



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

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

February 5, 2026

ACADEMIC COUNCIL CHAIR AHMET PALAZOGLU
EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLORS AND PROVOSTS

Dear Colleagues:

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

I recognize that these negotiations raise significant concerns for faculty, particularly where graduate student compensation is funded through externally sponsored research with fixed budgets and regulatory constraints.

The ASE/GSR contract was set to expire on January 31, 2026; however, the University and the UAW agreed to a brief one-month contract extension, which means that the No Strikes articles in the contracts remain in effect through February 28, 2026. This enables us to continue negotiations without disruption this month. Last week, the University and the UAW met for three consecutive days of bargaining, during which the parties made meaningful progress. Tentative agreements were reached on ASE Workload and Holidays, bringing the total number of tentative agreements to 22.

During the bargaining sessions, the University and UAW exchanged counterproposals on Appointments, ASE Summer Session, Immigration, No Strikes, Union Access and Rights, and side letters on a Work Authorization Support Program and Joint Labor-Management Meetings to discuss existing class size policies. Several issues remain unresolved in these articles, including appointment percentages, paid leave related to delayed or disrupted re-entry to the United States, the number of paid bargaining team release appointments for campuses, union access to department meetings, and class size policies.

Additionally, the UAW presented an economic package that included counterproposals addressing additional articles such as Defined Contribution and University Retirement Plan(s), Parking and Transit, Transitional Funding, and Wages. The UAW's Wages counterproposal builds on elements from their initial proposal while revising the overall structure by bringing salaried ASE and GSR pay scales closer together without fully aligning them. Compared to their initial proposal, this revised proposal reduces average annual increases for both groups by approximately one percentage point, shifting from 10 percent to 9 percent for GSRs and from 7 percent to 6 percent for ASEs and includes an annual \$1,500 lump-sum payment for Group 2 Teaching Assistants (UCB, UCLA, and

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UCSF). It also requests that the additional consumer price index–based cost-of-living adjustment be provided as a lump sum rather than incorporated into base wages.

The UAW’s proposal moves toward the University’s in some areas, but maintains several core wage provisions, including a unified pay scale for hourly ASEs and guaranteed income for hourly employees regardless of hours worked. Moreover, it asks that work experience is counted across all titles, whether performing research or teaching, which would support accelerated progression through experience-based pay levels for graduate student employees. These elements reflect the Union’s priorities and are under careful evaluation; they do not represent University agreement or acceptance.

While the University recognizes the Union’s desire for wage increases and a unified salary scale, operational constraints and fiscal limitations will be incorporated in the University’s counterproposal. In particular, the University is assessing the sustainability of proposals in light of fixed grant budgets, federal and sponsor requirements, and the cumulative impact on faculty-funded research. Faculty have expressed their concerns about sustaining this balance amid rising labor costs and increasing funding volatility, and I appreciate the care with which these issues are being considered. Faculty colleagues from UCI and UCLA who serve on the bargaining team have reminded everyone at the table of these constraints and have been essential voices in shaping the University’s proposals.

As negotiations proceed through this one-month extension, faculty should remain engaged with deans and department chairs as part of our shared responsibility to support instructional and research continuity. Maintaining open communication and thoughtful planning helps ensure stability for our academic community, particularly given the potential impacts of any work stoppage on research and instruction. I will shortly be issuing guidelines to faculty regarding strike readiness. We all hope these plans will not be needed, but it is important to have them for the sake of our students.

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

Thank you for your sustained attention, professionalism, and care you continue to bring to these issues. I am especially mindful of the many demands that faculty must balance, and I deeply appreciate your continued partnership with campus leadership to support students, instruction, and research. We remain committed to engaging constructively with our union colleagues while also safeguarding the long-term vitality of the University’s research and academic mission.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Katherine S. Newman".

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

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

cc: President Milliken
Chancellors
Laboratory Director Witherell
Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer Nava
Executive Vice President Rubin
Senior Vice President and Chief Compliance Officer Bustamante
Senior Vice President Turner
Academic Council Vice Chair Scott
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Chief Human Resource Officers
Graduate Deans
Executive Director Anders
Executive Director Lin
Executive Director Menezes
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