



OFFICE OF THE PROVOST AND
EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT FOR ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

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

March 25, 2026

ACADEMIC COUNCIL CHAIR AHMET PALAZOGLU
EXECUTIVE VICE CHANCELLORS AND PROVOSTS

Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased to share that the United Auto Workers (UAW) bargaining units have ratified their contracts, which are now in effect. These agreements cover the unified Academic Student Employees (ASE – Teaching Assistants (TA), Associate Instructors (AI), Readers, Tutors) and Graduate Student Researchers (GSR), as well as the Student Services and Advising Professionals and Research and Public Service Professionals staff units. The ASE/GSR contract expires on December 31, 2029.

The outcomes described below would not have been possible without the extraordinary work of colleagues who gave generously of their time and advice throughout the process. In particular, I'd like to thank the two faculty members who served as advisors to the UC bargaining team, the Academic Senate-appointed faculty advisory committee, and Academic Senate leadership for their thoughtful recommendations, dedication, and time throughout this difficult process. Gratitude is also due to campus leadership and administration, the UC bargaining team, and the cross-functional teams that all worked together to achieve this agreement. Finally, a special word of thanks to Deputy Provost Amy Lee and Associate Vice President Missy Matella and their teams who worked around the clock to get us to this agreement.

While the systemwide and campus Academic Personnel and Labor Relations offices will be providing guidance and training on the specifics, I wanted you to have an overview of contract terms as they may impact grant funding proposals, appointment decisions, and student admissions/funding. I realize this is time sensitive for many of you and hope that having this summary will prove useful.

Management and Academic Rights

Faculty on the bargaining team and members of the advisory committee repeatedly made the point that academic matters must be the sole discretion of the University and the distinction between student status and employment status must be maintained, as is established under California law. We were able to fulfill this priority in ways that will continue the venerable traditions of the University of California to assess the quality of academic performance and progress based on judgments by disciplinary experts.

Accordingly, the contract now explicitly states that many aspects of student status fall outside the scope of UAW representation. Specifically, new language states that the following matters are exclusively management/academic rights: admissions requirements for students; research programs; conditions for the award of certificates and degrees; normative time to degree; what is required for students to achieve satisfactory progress toward their degrees; student academic progress; requirements, evaluations, and decisions regarding qualifying and other exams; advancement to candidacy, and; dissertation/thesis (or culminating project required for degree).

Wages

With respect to wages, the attachment to this letter provides the monthly salary scale rates for ASEs and GSRs throughout the life of the four-year contract. As I relayed to you throughout negotiations, one of the UAW's top priorities in bargaining was to achieve a unified salary scale for TAs, AIs, and GSRs. To address this goal, the parties deviated from the traditional annual general range adjustment structure and instead restructured the salary scales.

The bottom of the GSR salary scale will increase by 6% annually, but the *average annual increase* (without experience level movement or movement to a unified scale in 2029) is as follows:

- 4.0% at salary point 2
- 3.9% at salary point 3
- 3.8% at salary point 4
- 3.6% at salary point 5
- 3.0% at salary point 6

In addition, the differentials between salary points have been reduced. Under the 2022-26 GSR contract, the salary point differential was 7.75%. The new contract restructures the scales to produce a differential that ranges from 1.88% up to 7.64%.

Effective October 2029, the bottom salary point will be eliminated and there will be movement toward a unified salary scale, which will result in additional increases. We know these costs will be challenging for principal investigators (PIs) to absorb and for the University budget to contend with. It is important for colleagues to understand why it was necessary and the role that a previous arbitrator's ruling played in setting the boundaries we were working within. In July 2025, an arbitrator ruled that the University had violated the GSR contract by discontinuing pre-contract salary point (formerly "step") placement and progression practices, following the 2022 contract ratification. He concluded that the "Past Practices Not Covered by Agreement" article obligated the University to continue to place GSRs on the same "step" that departmental practices had followed prior to implementation of the new GSR contract at the beginning of 2023. Moreover, the arbitrator determined that language in the Wages article, which the University understood to grant discretion to change those practices, permitted departments only to maintain, and not to discontinue, previous salary point structures.

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Given these findings, the arbitrator indicated that he would require each location to reinstate former practices, retroactively adjust affected appointments, and provide back pay. This decision would have been *extremely* costly for the University to implement. Accordingly, campuses were asked to refrain from making any adjustments based on the arbitration loss, but rather to address the issue in the new contract.

Under the new contract, campuses and departments that moved GSRs to lower salary points/steps in 2023 may retain their current departmental practice and do not have to prospectively move GSRs to the pre-2023 salary point/step. In exchange, the University agreed that current salary point/step practices will remain unchanged through the life of the contract (2026-2029) and that the University will move to a unified salary scale, effective October 2029. The parties recognized the importance of committing to those increases in the last year of the contract to maximize the opportunity for advance planning and budgeting by individual research units.

In order for the University to address the mandatory backpay remedy (totaling \$14.5 million), the UAW will provide the University with the names of individuals and the amount owed to them and the University will cover it in the form of a lump sum amount to those individuals. We understand grants that were in place at the time are not able to provide funds to pay for this requirement. Hence, we will work closely with campus Academic Personnel offices to facilitate payment of the lump sums.

I also attach the new monthly salary scale rates for TAs and AIs, as well as the new hourly rates for Readers and Tutors. Please note that the new contract requires that all new TA or AI appointments of individuals in PhD or MFA programs must add up to 50% FTE, with certain exceptions. Keep in mind that the University is not obligated by the contract to appoint graduate students as TAs or AIs, but when it does, the appointment (or combination of appointments) should be at 50% FTE, with limited exceptions.

Systemwide guidance and training on those exceptions will be provided soon.

Other Increases/Benefits

I want you to be aware of some other changes in benefits that are guaranteed in the contract:

Childcare

- **Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs)** are eligible to receive up to \$1,900 per fiscal quarter (up from \$1,400) for qualifying childcare expenses incurred
- **Academic Student Employees (ASEs)** are eligible to receive up to \$1,900 per quarter or \$2,850 per semester (up from \$1,400/quarter and \$2,100/semester) for qualifying childcare expenses incurred
- **Eligible Summer Session ASEs** may receive up to \$1,900 total (up from \$1,375) for childcare expenses incurred during their summer session appointment

Health Benefits

Effective immediately:

- The eligibility threshold for remission/reimbursement of child dependent health premiums has been revised, resulting in a higher number of employees who will qualify for remission/reimbursement of child dependent health premiums

Graduate Student Researcher Personal Time Off (PTO)

Beginning Fall Term 2026:

- GSRs who have unused PTO shall rollover their PTO bank into a reappointment under the following circumstances:
 - The GSR is reappointed under the same PI/supervisor
 - The GSR does not have a break in service as a GSR longer than thirty (30) days
- If there is a break in service of 30 days or less, the GSR must submit a written request to rollover their previously unused PTO within thirty (30) days from the start of their new appointment
- The total PTO days available for a GSR may never exceed eighteen (18) days

Immigration Leave

Effective immediately:

- Employees may take up to three (3) weeks of unpaid leave (used in one-week increments/blocks) to travel outside the United States of America to apply for a F-1 or J-1 visa or to seek other forms of immigration relief, with thirty (30) days' notice to their supervisor and the need for travel for a qualifying reason is verified by the International Students and Scholars Office (or equivalent)
- Employees may use available short-term leave, personal time off (GSRs only), or up to one week of long-term leave to receive pay during an Immigration Leave
- Immigration Leave is limited to three (3) weeks whether paid or unpaid in any rolling twelve (12) month period
- When feasible, employees are expected to schedule immigration-related appointments between academic terms or obtain supervisor pre-approval

Transition Position Program

Effective immediately:

- The Transition Position Pilot Program created in the previous agreement is now a permanent article in the agreement, and will be maintained at all locations effective immediately, with the updates below:
- **UCLA, UC San Diego, UC Berkeley, UC Irvine, UC Davis:** Up to 10 graduate student employees (increased from 6) per year per location, with a funding cap of \$100,000 (up from \$70,000) annually per location
- **UC Riverside, UC Merced, UC San Francisco, UC Santa Barbara, UC Santa Cruz, Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory (LBNL):** Up to 10 (increased

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from 6) graduate student employees per year per location, with a funding cap of \$50,000 (up from \$35,000) annually per location

The financial and benefit provisions outlined above are enormously important to our union partners, and we are pleased to have reached agreement on them. I know that the new contractual terms do not solve the issue of insufficient grant funding or campus budgets to support the increase in costs. These increases, however, are nowhere near the “jump” that we experienced in the last contract. Moreover, the salary scale restructuring will do a great deal to soften the impact of the arbitration loss in GSR step/salary point placement. Please be assured that we will be working with you closely on implementation and next steps based on this agreement.

Please share this message with all faculty to convey this broad overview of the contractual terms and to express my gratitude for all they do to advance the mission of the University. Systemwide training and guidance will be forthcoming regarding the specific provisions. In the meantime, if there are any questions, please contact your campus Academic Personnel and Labor Relations offices.

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: Monthly and Hourly Salary Rates for ASEs/GSRs

cc: President Milliken
Chancellors
Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Brostrom
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
Vice President Brown
Vice President/Vice Provost Gullatt
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

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Vice Chancellors for Research
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