



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

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

January 21, 2026

ACADEMIC COUNCIL CHAIR AHMET PALAZOGLU
EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLORS AND PROVOSTS

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to provide you with an update regarding the ongoing negotiations between the University and the United Auto Workers (UAW) for the unified Academic Student Employees (ASE – TAs, AIs, Fellows, Readers, Tutors) and Graduate Student Researchers (GSR) bargaining units. Please share this message with all faculty.

As you may know, UAW leadership has authorized a strike vote over unfair labor practice claims related to bargaining requests for information and local campus issues. I am sure you join me in being disappointed by this news, especially because the University and UAW have actually been deeply engaged in efficient, professional, and productive bargaining with the academic units since July 2025, with tentative agreements on 18 of the contract's articles. Indeed, UC has continued to bargain in good faith throughout, actively developing and advancing proposals that address many of the UAW's priorities. The University's statement on the UAW's strike authorization vote announcement can be found [here](#).

The University and the UAW have three more days of bargaining before the ASE/GSR contracts expire at the end of this month and we will do everything we can to reach agreement by then. Should the contract expire without an agreement, the UAW has scheduled their strike authorization vote from February 5 through 13. One silver lining negotiated as part of the May 2024 strike settlement: before a strike can occur, the UAW and the University are required to complete three days of mediation, at which point the parties will have another opportunity to reach an agreement.

I am hopeful we will reach a positive conclusion, as so much has already been accomplished. Last week, for example, over two days of bargaining, UC provided two significant proposal packages on academic and economic issues, including standardizing appointments at 25% or 50% (with exceptions) in recognition of one of the Union's highest priorities, to obtain job security for their members. Moreover, we clarified existing language on graduate student academic responsibilities.

Our economic package included proposals addressing Fee Remissions, Holidays, Immigration, Immigration Legal Support Fund Side Letter, Leaves, Wages, and the Transitional Position Program. This package was built to highlight the [total compensation](#)

that graduate student employees receive when appointed at 25-50% time (10-20 hours per week). The University's economic proposal included a \$250,000 fund that allows UAW-represented academic graduate student employees to consult with an external expert on visa issues. Lastly, the University proposes to maintain current levels of childcare reimbursements, tuition and fee remissions, and healthcare remissions for ASEs and GSR, which have a direct impact on grants and department budgets.

In recognition of the UAW's goal of establishing a unified monthly pay scale for ASEs and GSRs, the University's wage proposal seeks to bridge the union's priorities with the financial realities facing the University. In order to achieve a single salary scale by 2028, the union proposed average annual range adjustments of approximately 10% for GSRs and 6% for ASEs, and GSRs and ASEs would also receive experience-level wage increases. This is in addition to the substantial pay increases provided to GSRs and ASEs since 2022 (the minimum salaried ASE rate increased by approximately 52% over three years and the minimum GSR rate increased by approximately 63% over three years).

After many attempts at modeling different pay structures and consulting with stakeholders, the University's wage proposal simplifies pay structures across TA and GSR positions, narrows the gap between the two salary scales, consolidates campus-specific wage scales for ASEs, and introduces a multi-year wage plan with scheduled increases to provide greater consistency and predictability for all parties. While the University's wage proposal does not result in a unified monthly pay scale, it does take substantial steps toward meeting the UAW's objectives of moving toward a single salary scale. Further information about the UC's proposal can be found [here](#).

During the two days of bargaining last week, the UAW passed counterproposals on Appointments, ASE Workload, GSR Workload, Summer Session, and Union Access. Their proposals included provisions to count summer session employment toward experience-based salary point placement, to provide GSR work schedules that offer further flexibility, and to establish a class-size policy for each hiring unit that employs TAs.

While I remain optimistic about our ability to work with our union colleagues, it would be prudent for faculty to plan for academic and instructional continuity in the event that the parties are unable to reach an agreement. Please work closely with deans and department chairs to develop a plan for your courses and for the continuity of research. I will continue to provide more frequent updates as this process unfolds and will issue strike preparation guidance if it becomes apparent that it is needed. I sincerely hope it won't be.

For up-to-date information on ASE and GSR bargaining, please see [UCnet](#) and [UC Press Room](#) websites for additional information on these negotiations and updates on other bargaining units.

Thank you for your continued engagement and attention to these important issues. We remain committed to working constructively with our union colleagues to reach an agreement that supports graduate student academic employees, faculty, and the University's teaching and research mission.

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Best wishes,



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 Milliken
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