

University of California graduate student workers end strike, ratify three-year contracts

We are pleased to announce that graduate student researchers and academic student workers at the University of California voted this week to approve new contracts, ending their six-week strike today (Dec. 23). Under the terms of the new contracts, these workers will be among the best supported in public higher education in the country.

“The University of California welcomes the ratification of these agreements with our valued graduate student employees. The University believed that the assistance of a third-party mediator would help the parties reach an agreement, which is why we are so grateful that the union accepted our invitation to mediation and partnered with us in selecting Sacramento Mayor Darrell Steinberg to serve as the mediator,” said Letitia Silas, executive director of systemwide labor relations. “As a result of this collaboration, the parties were ultimately able to reach tentative agreements on the contracts as a whole in just a few days following months of negotiations. The University of California has negotiated several fair labor agreements over the last year with our represented employees. Today’s ratification demonstrates yet again the University’s strong commitment to providing every one of our hardworking employees with competitive compensation and benefits packages that honor their many contributions to our institution, to our community, and to the state of California.”

The new contracts go into effect immediately and will be in place through May 31, 2025. The University reached [tentative agreements](#) with both bargaining units on Dec. 16, and members voted throughout the past week to ratify the contracts.

Historically, the University has provided graduate student support packages that cover in-state tuition, provide annual stipends, and health benefits. Each University-provided support package has traditionally comprised a combination of wages for graduate students appointed as Academic Student Employees (ASEs) or Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs), as well as direct support from fellowships, training grants, and other sources. In addition, these special positions also provide in-classroom or in-lab experience to ASEs and GSRs, making them more competitive in the job market.

In response to the union’s proposals and following the University’s evaluation of other top research institutions across the country, UC has restructured and enhanced its support packages to better align with similarly placed institutions of higher education. These enhancements reflect the important role that these student employees play and the University’s dedication to support its graduate students as they obtain their masters and doctoral degrees.

Highlights of the agreements include:

Academic Student Employees (ASEs)

- **Compensation:**
 - Within 90 days of ratification, TAs/Associate Instructors will receive a 7.5 percent increase. Teaching Fellows will receive an 8.9 percent increase. Hourly ASEs will receive 5 to 8 percent increases.
 - In addition to October 2023 increases that range from 16.5 to 32.7 percent for TAs and Associate Instructors, these student employees will also be eligible for experience-based increases. Teaching Fellows will see 16.5 to 25.1 percent increases.

December 23: Bargaining Update for ASEs and GSRs

- By Oct. 1, 2024, the minimum 9-month salary for TAs with a 50 percent time appointment will be \$34,000. By October 1, 2024, the minimum salary rate for UC Berkeley, UCSF, and UCLA TAs will be \$36,500. Associate Instructors and Teaching Fellows will receive a 16.7 percent increase.
- **Childcare reimbursement:** \$1,350/quarter or \$2,025/semester, plus \$1,350 for summer. ASEs will also be entitled to an additional \$100 per year, effective on Oct. 1, 2023, and Oct. 1, 2024.
- **Paid Leave:** Expanded to 8 paid weeks per year for serious health conditions, family care, baby bonding, pregnancy or childbirth-related needs; short-term paid leave of 2 days for quarter campuses and 3 days for semester campuses; paid bereavement leave of 5 calendar days.
- **Fee remissions:** UC to cover 100 percent of campus fees for eligible ASEs with 25 percent or greater appointments, up from \$100 per quarter and \$150 per semester. This represents an increase of over \$1,000 per year on certain campuses, in addition to the 100 percent coverage of tuition, student services fees, and health care already provided to qualified ASEs. This amounts to UC covering a total of \$13,707 and up to \$22,248 for all tuition and fees for eligible ASEs, depending on the campus. In addition, UC will maintain its current practices concerning Nonresident Supplemental Tuition for eligible ASEs who have advanced to candidacy in their degree programs.
- **Transit:**
 - Participation in transit and parking-related services on the same basis as other employees.
 - Within 12 months of ratification: Access to a pre-tax program to pay for transit costs, and access to a UC-negotiated e-bike purchase discount program.
 - UC agrees to attempt to negotiate reduced-fee or no-fee access to regional transit system(s).
 - Formation of a joint labor-management committee to explore additional measures.
- **Benefits:** Continued participation for eligible ASEs in a UC-sponsored student health plan to the same degree as other eligible students at that campus. Eligible ASEs with 25 percent or more appointment to receive full remission of monthly premium for a UC-sponsored student health plan. In addition, UC will pay 100 percent of dependent child premiums for eligible ASEs.
- **Reasonable Accommodation:** Confirms reasonable accommodations for those with disabilities and access needs and provides temporary work adjustments for bargaining unit members during the interactive process; establishes a joint labor-management committee to address accessibility.
- **Respectful work environment:** New contract provision to address abusive conduct and provide a dispute resolution process.
- **Holidays:** Recognition of Juneteenth as a UC holiday.

Graduate Student Researchers (GSRs)

- **Compensation:** Most GSRs will see 10 percent increases in the first year of the contract, with 6.4 percent increases in each subsequent year (GSRs on the lowest three salary points will see an especially significant increase in the first year due to conversion to a new salary scale.) By Oct. 1, 2024, the first step on the new, six-point GSR salary scale will be set at \$34,564.50 for a 50 percent time appointment.
- **Childcare reimbursement:** \$1,350 per fiscal quarter. GSRs will also be entitled to an additional \$100 per year, effective on Oct. 1, 2023, and Oct. 1, 2024.
- **Paid Leave:** Expanded to 8 paid weeks per year for serious health conditions, family care, baby bonding, pregnancy or childbirth-related needs; short-term paid leave of 2 days for quarter campuses and 3 days for semester campuses; paid bereavement leave of 5 calendar days. In addition, 12 days of paid Personal Time Off (PTO) is a new benefit for GSRs.

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- **Benefits:** Continued participation for eligible GSRs in a UC-sponsored student health plan to the same degree as other eligible students at that campus. Eligible GSRs with 25 percent or more appointment to receive full remission of monthly premium for a UC-sponsored student health plan. In addition, UC will pay 100 percent of dependent child premiums for eligible GSRs.
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Following eight formal requests for neutral private mediation by the University, the United Auto Workers (UAW) finally [agreed](#) to engage a third-party mediator, Sacramento Mayor and former California Senate President pro Tem Darrell Steinberg on Dec. 9. This quickly facilitated discussions that led to parties reaching tentative agreements in a week.

On Dec. 9, Postdoctoral Scholars and Academic Researchers [ratified](#) separate contracts with the University. Further information about all four agreements between the University and the UAW may be found on our website [here](#).

If you have any questions about the agreements, you may contact the UAW. As always, thank you for your many contributions to our research mission and the UC community.