medical centers, the nurses (represented by the California Nurses Association, or CNA) effectively used the threat of a strike to achieve raises of 4 to 8%.

The university's eight thousand researchers (RX) and technical workers (TX) are taking this lesson to heart. "The most effective leverage we have to make sure that UC bargains in good faith is the threat of a credible strike, just like CNA," explains Kevin Rooney UPTE's chief negotiator for the TX and RX units.

UPTE's TX and RX workers perform research that generates \$4 billion of the \$7 billion of annual income for UC. That's in addition to the teaching, museums and other public services which also bring in revenue.

"A short strike won't cripple UC, but the embarrassment and the inconvenience of an interruption is enough to move them," said Rooney. "The support that we enjoy from faculty, students, and

the public will be evident when we strike for a fair contract to preserve quality research staffing," he said. "UC executives fear labor unrest will tarnish their image and turn faculty and the public against them."

No links on wages and state budget

Over eight thousand UC service workers represented by AFSCME also won a victory against UC recently. After months of hard bargaining and a week-long strike, they achieved a step pay system with guaranteed longevity increases.

resource specialist at UC Davis. "That union put an immense amount of effort into member actions. The one-week strike in July of last year significantly ramped up the pressure on UC," said Pinto.

After the strike, constant pressure and focused protests against key decision makers, such as chancellors, regents and the UC president, drove home the fact that service workers could not survive on the poverty wages paid by UC. The pressure resulted in UC making a better offer, leading to the agreement to settle.

UPTE has also had strong actions in support of bargaining, but more will be necessary to gain a settlement. "Our members' activities at recent regents' meetings have shown UC we will turn out," notes Jelger Kalmijn, UPTE's president and researcher at UCSD. "They need to know: we're just getting started," he said.



Calvin Cheng, photo

UPTE members marched outside the regents' meeting in San Francisco on February 4 to voice their concerns about UC's lack of movement on wage negotiations, as well as the university's proposal to require new employee pension contributions. "We must have shared governance of the retirement system, before considering changes to the pension plan," said Caroline DeVan, a lab assistant at UC Riverside. UC is the only public institution of higher education in the nation without employee participation in its pension governance.

COME ONE, COME ALL!

SYSTEMWIDE PROTEST AT EVERY UC CAMPUS, LAB & MED CENTER



Morning of March 18, time and place TBA, coinciding with the regents' meeting at UC Riverside



Watch for bulletins, and contact your local for more information. Let's all tell UC that we want pay increases and a fair contract!

UC has the money, UPTE members need to shake it loose

The pay raises that UC agreed to for service workers and nurses show that UC has the money for employee raises and can agree to a multiyear contract that locks in pay and benefits.

“UC has done the math and knows that the state budget crisis has only minimal impact on UC,” said UPTE’s chief bargainer, Kevin Rooney, “while the growth in research funding and profitability of the medical centers will generate increased revenue.”

Historically, UC will agree to similar wage and benefit packages for all unionized employees. The nurses’ and service workers’ settlements set a template for an UPTE TX/RX settlement.

“UPTE’s bargainers are not asking for anything unreasonable,” said Rooney. “We are bargaining for members earning as little as \$10.98 an hour. We are bargaining to reduce high turn-over and to provide longer term ‘topped out’ employees equity increases. And we are bargaining for modest

increases for the rest of us in line with what UC is giving others.”

“We have a right to demand fair pay,” said Kevin Foote, a union mobilizer who works as a computer resource specialist at UC Santa Barbara. “We want to ensure that whatever raise we win does not get eroded by increased costs for the pension plan or benefits.”

UC faculty have already signed over 200 “I support UPTE” letters. The union also has support from legislators, three of whom showed their support publicly at the February 4 Board of Regents meeting. Student groups and others unions have also lend their backing.

Putting direct pressure on UC

UPTE will hold a systemwide action on the morning of March 18 to demonstrate support among workers, faculty, legislators, students, and community members. “Most importantly, we’ll demonstrate our willing-



An UPTE-CWA member at the February regents’ meeting.

ness to stand up for ourselves to demand fair negotiations and a fair settlement to our contract,” said Rooney.

While UPTE members picket and in engage in other pressure tactics, union activists continue to collect strike pledge cards. When a strike is called, a large turnout is essential. “By signing the pledge you commit to your co-workers that we will stand together,” said Rooney. If you have not already done so, please sign the pledge today.

UPTE has filed multiple unfair labor practice charges at the state labor board against UC’s bad faith bargaining, but a strike may be necessary to get UC to meet its legal obligation to negotiate. “Once we get them to be serious at the table, I am convinced we can bring home a contract,” said Dieskau Reed, an UPTE bargainer who works as a UCSC computer resource specialist.

BARGAINING UPDATE

We’ve seen some movement from UC but it’s clear that rather than bargain in good faith, the university prefers to divide UPTE-represented workers by buying off a handful of job titles. Here’s a brief update on recent talk at the bargaining table.

ISSUE	UPTE PROPOSAL	UC PROPOSAL
Cost of living increases	Fair across-the-board increases to keep pace with increased cost-of-living	2.75% to 300 workers at Lawrence Berkeley Lab; 0% to 8,700 UPTE workers at 10 UC campuses.
Minimum wage	Immediate increases to the 10% of RX/TX workers earning below \$15/hr.	No raises to low-wage UPTE members
Health & safety protections	UC to strengthen the poor standards which led to the death of an UPTE-represented worker in January 2009	UC is not obligated to follow local, state or federal health and safety laws. Substantial changes are not necessary.

How to contact your bargaining team

BERKELEY DAVIS IRVINE

Bargainer needed for this campus.
Edgardo Vasquez, Sr. Animal Technician (TX), edvasquez1966@sbcglobal.net, 530-574-4705
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