



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
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February 17, 2026

ACADEMIC COUNCIL CHAIR AHMET PALAZOGLU
EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLORS AND PROVOSTS
VICE CHANCELLORS FOR RESEARCH

Dear Colleagues:

I am writing to provide an update on the strike authorization vote by the United Auto Workers (UAW) for the unified Academic Student Employees (ASE – TAs, AIs, Fellows, Readers, Tutors) and Graduate Student Researchers (GSR) bargaining unit. Please share this message and the attached FAQs regarding strike preparation with all faculty, principal investigators, and instructors of record.

The FAQs provide guidance on engaging employees regarding strike participation, expectations for academic progress during a strike, time and attendance reviews, and general strike activity. **Please do not post the FAQs online or distribute to ASEs, GSRs, or to individuals in the new staff Research and Public Service Professionals Unit (RPSP) and Student Services and Advising Professionals Unit (SSAP). We are strictly prohibited from communicating directly with union members as the UAW is their official interlocutor.**

As you know, we have been in active negotiations with the UAW concerning ASE and GSR bargaining since July 2025. During these past eight months, we have made every effort to reach a fair agreement that supports UC's education and research mission while remaining consistent with operational and financial constraints. As I noted in my last bargaining update, although the University recognizes the UAW's desire for wage increases and a unified salary scale, we face significant financial constraints right now and unstable prospects going forward.

With the encouragement of faculty participants in the bargaining process, we are assessing what we can manage in the contract in light of fixed grant budgets, federal and sponsor requirements, and the cumulative impact on faculty-funded research. I hear from my faculty colleagues about their serious concerns over rising labor costs and persistent funding volatility, twin pressures that continue to impact their research. They have made it clear that we must be mindful of and responsible to people bear much of the responsibility for bringing in essential support. I know the faculty members of the bargaining team and the faculty advisory committee are steadfast in advocating for faculty needs in the context of bargaining

As you know, we have a contract in place through February 28, 2026. Regrettably, the UAW authorized a strike vote, which was successful. The existing agreement requires the

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UAW and the University to complete three days of mediation before a strike. Accordingly, the parties have tentatively agreed to mediation dates that stretch from mid-February through early March. A faculty representative will also be in attendance throughout mediation.

Although we are hopeful that the parties will reach an agreement at mediation, we must prepare for academic continuity as a contingency plan. Our commitment to the University's mission must continue unabated. In the event of a strike by UAW-represented employees, we will be prepared to sustain the educational and research responsibilities we are all committed to. Each campus must now prepare plans to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, the uninterrupted delivery of instruction and student services. Campuses should also plan to safeguard research materials and maintain compliance with the terms of contracts and grants.

As you know, the UAW also represents the new Research and Public Service Professionals and Student Services and Advising Professionals staff units. Systemwide Labor Relations is distributing to campuses FAQs related to strike plans for those two units, as well as additional guidance on contingency planning.

Your campus EVC is preparing contingency plans, which will include the following:

- Identification of key personnel and relevant offices who will take responsibility for coordination with the campus Academic Personnel, Labor Relations, and Legal offices; and
- A mechanism to ensure that if work is withheld, absences are accurately recorded in campus time and attendance systems.

Continuity in Instruction

All scheduled classes must continue on their regular schedule, even if a strike occurs. Accordingly, in coordination with their departments, Instructors of Record should be prepared to confirm any discussion/lab sections missed by ASEs under their supervision and to implement contingency plans to ensure students can continue making progress toward their degrees.

As you know, Instructors of Record are responsible for courses and submission of grades even under strike conditions.

We encourage faculty to seek support from their campus Teaching and Learning Centers to help maintain instructional continuity. Regular communication among faculty, department chairs, the administration, and divisional Academic Senate leadership will be essential. The extent of any disruption, should it occur, will determine whether additional instructional support is required.

Continuity of Research

We recommend that each campus Office of Research promptly engage with Principal Investigators (PIs) to help minimize potential impacts of a strike on the University's

research mission. This includes developing or sharing existing procedures for accurately recording and reporting personnel effort on sponsored projects. Please remember that personnel expenses may be charged to sponsored awards only for work that has actually been performed.

Principal Investigators may require guidance and resources to maintain research continuity, including assistance in developing contingency plans, preserving research materials, and ensuring proper documentation of effort and expenditures. It will be particularly important for faculty intending to submit grants for upcoming competitions to check in with the Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research to follow the submission guidelines.

Settlement with UAW regarding Timekeeping Responsibilities

We fully respect represented employees' right to engage in protected activity, including a lawful strike. However, since employees on strike are, by definition, not working, they are not eligible to receive their regular pay. The UAW and the University have reached an agreement, mutually acknowledging this, and have issued a [joint leave compliance statement](#) to that effect. With this agreement in place, the parties acknowledged that during a labor stoppage, it is expected that UAW-represented UC employees will record whether they participated in the strike by entering Leave Without Pay in the University's time and attendance system.

Instructor of Record and Principal Investigator Responsibilities

Under the Academic Personnel Manual (APM 410-20), developed through management consultation and systemwide review, Teaching Assistants serve under the active direction and supervision of a regular member of the faculty. These Instructors of Record bear full responsibility for the course, including oversight of Teaching Assistant performance. Accordingly, the University relies on Instructors of Record to verify the accuracy of Teaching Assistant leave reporting in local Time and Attendance systems.¹

Principal Investigators are similarly reminded that federal research grants are governed by the Uniform Guidance (2 C.F.R. Part 200), which establishes uniform administrative requirements, cost principles, and audit standards, along with any agency-specific provisions. PIs hold primary responsibility for the financial management and oversight of sponsored project funds in compliance with both University and sponsor policies. This includes ensuring the accurate reporting of hours worked and wages charged to grants and contracts and certifying the accuracy of leave reporting for project personnel.

While the University fully respects the right of employees to withhold labor during a lawful strike, they are only entitled to compensation for work actually performed. In the attached FAQs, there is systemwide guidance provided on how to do that. Instructors of Record and Principal Investigators should contact their local Office of Labor Relations or Academic Personnel Office with any questions.

¹ Likewise, other ASE titles such as Readers, Tutors, and Associate Instructors all serve under the supervision of an Instructor of Record or another designated academic appointee, which are responsible for the continuity of missed instructional services and accuracy of leave reporting for these roles.

Resources

I recognize the frustration that uncertainty brings. It is understandably unsettling when Instructors of Record and Principal Investigators must activate contingency plans to ensure grades are submitted and that research obligations are met, or when they must decline to certify inaccurate leave reporting by Teaching Assistants or Graduate Student Researchers. None of us wants to be in this position, and I sincerely hope such measures will not be necessary.

These concerns are valid and shared by many. Still, we have clear responsibilities to our students. Cancelled sections, missed office hours, or delayed grade submissions can seriously affect students' academic progress, financial aid, employment opportunities, and graduation timelines. We owe it to them to minimize these disruptions. There are also clear responsibilities and reporting obligations to granting agencies if research is withheld.

To aid in preparations for a strike, as well as to understand your obligations under California labor laws in respecting the rights of graduate student employees to strike, please review the attached FAQs.

Thank you for your continued professionalism, collaboration, and dedication to supporting our students and our academic mission. We will keep you informed as developments occur.

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

Attachment: FAQs for Faculty, IORs, and PIs

cc: President Milliken
Chancellors
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
Academic Council Vice Chair Scott
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Vice President Humiston
Vice President and Chief of Staff Kao
Vice President Henderson
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 Menezes
Deputy General Counsel Woodall
Chief of Staff Beechem
Labor Relations Directors
Director Weston-Dawkes