

GET THE
FACTS

BARGAINING



academic
researchers
united



UAW 5810 Postdocs discuss proposals during contract negotiations in 2016

SUMMARY:

1 Academic Researchers (ARs) elect a bargaining committee made up of ARs.

2 The bargaining committee uses feedback from all ARs, collected through surveys and multiple campus meetings, to draft a set of initial bargaining demands.

3 All ARs vote to approve or reject the draft of initial bargaining demands.

4 The AR bargaining committee negotiates as equals with the UC bargaining team and sends updates to all ARs after each bargaining session.

5 ARs participate in bargaining in a wide variety of ways, including attending bargaining sessions, soliciting the support of strategic allies, and grassroots actions.

6 Once a tentative agreement is reached at the bargaining table, all ARs vote on whether or not to ratify the agreement.

Academic Researchers set our bargaining agenda

UC Academic Researchers are already taking a preliminary survey as part of signing union authorization cards, as well as holding meetings to discuss current working conditions and what kinds of improvements they would like to see. This preliminary feedback will be used to design a comprehensive bargaining survey, which will then be circulated in person and online.

Additional meetings will be held to discuss survey results, ultimately resulting in a set of initial bargaining proposals. All Academic Researchers will have an opportunity to vote to ratify these initial proposals before presenting them to UC administration at the bargaining table.

ARs elect a Bargaining Committee and negotiate with UC

Academic Researchers will nominate and elect colleagues from across UC to serve on the Academic Researchers United / UAW 5810 (ARU/UAW) bargaining committee. The bargaining committee will, with the help of UAW staff members who have experience negotiating with UC and other universities, draft proposals, exchange proposals with UC's bargaining team, and make counter-proposals. Throughout this process, the bargaining team will regularly update all ARs and solicit feedback.

The result of the bargaining process is a tentative agreement with UC administration on a union contract. The tentative agreement is presented to all ARs for approval. **If ARs vote to ratify the tentative agreement, it becomes a contract.** Once ratified, the terms of the contract can only be modified by mutual agreement of ARs and UC for the duration of the contract (typically 1 - 4 years). The contract itself will set out a process for negotiating subsequent agreements, through which future ARs will have the opportunity to negotiate for further improvements.

UC's bargaining team

UC administration chooses their own bargaining team, but they must have “authority to bargain”, meaning they must have authority to negotiate over terms and conditions of employment. If past experience bargaining with UC admin is any indicator, their team will likely include human resources administrators from the UC Office of President and various campuses, representatives from campus research offices, a few UC faculty members, and benefits experts (for example, administrators responsible for health care and retirement plans).

Academic Researcher participation in the bargaining process

In addition to giving input through surveys, votes, and meetings, **ARs are encouraged to assist the bargaining committee by helping to research proposals, deciding how best to present proposals to UC's bargaining team, and attending bargaining sessions.** Additionally, to reach the best agreement possible, ARs can help demonstrate the importance of the bargaining team's proposals. This includes actions like signing petitions, enlisting the support of administrators or faculty, reaching out to State and Federal legislators, etc.

Addressing the needs of a diverse workforce

Active participation by ARs from different backgrounds, campuses, fields of research, and points in their career will help ensure the contract is tailored to meet the needs of a diverse and highly specialized workforce. Collective bargaining allows for creative proposals, which means problems need not be solved in a “one size fits all” manner. Some examples include:

- The union contract for UC Teaching Assistants, Tutors, and Readers contains different language for different job titles throughout much of the contract to account for differences between hourly and salaried employees, differences in job duties, and differences between undergraduate and graduate employees.
- The compensation article of the UC Postdoc contract guarantees minimum salary levels for all Postdocs, but allows and encourages UC to pay more than the required minimums as individual circumstances dictate.
- The contract for Graduate Teaching and Research Assistants at the University of Washington protects against excessive workload by setting an hourly limit to the amount of work that may be assigned, but allows work assignments for Research Assistants to exceed their hourly limit if that work contributes to their dissertation project.

Legal foundation of collective bargaining

Under the California Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA) the elected ARU/UAW bargaining team and UC administrators bargain as equals.

By forming a union, Academic Researchers will have greater power to negotiate with UC administrators and democratically shape working conditions. The State of California uses the term “meet and confer” to describe the meetings between the ARU/UAW bargaining team and the UC administration. HEERA is clear that:

“‘Meet and confer’ means the performance of the mutual obligation of the higher education employer and the exclusive representative of its employees to meet at reasonable times and to confer in good faith with respect to matters within the scope of representation and to endeavor to reach agreement on matters within the scope of representation.” (3562(m))



More information

If you'd like more information or to get more involved, either ask an AR who is helping organize ARU/UAW; send an e-mail to arunited@academicresearchersunited.org; or visit: <http://academicresearchersunited.org/>.