



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND  
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT  
1111 Franklin Street, 12<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Oakland, California 94607-5200

July 8, 2025

ACADEMIC COUNCIL CHAIR STEVEN CHEUNG  
EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLORS AND PROVOSTS

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to you regarding the contract negotiations between the University and the United Auto Workers (UAW) for the recently unified Academic Student Employee (ASE – TAs/Readers/Tutors) and Graduate Student Researcher (GSR) unit, which officially began today.

As you know, we have been hard at work improving our communications process during collective bargaining. Based on a request from the Academic Senate systemwide committees, including the Academic Council, I will be sending regular updates throughout the 2025-26 ASE/GSR bargaining process that should be shared with all faculty.

At the outset of the bargaining season, I want to share with you some of the changes we have made since 2022, and I ask that you share this letter broadly with faculty at your location.

- We are grateful to have the help of two faculty colleagues who are now serving on the UC bargaining team: UCLA Professor Andrea Kasko and UCI Professor Emeritus Donald Senear. They will attend bargaining meetings, advise on proposals, provide subject matter expertise to the bargaining team, and receive questions from faculty to share with the bargaining team.
- Staff representatives on the bargaining team (from Academic Personnel or Labor Relations) will consult with subject matter expert teams, including faculty experts, at each campus throughout the bargaining process.
- Systemwide Academic Personnel coordinated with Academic Senate leadership to form a faculty advisory committee that will advise on critical issues and provide subject matter expertise throughout bargaining.
- Deputy Provost Amy Lee and Associate Vice President Missy Matella will meet regularly with the Academic Council, which will ensure that each campus divisional Senate Chair is kept informed.

Under the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA), the negotiation process must be conducted in good faith, meaning both the employer and the union must participate actively, make reasonable efforts to reach agreement, and avoid delaying tactics. The University is not obligated to agree to any union demands, but it must make an earnest attempt to reach an agreement. If negotiations reach an impasse, the parties must engage in mediation, factfinding, or other impasse resolution procedures as

July 8, 2025

Page 2

outlined by the California Public Employment Relations Board (PERB). Ultimately, the intent of the process is to reach a mutually acceptable agreement that supports our employees, our mission, and labor peace.

As the ASE and GSR units are merging into one contract and given the number and complexity of the issues expected to be raised at the table by both parties, we anticipate negotiations lasting at least through the remainder of the calendar year since the ASE/GSR contract expires on January 1, 2026.

Our bargaining team remains aware of the budgetary and operational challenges the University faces against an ever-changing federal and state funding landscape. Bargaining negotiations are always a compromise between the parties, and our team will endeavor to achieve the right balance in any final agreement.

Lastly, many of you have asked in the past for guidance regarding the “rules of the road” when communicating with graduate student employees during negotiations. In general, faculty should avoid bringing up the topic of bargaining negotiations with graduate student employees. If asked, faculty should avoid expressing any opinion on specific bargaining proposals. We want to avoid appearing to undermine the union's authority as the exclusive bargaining representative, which constitutes direct dealing, an unfair labor practice involving bypassing the union. We also must avoid the appearance of attempting to influence the employee's choice to become or remain a union member, and commentary on bargaining could be the basis for an accusation of doing just that.

Routine communications with graduate student employees on day-to-day employment matters, including matters related to performance management, are not prohibited and should continue as usual. The University will also be regularly communicating with GSRs and ASEs regarding the status of bargaining and the University's bargaining proposals. These bargaining updates will be available online so that faculty and graduate student employees can reference and review them at any time.

With respect to student matters, including academic advising and academic progress conversations, they should continue as usual since these activities remain outside the scope of employment. If you have any questions or concerns about communicating with graduate student employees during negotiations, I recommend you reach out to your campus central Academic Personnel or Labor Relations offices, who can provide you with guidance related to your specific questions.

Because of the confidential nature of bargaining, we will not be able to provide you with details on the University's strategy or approach to negotiations. Internal communications related to bargaining strategy are privileged from disclosure, but wider circulation could jeopardize that protection. Nevertheless, you can expect regular communications from me to keep you apprised as negotiations continue with updates on the status of negotiations and relevant information that does not breach confidentiality.

I want to thank the Academic Senate and faculty across the system for their insight and advice during our year-long preparation for these negotiations, and I look forward to

July 8, 2025

Page 3

finding common ground with our union colleagues to reach a successful agreement that benefits the graduate student academic employees, the faculty, and the overall mission of the University.

Thank you for your time and dedication to our academic community.

Sincerely,



Katherine S. Newman  
UC System Provost and  
Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

UC Berkeley Chancellor's Distinguished Professor  
of Sociology & Public Policy

cc: President Drake  
Chancellors  
Academic Council Vice Chair Palazoglu  
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Nava  
Executive Vice President Rubin  
Senior Vice President and Chief Compliance Officer Bustamante  
Senior Vice President Turner  
Laboratory Director Witherell  
Vice President Brown  
Vice President/Vice Provost Gullatt  
Vice President Humiston  
Vice President and Chief of Staff Kao  
Vice President Lloyd  
Vice President Maldonado  
Vice Provost Varsanyi  
Vice Provosts/Vice Chancellors for Academic Personnel  
Deputy Provost Lee  
Associate Vice Provost Jennings  
Associate Vice President Matella  
Associate Vice President McRae  
Assistant Vice Provosts/Vice Chancellors for Academic Personnel  
Chief Human Resource Officers  
Graduate Deans  
Executive Director Anders  
Executive Director Lin  
Executive Director Teaford  
Deputy General Counsel Woodall  
Chief of Staff Beechem  
Labor Relations Directors  
Director Weston-Dawkes

July 8, 2025

Page 4

Associate Director/Chief Negotiator Menezes