

Historic Contract Agreement for UC Student Workers

On June 3, 2014, after nearly a year of negotiations, the bargaining team of the UC Student Workers Union (UAW 2865) signed a tentative contract agreement with UC management. A vote to ratify the tentative agreement will be held on Thursday, June 12th and Friday, June 13th. Members who have left campus for the summer will have the option to cast ballots by mail. The bargaining team has put together this flier to outline the victories we've made in this round of negotiations, as well as some areas and plans for ongoing organizing. We feel very positive about this tentative agreement -- we've made real progress on all of the key areas we've been focusing on, and have made a number of precedent-setting breakthroughs, particularly on equalizing opportunities for undocumented graduate students, and on rights to all-gender restrooms. This agreement will make a significant difference in the lives of all UC student workers, set an example for future student worker negotiations, and positively transform the quality and accessibility of public higher education in California.

**I DEMAND
SMALLER
CLASS SIZE**
UAW CONTRACT 2013

In 2012/13, thousands of student workers identified their priorities for this round of contract negotiations: other than wages, our members listed the issue of class size as their top priority. For the first eight months of negotiations, UC management insisted that they were not legally obligated to discuss the issue of student/TA ratios. After months of mobilization by members and allies, as well as an unfair labor practice charge filed by the union with the Public Employee Relations Board, management finally agreed in May to an annual labor/management meeting where issues of class size could be discussed. While this was a major step, our bargaining team insisted on at least two meetings per year, and on a mechanism for obtaining information about section sizes and student/TA ratios, both of which we ultimately won. The class size panels will allow our members to track and intervene in changes to student/TA ratios. In this way, we will have a means for shaping and improving the quality and accessibility of undergraduate public education in California, at a time when austerity measures are tending to intensify TA workloads and increase class sizes at the UCs.

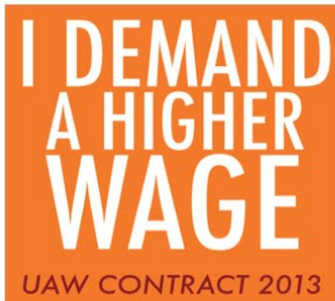
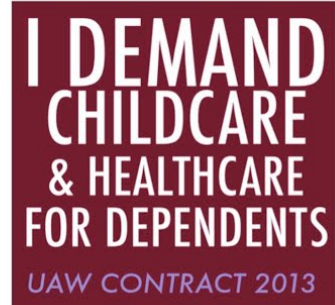
Currently, undocumented graduate students who do not qualify for DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) are denied access to critical professional and academic opportunities offered to documented graduate students. In particular, undocumented students are denied instructional opportunities and often have difficulty securing reliable sources of financial support while enrolled in graduate programs. Undocumented students and their allies attended bargaining sessions over the past year and called on UC management to end this disparate treatment. In the final days of negotiations, management agreed to a binding side-letter that mandates the creation of an "instructional opportunities" committee, comprised of UAW representatives, administrators, and undocumented students, which is tasked with equalizing undocumented students' academic and professional opportunities by establishing instructional courses and funding mechanisms. The program will have a targeted implementation date of Fall semester 2015.

**I DEMAND
RIGHTS FOR
UNDOCUMENTED
STUDENTS**
UAW CONTRACT 2013

**I DEMAND
ALL-GENDER
BATHROOMS**
UAW CONTRACT 2013

In multiple bargaining sessions last fall, queer and trans graduate students shared stories of harassment faced on campus in single-gender restrooms, and talked about the health consequences of their not having access to all-gender restrooms. Initially, management insisted that workers' access to safe restroom facilities was not a mandatory topic of bargaining, despite labor law precedents indicating otherwise. Following our solidarity strike with AFSCME 3299 in November, management agreed to bargain on this issue; and in April, following our ULP strike against intimidation, we won new, historically unprecedented, anti-discrimination contract language that ensures student workers' right to all-gender restrooms within a reasonable distance of their workspace, and that establishes ongoing labor/management meetings on the issue of all-gender restroom access. We intend to use these protections and meetings to push for the establishment of at least one all-gender restroom in each campus building.

Student parents have significantly higher costs of living than those not caring for children, and unsupportive academic and employment policies make completing graduate programs more difficult for women who have children while enrolled. The union prioritized a number of demands relevant to student parents in this round of negotiations, including childcare, leaves, access to lactation facilities, and dependent health insurance, and made significant gains on most of these issues. On **childcare**, we increased the subsidy (from its current level of \$600 a quarter and \$900 a semester) to \$900 a quarter and \$1350 a semester. We also increased the age of eligibility for the childcare subsidy from five to twelve, meaning that student parents can count on childcare support until their children's teenage years. On **leaves**: we increased the period of childbearing leave from 4 weeks paid to 6 weeks paid and 2 weeks unpaid, and also won language ensuring that student workers will not face retaliation following a childbearing leave. We increased parental leave from 2 weeks paid to 4 weeks paid and 2 weeks unpaid. These improvements ensure that nearly all TAs who take childbearing leaves on quarter campuses will be guaranteed full benefits; while on semester campuses, because of the length of the term, most TAs will either need to work for approximately two weeks or to secure pregnancy disability leave for up to eight weeks in order to receive full benefits. We also won new anti-discrimination language that guarantees access to appropriate, private **lactation and refrigeration space** within a reasonable distance of a TA, reader, or tutor's place of work. We did not win dependent health coverage, improved disability accommodations, an end to the 18 quarter rule, or higher international fee remissions in this round of negotiations, and intend to continue fighting for these protections in the years to come.



UC student workers currently receive wages that do not enable us to reliably cover the rising costs of living in California. Moreover, compensation rates for UC student workers are significantly lower than those provided by competitor institutions. In recent years, this lack of competitive compensation has contributed to a situation where over 50% of admitted graduate students choose to go elsewhere. Prospective students, particularly working class students and students of color, regularly express scepticism about whether they will be able to support themselves on UC wages, and often choose not to attend UC for economic reasons. For our contract campaign, we committed to making progress in closing this compensation gap. Management did not appear to share this commitment, and fought us at every step on wages. In the end, the concerted pressure of members and allies, and our willingness to take action together, compelled management to move off of their bottom line, and to agree to annual wage increases of 5%, 4%, 4%, and 3% over the next four years, which, when compounded, will result in an approximately 17% raise in relation to our current wage rate; we also closed a loophole on benefits at privatized, "self-supporting" UC programs. The past year (2013/14) was taken up with a hard fought contract campaign, and we did not secure a raise during this time. Therefore, if we average the wage raise for the four-year period of the contract plus the preceding, 2013/14 year, the increases work out to an average of nearly 3.4% per year. These raises will help to close approximately 1/3 of the gap with competitor institutions, and will make a UC graduate education more viable for those who do not have financial or family reserves upon which to draw as they pursue their graduate careers.

In addition to conveying a sense of accomplishment at this historic contract agreement, the entire bargaining team also wants to express a deep sense of appreciation to all our members for making this contract campaign as effective as it was, and for sticking with and propelling this process for nearly an entire year. We believe this year's campaign demonstrates that when we fight we win, and that we are stronger when we act in solidarity with those on other campuses and in other divisions, with UC service workers facing intimidation at work, and with undergraduate students facing fee hikes and indifferent and hostile campus climates. We've shown that together we can continue to transform the University of California into a more public and accessible institution. We've made a number of historic breakthroughs in this contract campaign, and have won significant improvements in our working and living conditions. We've also established three new labor/management meeting spaces through which to continue to press our demands. Let's keep building a broad-based union that can effectively realize our demands for decent working conditions and for a more public and accessible university.