

Q. How is a strike authorized?

A. In UPTE, strike authorization requires a majority vote of the members. The UPTE executive board can initiate such a strike vote.

Q. Does UPTE have strike benefits?

A. UPTE provides a benefit for strike participation of \$40/day paid out of a constitutionally mandated strike fund.

Q. Who sets the timing and length of a strike?

A. Once members have given strike approval, the five systemwide elected officers and the union's chief negotiator determine the time and duration of the strike. If the strike is to take place only at one campus, the local leadership will be involved in this decision. UPTE systemwide leadership is responsible for coordinating with CWA, and UPTE will seek sanction and support from regional AFL-CIO central labor councils in order to have broad-based labor support. Decisions about timing and length are set to have the maximum effect on bargaining.

Q. What kinds of strikes are possible?

A. **Limited walkouts.** We can select strategic days on particular campuses where we are best prepared for one-day work stoppages. Actions like these send a clear message to UC management, legislators, funding agencies and the public about how serious our members are about achieving their bargaining goals. This kind of event does not cause great financial hardship for our members.

Strikes of indefinite length. These strikes would normally aim to halt work at UC until contract negotiations are settled. This would not be undertaken without exhausting other avenues of pressure. It is the last and most powerful resort our members have to achieve our bargaining goals.

Q. What are the legal prerequisites for a strike?

A. Under the labor law which covers UC employees, the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act, there are three ways to legally strike.

Bad faith bargaining. We demonstrate that UC is bargaining in bad faith and file unfair labor practice charges. Examples of bad faith bargaining include UC's implementing new work rules, reorganizations or increases in parking or benefits rates without the union's approval; not negotiating seriously; or not providing the union with relevant information we have requested.

Impasse. We reach the point where we can no longer make any progress in bargaining, which is called "impasse." The state Public Employment Relations Board determines whether impasse truly exists, once either UPTE or UC makes the claim. Under the law, if we reach impasse, UC can unilaterally implement wages and working conditions without a contract and we can strike.

Sympathy strikes. UPTE members have the legal, first amendment right to respect the picket lines of other unions just as we expect them to respect our picket lines.

Q. How can I help win a strike?

A. Get involved!

Attend mobilizing events. Keep informed by contacting your UPTE local and by visiting <www.upte.org>.

Sign a STRIKE PLEDGE CARD today. To obtain one, contact your UPTE rep or visit the website above.

Talk with your coworkers about what's at stake for UC's workers and how we can all win good contracts by working together.



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STRIKING: THE WHAT, WHY & HOW

Q. What is a strike?

A. To strike means to withhold one's labor to get better pay and working conditions.

Q. With a bad state budget and economy, does UC have money for a raise?

A. UC has plenty of money. More than 90% of UPTE TX and RX employees are not on state funds. We are on grants and work for departments dependent on grant funds, such as animal care. Grants already have built-in escalators for our raises. Only 18% of the entire UC budget comes from the state, so using the state budget to set raises makes no business sense. In fact, UC negotiators have never stated they do not have enough money, they just say we are not a priority. We need to convince them to make us a priority.



Q. Hasn't UC already told employees "no raises" for 2008/2009?

A. UC must bargain raises with our union. The university has told some employees who are not part of a union that they won't receive a raise. UC uses such declarations to non-represented employees to make union-represented employees believe that no raises are possible, but it has in fact given out many raises this year.



The faculty are receiving their scheduled step raises. The UC attorneys received raises in September 2008. In October, the police union settled for raises of 2% to 6%. AFSCME patient care workers will receive raises of 20% over 5 years and an increase in their minimum wage to \$14.50 per hour. The nurses have been offered raises. UPTE health care workers received raises from 2% to 10% and more in July 2008. AFSCME service workers have been offered increases and are fighting for more. And, of course, UC's new president, Mark Yudof, arrived in April 2008 with a compensation package of over \$900,000, almost double that of his predecessor.

Q. Why should I pledge to go on strike?

A. UC is demanding what amounts to a pay cut at the bargaining table. It is refusing to give COLAs (cost-of-living adjustments) or any longevity steps. With the cost of living increasing by more than 5% this year, UC's proposal equals a de facto pay cut. UC also wants to increase our health care premiums and take away our 2% retirement savings contribution (DCP) to fund the pension plan. It hasn't paid into the pension plan for 20 years. With our wages already 20% to 30% below market, we can't afford these cuts.

Q. What is a strike pledge and why should I sign one?

A. We want to make sure that our strike is successful, so we will only call for a strike authorization vote and an actual strike when enough members have signed a pledge agreeing to participate. The number of members who sign a strike pledge also gives feedback to our union leaders and bargaining team about what our members willing to fight for.

Q. What can we do prior to a strike to achieve our contract goals?

A. Joining the union; participating in informational pickets, legislative lobby days, and media campaigns; getting support from other unions, faculty and students; and many more activities contribute to the fair settlement of a contract. UPTE utilizes all these and other actions to pressure the university to bargain fairly and settle. A strike is our final, but most powerful, option.

Q. Wouldn't a strike hurt the work we are so dedicated to?

A. Providing no pay increases year after year, even though there is money, is a short-sighted policy and causes long-term harm to the university. Despite our best efforts to convince the university over the past year of bargaining, it has been deaf to our appeals. Our experienced and talented colleagues leave the university for more lucrative and rewarding jobs every day. Research staff leave at the rate of 30% annually. More than 20% of information technology staff leave every year.

We need to make sure that a policy of fair pay increases is established to stop the erosion of research and education. A strike is a last resort and would be used only when all other avenues have been exhausted. We take vacation days off to visit with our family, catch up with chores and get some rest. We can take a day off on strike to get a raise and to preserve a quality university.

Q. What success have strikes had at UC and other employers?

A. We won our first contract and our biggest raises with one-day strikes at several campuses. Academic student employees and service workers at UC have made major wage and other improvements by staging brief walkouts. Recently, AFSCME patient care workers and service workers saw bargaining move forward after a week-long strike.

In other industries, our national union, the Communications Workers of America, has gone on strike to keep down the cost of health benefits and stop the exporting of jobs overseas. Historically, working conditions we take for granted, such as the 8-hour workday and even union recognition, have been won through strikes.



Q. How do we win a strike?

A. By sticking together and working in coalition. The more workers participating and supporting each other at UC, the greater the likelihood of success. UPTE is not alone in pushing for a fair pay system. Currently, the service workers (represented by AFSCME) and clericals (represented by CUE) are in the same bargaining situation. Librarians (represented by UC-AFT) begin bargaining soon. Nurses and student employees' unions are committed to supporting UPTE and organizing their members to honor our picket lines.

The UC Union Coalition, to which all of these unions belong, meets on both local and systemwide levels. Union workers from other employers, such as those who drive buses, and construction and package delivery trucks, will not cross our picket lines if we strike. Support from students, faculty, legislators, and religious and community leaders will also contribute our victory.

High visibility is also very important for winning. We get visibility with picket lines, press conferences, teach-ins, community talks, and other public events before and during a strike. Strikers who are not at work usually spend a good deal of their time making their cause understood in this way. Because we work for an institution that is sensitive to public opinion, such tactics can be especially effective at UC.

Setting realistic goals at the bargaining table that the university understands and can meet is critical to the success of a strike. They need to clearly know what they must do to end the pressure on them.