UP·DATE

We made the count!
Staff and administrative professionals qualify for union election

Union representation is on the way for some 12,000 staff and administrative professionals at UC. The state Public Employment Relations Board has validated thousands of signatures in support of electing UPTE-CWA the collective bargaining agent for UC’s staff and administrative professionals.

“What this means is that an election for UPTE representation will take place – perhaps very soon – giving us the opportunity to finally have a true voice in our workplace,” according to Lisa Kermish, an administrative analyst at UCB and UPTE’s systemwide vice president.

Union representation promises to put real bargaining power in the hands of UC’s 12,000 staff and administrative professionals. “With the state budget crisis growing larger by the day, we need to keep our sights set on bargaining with UC over any future changes to our wages and working conditions,” adds Kermish. “Union representation will give us that right.”

Positive changes on the horizon

Gains won by UPTE-represented researchers, techs and health care professionals make unionization for administrative professionals even more compelling, according to Linda Rosewood Hooper, a programmer/analyst at UCSC. “All three groups have succeeded in negotiating fairer pay systems this year, as well as numerous improvements in areas like professional development, reclassification, severance rights, and holding UC accountable for the funds it receives from the state for salaries,” said Rosewood Hooper. “We need the same rights.”

Substantial wage increases under new pay system

Tentative agreement near in HX bargaining

After a grueling 13-hour-long session on August 5, UPTE and UC management have brought health care professionals (HX) bargaining close to a tentative agreement. At press time, both parties were scheduled to meet for another session to sign a tentative agreement, which would then go to UPTE health care professional members for a ratification vote.

The proposed overall average wage increases for the medical centers are: San Francisco, 8.1%; Davis, 12.6%; Irvine, 12.2%; Los Angeles, 8.6%; San Diego, 9.5%. These wage increases include an additional 0.5% for San Francisco, Los Angeles and Irvine that was obtained after almost half of all HX employees signed petitions saying the current offer from the University was insufficient (see story on page 2).

New system to replace “merit pay”

The landmark agreement, achieved in record-breaking time, meets nearly all of the goals set by UPTE’s members when bargaining began last January. “We succeeded in eliminating the merit pay system, which was fatally flawed,” said Gail Garcia, a recreational therapist from UCLA and UPTE’s chief bargainer. “In the years since merit pay was instituted, employees have watched their salaries fall significantly below the competition.” For example, nuclear medicine techs made 30% less than market rates in San Francisco.

In lieu of a traditional step-based pay plan, a “Zone Plan” will place employees based on years of experience at certain minimum standards within the range. This internal equity adjustment will move almost half of the Davis and Irvine HX employees by an average of 7.2% and 6.4%, respectively. Los Angeles, San Francisco and San Diego employees will also see increases, but the disparity between years of service and wages was not as great at these medical centers.

While all employees may not benefit initially, this plan moves toward a step-based pay

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system similar to the one enjoyed by UC nurses. Such a plan rewards employees for their years of experience in the profession, and addresses wage stagnation suffered by long-time employees.

In addition, performance evaluation ratings were inconsistent among departments, and were even more so across the UC system. While 90% of the employees at Davis would receive an overall “exceeds expectations” rating, only 40% of the employees at UCLA would receive the same rating. In units where all or most of the staff received “exceeds expectations,” UC would reward some employees with a larger raise, thus ensuring other employees would be punished with smaller increases in order to stay within their overall “target figures.”

“Ironically, this often resulted in supervisors and managers receiving large bonuses for not going over budget,” said Wendy Mullen, a clinical social worker at UCLA. “Over time our wages have declined, which translates into smaller retirement benefits and makes it more difficult to adjust to rising health care and parking increases.”

Closer to market pay

The tentative agreement includes many additional equity increases for certain job titles at specific locations where employees had fallen below the market pay. “We also won the right to negotiate equity adjustments on an ‘as needed’ basis during the next three years,” said Cindy Yuge, bargainer from UCLA and a clinical lab scientist. “That will enable us to help hold UC accountable to their promise to keep salaries competitive with the outside market.”

While the financial situation at many student health centers was called into question, there were gains to be made. For student health centers attached to a medical center, there will be across-the-board increases each year of the agreement. For student health centers not attached to medical centers and which are dependent on the state budget, increases will be consistent with state budget allocations. In addition, per diem employees will receive 16 hours of non-scheduled time for professional development. Currently per diem employees do not receive professional development hours.

The UPTE health care professionals bargaining team also tenatively agreed to a contract expiration date of June 30, 2006 and an effective date of July 1, 2003. That means all increases would be retroactive to July 1.

The team worked hard to reach agreement and benefited greatly from the language negotiated during joint UPTE technologist and researcher bargaining earlier this year. Significant improvements include up to 16 weeks of severance if chosen by the employee, 12 hours of home study to facilitate professional development, and improvements in ergonomic protections.

Health care workers rally for fair pay

Before bargaining was finished, health care professionals turned out to rally on July 30 at the UCLA medical center to let UC management know loud and clear that their offer of a 1.5% raise for this year was simply not enough.

Health care professionals in southern California are paid well under the market rate and a higher raise is needed to try to keep pace with inflation. “We had many members from almost every area of the hospital, along with people who took time off from their jobs from the outlying areas of Venice Family Clinic and Santa Monica Hospital to come to the rally,” said Wendy Mullen, a clinical social worker at the medical center, who is on leave from her position to work for UPTE. She had the help of three UCLA pharmacists who took a vacation day to help gather petition signatures and increase turnout for the rally at lunch time in front of the hospital.

Signatures made the difference

UPTE was able to get over 240 members to sign a petition for a larger wage increase. Those signatures represented two-thirds of UPTE’s health care professional members of the UCLA local.

Petitions were delivered by UCLA UPTE President Rita Kern, along with Mullen and Cindy Yuge, a clinical laboratory scientist and UPTE bargaining team member, to Dr. Michael Karpf’s office, the director (or should we say the CEO?) of the UCLA medical center. The petitions were also brought to the bargaining table to present to UC the following week, and helped push UC to raise their monetary offer (see story, page 1).

The California Nurses Association, which bargains for nurses at the hospital, sent representatives to support UPTE’s struggle, just as UPTE came out and demonstrated in solidarity with the nurses when they were in bargaining last year.

UPTE health care professional members at the UCSF and Irvine medical centers also demonstrated the last week of July. Along with staff and union builders, Irvine’s bargaining representative Judy Lamar, a clinical lab scientist, convinced many health care professionals to either take a vacation day for the rally, or wear their UPTE t-shirts (a ‘minor’ violation of the hospital’s dress code) on that day to protest the meager raises offered by UC.

— Tom Walsh
Know your rights

Layoff rights: severance pay is now an option

The new UPTE contracts for technical employees and researchers include important improvements to layoff and severance rights. If you receive a layoff notice, within 14 days, you must choose between two options. Your election must be in writing and is irrevocable.

The first option is reduced severance with preferential rehire and recall rights. Contingent upon years of UC service, you may choose a combination of pref rehire and recall rights with reduced severance:

Severance: Less than 5 years of service, no severance • 5 to 13 years of service, 4 weeks severance • over 13 years of service, 8 weeks severance.

Recall and pref rehire rights: Less than 5 years of service, 1 year • 5 to 10 years of service, 2 years • 10 years or more of service, 3 years.

The second option is severance pay in lieu of preferential rehire and recall rights. You may elect to receive one week per full year of UC service up to a maximum of 16 weeks.

Recall is by seniority into an active, vacant, career position for which you are qualified, if the position is the same classification and department from which you were laid off.

You have preferential rehire status for an active, vacant, career position, if it is at the same campus, same or lower salary, same bargaining unit or same or lesser percentage of time. You can only be denied if you are not qualified, and a reason must be provided.

UC must send you information on how to activate preference or recall, if they lay you off. You are responsible for telling UC you want recall and pref rehire, and you must request information on active vacant openings.

UPTE has a check list on what to do if you receive a layoff notice, including consulting about retirement and benefits issues. Contact UPTE if you have questions or need help. Remember: you do have the right to grieve a layoff if your layoff has violated the contract.

Exercise your rights! – Cliff Fried, UPTE executive vice president

Staff professionals election

...and benefits for staff and administrative professionals.”

For instance, UC research professionals are no longer on an “open range” pay system like staff and administrative professionals. Researchers won a return to the “step system,” which allows for set pay increases each year, to make sure that employees can actually move through their pay range regardless of whether or not they are evaluated (see story on back page). This is in addition to any cost-of-living increases the union may negotiate.

“Research employees will now have a fighting chance to keep up with increases in annual inflation,” notes Rodney Orr, UPTE’s systemwide representative from UCSB. Wage stagnation has also been a major complaint from staff and administrative professionals.

Health care professionals are now voting on a package of pay proposals that will dramatically increase average wages at most campuses. UPTE represented technical employees who are not at the top of their range received a 2.8% wage increase last year – that’s 1.3% more than staff and administrative professionals received.

What’s next?

Now begins a crucial phase of the campaign: building campus networks, identifying issues which will become key bargaining priorities after gaining representation, and expanding the base of those committed to voting for UPTE.

“Many of us are asking our colleagues – those who previously pledged support, those whom we hadn’t reached and those who hadn’t made up their minds, to sign our ‘YES pledge,’” said Kermish. “Our goal is to have staff and administrative professionals sign on as quickly as possible to show the University we’re committed to having union representation.”

Now that UPTE has qualified to have an election, UC and the union have to meet to discuss which job titles will be eligible to vote. If UC and UPTE can’t agree, the state Public Employment Relations Board (PERB), which oversees labor relations at UC, may set hearings to determine which job titles will be included in the election.

The bargaining unit will likely consist of many of the classifications currently included in the non-management tier of PPSM. These include student affairs officers, administrative specialists, program/analysts, administrative analysts, and many other jobs.

Once an election is set, voting will be by secret mail ballot, and PERB will count the ballots.

Time to celebrate

UPTE members at several campuses held gatherings to celebrate the milestone of making the signature count. “In typical UPTE fashion, we combined savoring our success with an opportunity to meet more activists and supporters – in other words, to celebrate and build the union at the same time,” said Jessea Greenman, a member organizer in the campaign, and a student affairs officer on the UCB campus.

Many locals have scheduled trainings and meetings for those interested in becoming more informed about the campaign. Check out UPTE’s website at <www.upte.org/admin> for a schedule. If you’d like to sign a “YES pledge” for union representation, contact your UPTE local.
CWA Ohio members fight for child safety

Unwilling to lower the caseloads for overburdened workers dealing with life-and-death issues, Summit County Children Services in Akron, Ohio ignited a dispute with members of CWA Local 4546.

The union of caseworkers, intake workers and support staff has been on the picket line since late July, generating enormous press coverage and strong support from the public. The company initially told local negotiators that it was locking the workers out, but then changed its story the next day and claimed it never intended to lock them out and that the workers were on strike.

Besides confusion over that issue, what’s clear is that negotiations broke down over the county’s refusal to cap employees’ caseloads, as well as management’s demand to bargain only a one-year contract.

Child safety the main issue

The county’s wage offer of a 4 percent raise for caseworkers and 3 percent for support staff is fine with the union, except for the county’s insistence on a one-year contract. The union is trying to hold the line against givebacks in health care, but even that isn’t the local’s driving issue.

Their primary concern is for at-risk children and families whose caseworkers are so overburdened that they can’t give them an adequate level of service. Over the past three years, 11 children in the system have died and others have been victims of abuse.

“The bottom line is that the county demonstrates every day that they don’t care about these kids,” said Robin Schenault, president of CWA 4546 told the Update. Schenault said caseworkers feel helpless against a county that refuses to even acknowledge the high number of cases employees are assigned.

The week before the lockout, the county suspended Schenault for three days without pay for speaking out about the county’s failure to protect children. The local has filed a grievance and is preparing an unfair labor practice complaint.

UPTE systemwide has passed a motion and written letters in support of the workers. To learn more, check out CWA 4546’s web page at <www.summitkare.org>.

Verizon’s 87,000 workers ready to strike

Workers at telecom giant Verizon are poised for a strike at press time over issues of health care reductions and job cuts. Verizon’s 87,000 workers are members of CWA (UPTE’s parent union).

Verizon has been posturing with the media and trying to justify worker concessions by claiming it is in trouble because of the bad economy and competitive forces – but the facts prove otherwise.

Verizon is the industry leader with the greatest market capitalization of any U.S. telecom company – $96 billion – and it’s the third biggest telecom company worldwide. Verizon also tops the industry in revenues, which were $67 billion last year. Its profits were $4.1 billion.

Company success is shown in the way its executives reward themselves. Top execs made $427 million over the last six years. In fact, just as Verizon workers were being laid off last fall, Executive VP Larry Babbio gave himself a big payday by cashing in $5.2 million worth of his Verizon shares.

Verizon is winning in the marketplace and emerging in such businesses as wireless, where it is the largest provider, in DSL, data communications, and in long distance, where it is now the 3rd largest carrier.

Now, in current contract talks, Verizon is demanding that union workers give back benefits and job security gains made over decades of collective bargaining. The company wants to drastically cut health benefits by shifting millions of dollars in benefit costs to the frontline employees who have generated Verizon’s wealth. It also wants to wipe out contractual job security protections, potentially eliminating thousands of jobs from our communities and jeopardizing customer service quality.

And that’s not all. Verizon wants to break faith with its retirees and take $60 million out of their pockets for health care in 2004. Each year thereafter these fixed-income retirees will have to pay even more, just when the cost of health care is growing astronomically. What’s fair — health care for 34,500 retired families or $60 million in stock options for the CEO?

If you are a Verizon customer, you can help. Check out <www.cwa-union.org/FairnessAtVerizon>.
UPTE-CWA Membership Application

To join UPTE-CWA, fill out the top part of this form and sign in the lower right hand corner on the form below. Mail to UPTE-CWA at 2437 Durant Ave., Suite 209, Berkeley, CA 94704.

**DUES RATES**

If you are covered by a collective bargaining contract (techs, researchers, health care professionals):

- If you earn $30,000 or less: dues are 1.15% of gross salary to a maximum of $25 per month.
- If you earn more than $30,000: dues are 1.15% of gross salary to a maximum of $35 per month.

If you are not covered by a collective bargaining contract (staff professionals or LANL employees):

Dues are 1.15% of gross salary to a maximum of $20 per month.

I hereby apply for membership in and designate UPTE-CWA as my duly chosen and authorized representative on all matters relating to my employment and in order to promote and protect my economic welfare.

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**PLEASE NOTE:** even though your pay stub may show a “fair share” contribution to UPTE-CWA if you are in a unit covered by an UPTE contract, you are not a member of UPTE unless you have filled out and sent in a member application. Being a member entitles you to participate fully in your union, including voting in elections and for contract ratifications.

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NAME

HOME ADDRESS

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER

EMPLOYEE NUMBER (if different than above)

CITY/STATE/ZIP

HOME PHONE

DEPARTMENT

WORK PHONE

JOB TITLE

ACTUAL WORK LOCATION

NAME OF PERSON WHO ASKED ME TO JOIN (if applicable)

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I authorize The Regents of the University of California to withhold monthly or cease withholding from my earnings as an employee, membership dues, initiation fees and general assessments as indicated above.

I understand and agree to the arrangement whereby the total monthly deduction will be made by the University based upon the current rate of dues, initiation fees and general assessments. I ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT CHANGES IN THE RATE OF DUES, INITIATION FEES AND GENERAL ASSESSMENTS MAY BE MADE AFTER NOTICE TO THAT EFFECT IS GIVEN TO THE UNIVERSITY BY THE ORGANIZATION TO WHICH SUCH AUTHORIZED DEDUCTION AMOUNTS EITHER GREATER THAN OR LESS THAN THOSE SHOWN ABOVE WITHOUT OBLIGATION TO INFORM ME BEFORE DOING SO OR TO SEEK ADDITIONAL AUTHORIZATION FROM ME FOR SUCH WITHHOLDINGS.

The University will remit the amount deducted to the official designated by the organization. This authorization shall remain in effect until revoked by me - allowing up to 30 days time to change the payroll records in order to make effective this assignment or revocation thereof -- or until another employee organization becomes my exclusive representative.

It is understood that this authorization shall become void in the event the employee organization's eligibility for payroll deduction terminates for any reason. Upon termination of my employment with the University, this authorization will no longer be in effect.

This authorization does not include dues, initiation fees and general assessments to cover any time prior to the payroll period in which the initial deduction is made. Payroll deductions, including those legally required and those authorized by an employee are assigned priorities. In the event there are insufficient earnings to cover all required and authorized deductions, it is understood that deductions will be taken in the order assigned by the University and no adjustment will be made in subsequent pay period for membership dues, initiation fees and general assessments.
Los Alamos National Lab employees at risk in contract renewal process

For the first time ever, a contract to manage and operate a nuclear weapons design laboratory will be subject to a competitive bidding process. The Secretary of Energy has named a Blue Ribbon Committee to decide upon the requirements for the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) prime contract.

The LANL prime contract is potentially the largest Department of Energy (DOE) contract ever to be written. “The potential for closed back door dealings, good old boy politics, and outright fraud is a major concern,” according to UPTE Los Alamos President Theresa Connaughton.

UPTE Los Alamos is demanding that DOE and all its bodies responsible for placing the contract conduct the process in the open, with hearings in northern New Mexico, and provisions for employee, citizen, and community input.

UPTE is the only independent voice for UC workers at LANL. UPTE Los Alamos union steward Betty Gunther notes that “LANL employees (including subcontractor employees) need direct contractual language both in the Scope of Work for the Request for Proposals and in the final contract that guarantees a LANL job to every present Los Alamos workforce employee who want one.”

UPTE is concerned that the LANL pension fund not be subject to raiding by any contractor – public or private. There are many options for handling the retirement system of the LANL workforce in the contract process, ranging from employee-owned systems such as that at Sandia National Laboratory, to retirement funds managed by the New Mexico Public Employees Retirement Board. How UC retirement funds are to be managed should be specified in any contract the DOE makes.

UPTE is urging protection of rights and benefits. DOE must include provisions for fairness in compensation, hiring, promotion, job evaluations as well as layoff protections, whistle-blower protections, and protections from discrimination in the contract requirements.

Health, safety, and environmental stewardship are also important to the LANL workforce. UPTE wants strict enforcement of present state and federal laws and full federal OSHA and Price Anderson Act Amendment protections, regardless of who wins the contract to operate LANL.

“Organizing the employees at LANL is a relatively new right. UPTE wants this right preserved,” said UPTE organizer Olga Miranda.

“UPTE is the canary in the coal mine at LANL,” according to UPTE systemwide representative Manuel Trujillo. “UPTE is often the first to draw the attention of supervisors and managers to workplace and employment problems. Because UPTE is independent of LANL management, its voice is uncompromised.”

Construction inspectors win big at UCLA

Despite the budget crisis, heavy construction projects continue at a brisk pace on the UCLA campus. Not only is an entirely new hospital nearing completion, but new buildings are rising all over campus.

Six UCLA state-licensed construction inspectors, who are covered by UPTE contract, alerted the union that UCLA’s Capital Programs was hiring new construction inspectors with starting salaries $17,000 higher than the existing senior inspectors with more than ten years seniority.

“This creates serious problems of equity with the compensation packages of the other senior inspectors,” UPTE steward Pete Goodman wrote to the University. “Not only are these inspectors more experienced and knowledgeable…some have more than ten years senority.”

In the meetings that followed, UC said the new hires were temporary and hired only for the completion of the hospital. When pressed for an explanation of high starting salaries, UC said no inspectors applied until that salary was advertised – it was “the going rate.”

Goodman pointed out that by that logic, all of the existing inspectors should be paid the market rate as well. UC wasn’t quite convinced until UPTE suggested that the Iron Workers Union, also involved in the hospital construction, might object to the inequalities and that their protests might interrupt ongoing construction.

UC quickly offered to settle by giving all six construction inspectors raises from $68,040 to $74,376, retroactive to April 2003.

“It’s nice to know that when equity issues arise, the union is there for you,” said inspector Loren Young.

“I’m happy with the wage increase,” added inspector Marty Kozdrey. The inspectors approved the offer in late July.
Riverside researchers fight discriminatory layoffs

In late May, 36 staff research associates received layoff notices at UC Riverside. These were state-funded staff with 18 to 35 years of service with the University. Many were in their early fifties and too young to retire with a decent pension.

UPTE CWA organized a 100-person strong demonstration of co-workers, graduate students and faculty. “We asked fellow researchers systemwide to write UCR’s chancellor and tell her of the importance of experience in UC’s research staff,” said Fran Holzer, an SRA at Riverside and representative to the systemwide UPTE board. SRAs reached out to former graduate students and post docs, asking them to contact UCOP and the chancellor. Local activists also met with their legislators to talk about the impact of budget reductions on research important to agriculture.

All this activity led the chancellor to successfully lobby UCOP and obtain over $800,000 as a transition to grant funding for the laid off SRA positions. “Unfortunately, UC now intends to use this money to hire inexperienced postdoctoral fellows instead of experienced SRAs,” said Holzer. UPTE has filed a grievance alleging age and other discrimination. Employees have also filed a complaint with the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

At press time, 16 of the 36 layoffs were rescinded fully or partly, 2 of the laid off employees found jobs elsewhere, and 3 retired with severance as a retirement bonus. Local activists continue their work to have all the layoffs reversed.

Test UC’s “whistleblower hotline”

UC has been publicizing its new whistleblower hotline (800-403-4744), which you can call with complaints of fraud and unethical practices. Remember, though, to also inform your local union representative of any complaint.

“Everyone wants to insist on follow through on all complaints with a truly independent inquiry and fair resolution,” said systemwide UPTE President Jelger Kalmijn. “Our experience has shown that the University does not do independent investigations and uses calls to the hotline as an early warning system to launch cover-ups. We can expose this if we make calls and show that nothing happens.”

UPTE wants to hear about your experience with the whistleblower line so the union can demonstrate UC’s lack of willingness to fix fraud and unethical practice. Remember that all whistleblowers have special protections against retaliation that the union is prepared to enforce vigorously.

UC executive gets mega-raise while workers suffer

The UC Regents have approved a big raise and $20,000 annual bonus that will increase the pay of Senior Vice President Joseph Mullinix from $291,900 to $370,000. That’s higher than the current UC president’s salary of $361,400. (New UC President Robert C. Dynes will have his salary bumped up to $395,000 to compensate.) All this while the state’s dire budget situation has meant program cuts, staff layoffs and increases in student fees.

Become a union steward

Want to help your co-workers and yourself with on-the-job issues? Learn how the UPTE contracts protect you and how to use labor law to defend your rights by attending one of UPTE’s stewards trainings.

The Northern California Training will be in Berkeley on September 13 from 10 am to 2:30 pm (place to be announced). The Southern California Training will be in Los Angeles on September 20 from 10 am to 2:30 pm at UCLA, 159 MBI.

The agenda will include traditional grievance training along with how to enforce the contract on a wide range of issues.

Meet UC’s student labor activists

Fifty-two students representing all eight of UC’s undergraduate campuses held a two-day labor conference in May at UC Santa Cruz. Representatives from five UC unions, including UPTE, participated and presented their first-hand experience to students.

Called the “First Annual UC Organizing Institute,” the conference was intended to build networks and facilitate information sharing by student labor activists.

The student attendees pledged to work in alliance with UC workers to “make the changes that we all know need to happen” – fighting for fair wages and working conditions and affordable education.
Tech and researcher contracts ratified – open-range employees moved to step system, UC required to account for salary funds

UPTE-CWA members have ratified a landmark 2-year agreement for researchers (RX unit) and technical employees (TX unit). The agreement marks a breakthrough by moving open-range employees back to the step system and offering laid off employees severance pay with preferential rehire. The new contracts were overwhelmingly ratified by membership vote last month.

“The continuing efforts of UPTE-CWA activists and bargaining teams over the past years have pushed the University to come to terms on these two very important changes,” said chief negotiator Jelger Kalmijn, UPTE’s systemwide president and an SRA at UCSD.

The overall wage agreement gives UPTE-represented employees excellent pay increases. The combination of step increases, across-the-board increases, and the conversion of all open-range employees to steps will provide increases averaging 2.5% for open-range employees and 2.0% for step-based employees. Additional equity increases will be given to many job titles and individuals.

Open-range employees will receive a 1.5% across-the-board raise October 2002 and an average 1.0% increase when they are converted to steps July 1, 2004. All TX and RX employees will be eligible for incentive awards from the 2002/03 fiscal year through the 2003/04 fiscal year.

UPTE succeeded in jointly negotiating the new tech and research professional contracts with a combined bargaining team. The large majority of the articles in the two contracts are now identical.

Accountability, severance pay

The new contracts requires the University to account for all wages spent in the TX and RX units. “This will enable UPTE to demonstrate if UC is spending less than it has received, and also show that regular increases within range step increases do not cost the University more money in the long run,” said Kalmijn.

Big changes were also made in articles relating to job security. All laid off employees now have the opportunity to choose between: a) 1 week of severance pay for each year of service, up to a maximum of 16, and no preferential rehire/recall or, b) 4 weeks severance pay for 5 to 13 years and 8 weeks severance for greater than 13 years service with full preferential rehire/recall rights.

Laid off employees exercising preferential rehire/recall will not lose their rehire rights because the University offers them jobs they do not want.

UPTE was also able to reverse what had become a worrying phenomenon: UC’s attempt to get around career employment rules by creating “floater” appointments, which made possible 18-month second-class positions. Those are now eliminated. All employees working for UC temporary employment agencies shall be either limited-appointment or career.

The new contracts also establish a “Joint Benefits Committee” that will meet regularly, and include four UPTE representatives who receive paid release time to participate. They’ll be provided with relevant information about benefits changes and costs so that UPTE can give meaningful input into the UC benefits package.

Best practices of other contracts

Before joint bargaining for the two contracts began last year, UPTE tech and researcher members set as a main goal incorporating the “best practices” of other UC union contracts into their contracts. Many improvements were made. UPTE now has subpoena power for documents and individuals in arbitration hearings. Under “leaves for union business,” UPTE can now invite members off the job to work for the union with great flexibility. And, a new article guarantees respectful and fair treatment on the job, even if no other contract article was violated.