



Press Release

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University of California Health Care Professionals Vote For Strike Authorization

In protest of the University's lack of commitment to quality staff, pharmacists, clinical laboratory scientist, social workers and other health care professionals at all 5 UC medical centers and student health centers voted 89% in favor of striking. Today, UPTE-CWA, the union of the health care professionals at UC, is filing for impasse with the Public Employment Relations Board so that a mediator and fact-finder can be brought in to avoid a work stoppage.

"We have tried everything to achieve a fair agreement but the University has irrationally refused to even engage in substantive negotiations. We must get outside agencies involved to move the University so we can avert a strike," explains Sheila Stittiams UPTE-CWA HX chief negotiator and social worker at UC San Diego.

Health care professionals have witnessed the lavish expenditures by UC for executives and expansion, while they are being asked to take pay cuts. As many experienced professional staff near retirement age, UC's stagnated pay system and poor labor relations does not encourage newly-trained professionals to view their jobs at UC as a career, but seek employment elsewhere. Over the past years, the UC medical centers have chronically reached a point of understaffing and over work that require emergency measures in response.

"The clinical lab at UC Los Angeles went around our bargaining team and distributed a 15% pay increase because of a critical need to attract additional staff," said Lisa Brenner, clinical laboratory scientist at UC Los Angeles.

In contrast to how staff has been treated, the medical centers recently gave incentive awards averaging more than \$80,000 to executives. Bonuses were based primarily on meeting financial (profit) targets over the last year. The financial success of the medical centers has enabled the medical centers to construct impressive new facilities including a new building for cardiovascular treatments at UCSD, a new UCSF medical center at Mission Bay, a new medical education building at UC Irvine and many others.

UPTE-CWA, the union of health care professionals at UC has made bargaining proposals that will allow UC to retain and recruit quality staff. After more than a year of stalled and hostile negotiations the University continues to insist on a cut in compensation for nearly half of the staff.

UPTE-CWA has proposed that a mediator be brought into the conflict as part of the impasse process in an effort to achieve a long overdue settlement for wages and benefits for FY2009/10 and FY2010/11.