UPTE/CWA's bargaining team. Front row, left to right: Jie Lii (RX, UCLA); Karen Glibrecht (TX, UCD); Wendi Felson (HX, UCSF, retired); Vanessa Bakuta (RX, UCD). Back row, left to right: Jim Hockridge (TX, UCB); Paul Phojanakong (TX, UCD); Damion Miller (TX, UCSB); and Mike Dupray (TX, LBNL).

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Patient-union coalition saves UCSF Renal Center

UC San Francisco’s medical center is big business. So big, in fact, that its CEO, Mark Laret, has reportedly told workers, “When you see patients, you should see dollar signs.” (See “Care Clash,” San Francisco Bay Guardian, April 23, 2013).

Under Laret’s direction, the medical center has launched some major capital projects expanding its physical plant, at the same time it has attempted to cut services to the community.

Last year, UC was planning to pull out of its management role at a renal center jointly run with San Francisco General Hospital, which provided dialysis services to low-income residents of San Francisco, many of them on Medicare or Medicaid. Management of the facility would have been contracted out to a for-profit company.

Dumping the poor “Patients would have been forced to endure longer bus rides to reach the center, the patient-staff ratio would be lower, likely leading to worse health outcomes,” noted UPTE steward Nino Maida. “Jobs would have been lost as well.”

A coalition of UC health care workers represented by UPTE-CWA, AFSCME, the California Nurses Association, and the Teamsters worked together to oppose the move, joined by a large group of patients served by the center.

They convinced San Francisco Supervisor David Campos to hold a hearing on the matter, which brought public pressure on UCSF and San Francisco’s Health Department to back away from the privatization plans.

Congratulations UCSF union coalition members!

Fifteen thousand UPTE-CWA-represented health care professionals (HX), researchers (RX), and technical (TX) employees have overwhelmingly approved new labor contracts that include fair raises and preserve their UC pensions on a single-tier. Highlights include:

- Cost-of-living raises for the next four years of 11.5 to 13%, plus other raises for some titles.
- All current and future employees remain on the “old” (1976) pension eligibility formula.
- Getting rid of the “Rule of 50,” that would have forced half of current employees onto an inferior tier for retiree health benefits.

“This historic agreement is a commitment to preserving UC as the world’s premiere academic institution,” said UPTE’s president, Jelger Kalmijn.

“Our bargaining team made a reasonable proposal to contribute an additional 1% to the pension fund in exchange for UC keeping everyone on a single plan, and UC agreed.”

UC management had initially proposed a two-tier pension system that would have dramatically reduced benefits for current and future employees.

Employee activism saved pension, improved wages UPTE members poured out on to picket lines, wrote letters and even went on strike in solidarity with other UC workers last spring to make it clear they rejected UC’s plan. Legislators pressured UC for a fair agreement, and the university’s new president, Janet Napolitano, also played a constructive role in sending her team back to the table.

The union argued that quality retirement and health benefits are the cornerstone of recruitment and retention of the best research, technical and professional staff at public institutions such as UC.

“Finding cures for cancer or heart disease, creating the next version of the internet or understanding global warming, require long-term dedication of knowledgeable staff, and retirement security is a crucial part of what draws these staff to UC,” said Wendi Felson, UPTE’s chief bargainer and herself a former UC health care professional.

“We hope this ground-breaking agreement sets a new pattern for labor negotiations and brings to an end the years of attempted management take-backs despite healthy bottom-lines at UC’s research and medical facilities,” added Kalmijn.

Let’s work together Union members had delivered a letter with over 1,000 signatures welcoming Napolitano to UC and asking her to do the right thing by HX, RX and TX employees.

“A four-year agreement provides the new UC president with a period of labor peace,” Kalmijn said, in which he hopes “we can...” (continued on p. 2)
Did you get the Memo?
If you’re looking for a way to stay current with news about UC and public higher education, sign up for UPTE’s Monday Memo. An email bulletin of “news and views about working at UC,” the Memo is published each week by a collective of UPTE activists, highlighting stories you probably didn’t see in your morning paper.

Here’s what one subscriber recently wrote to Memo editors: “I just wanted to say how much I get out of reading the Monday Memo, and have for many years. I completely appreciate it and all the research and links to relevant articles – a great digest for those of us who work here. Just wanted to finally say thanks for something I relish each week and which gives me ideas and info I need in the battles for quality, accessible public education and strong, democratic unions.”

Visit UPTE’s website to read the latest Monday Memo, or drop a note to info@upte-cwa.org to subscribe.

Historic contract for RX/TX/HX (continued from p. 1)
work together to remedy much of the damage that was done by difficult budget times and acrimonious employment strategies of her predecessor.”

“UPTE’s victory is truly remarkable,” noted Kalmijn. “Workers across the US, including auto, airline and telecommunications workers, have conceded under management pressure to two-tier pension plans,” he said. “UPTE’s members joined with those from the California Nurses Association (CNA) to oppose such a move, laying a foundation for future UC workers to build on.”

Summaries of the agreements, including detailed outlines of when each wage increase or other change will go into effect, are available on UPTE’s website: <www.upte.org/htx> for health care professionals and <www.upte.org/rx-tx> for researchers and technical employees.

Wages, safety top priorities for skilled trades workers at Livermore lab
Lawrence Livermore National Lab’s skilled trades workers hit the streets on January 15 as part of their fight for a fair contract.

The Society of Professionals, Scientists and Engineers (SPSE), UPTE-CWA’s chapter at the lab, is currently bargaining its third contract with management, but progress is slow because management has yet to negotiate in earnest.

To bring public attention to the issues and to show support for the bargaining team, SPSE held an informational picket at the lab and the downtown Livermore office of Lawrence Livermore National Security (LLNS), the private company which manages it.

SPSE represents skilled trades workers, including mechanics, locksmiths, carpenters, electricians, heavy equipment mechanics, laborers, painters, plumbers/pipelifters, riggers, sheet metal workers, welders, and other titles. One of the primary bargaining issues is closing the wage gap with the prevailing wages among the respective crafts.

Equally important, however, is controlling the erosion of safety and working conditions caused by LLNS management pressure. SPSE-UPTE members routinely work around hazards that their counterparts elsewhere never or rarely face: radioactivity, biohazards, high explosives, and contamination from beryllium, lead, depleted uranium, asbestos and heavy metals.

A policy of neglect
Since the lab was privatized in 2007 – essentially spun off to LLNS’ management – lab workers have seen their ranks drop by approximately 50% as the newly-formed company attempted to impress the Department of Energy and win millions in management incentives by cutting, among other things, the maintenance budget.

Lab management deliberately allowed the lab’s infrastructure to fall into disrepair. Their motto: “Run to fail, then maintain.”

This misguided policy has led directly to several safety incidents and many more close calls. Accidents and faulty equipment affect all lab employees and could also endanger the surrounding community.

“There’s a desire to do more with less. We have deep pride in our part in restoring the lab to greatness.”

SPSE-UPTE chief bargainer, “but management exploits that pride to get things done – ‘running to fail’ makes no business sense either; repairs are more expensive and more disruptive to lab operations than preventive maintenance to equipment and facilities.

“We want an end to the relentless push to do more with less. We have deep pride of ownership of the equipment and facilities that we maintain,” said Kevin Aguilar, SPSE-UPTE chief bargainer, “but management exploits that pride to get things done on a shoestring,” creating hazardous working conditions and underpaying us.”

“It’s time to put an end to that,” said Aguilar. “We want a fair contract and to do our part in restoring the lab to greatness.”

For updates on the situation, see SPSE’s webpage: <www.spse.org>.

ORGANIZING FOR FAIRNESS

Skilled trades workers at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory picketing on January 15 for a fair contract. From left to right, Terry Cunningham, Steve LaMunyon, Larry Braley, Bruce Strohman, Jerry Burrows, Don Perry, Randy Misa, Javier Dias, Jeff Costa, Bill Graves, and Tommy Lau.

Organizing for fairness
Around the state

UPTE delegates at CWA's District 9 conference

Delegates from UPTE attended CWA's District 9 conference in Hawaii in early February. District 9 is the umbrella group of CWA members in California, Nevada, and Hawaii. Here are a few of the activities that marked the event:
- **CWAArs** stood in solidarity to show their support for AFA-CWA Flight Attendants at United Airlines.
- **Participants** took action against “fast track” authorization for the Trans-Pacific Partnership by calling and emailing their members of Congress.
- **District 9 participants** helped “stamp out money in politics” by stamping paper currency with that message. CWA is working with citizen groups to stop the dangerous flood of money in politics, and also with Ben Cohen (of Ben and Jerry’s ice cream) who founded the stampsmpedese.org campaign.

According to Cohen, every dollar stays in circulation for approximately 2.5 years and is seen by 875 people. As more stamped bills enter the marketplace, it becomes a massive visual demonstration of support for reforms.

In early February, House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (D-Calif.) and Rep. John Sarbanes (D-Md.) introduced H.R. 20, a bill that will change the way the nation finances elections by empowering small donors.

Keeping an eye on UC’s executives

UCLA has revised its travel guidelines after an investigation by the Center for Investigative Reporting, which found executives ignoring rules, and flying frequently in business or first class and staying in luxury hotels.

The revised rules, announced in an internal email from UCLA’s provost in late January, are designed to ensure employees make “prudent” arrangements. The internal email was first reported on by UCLA’s student newspaper, the Daily Bruin.

In response to California governor Jerry Brown’s call for frugality, UC president Janet Napolitano is pledging that her office will “lead by example” – by cutting back on spending for the first time in five years. Brown has tied spending increases with a freeze in tuition and insistence that UC cut administrative costs.

But the compensation awarded to UC’s new chief financial officer, which could go as high as $1 million, has drawn protests. Jagdeep Bachher, executive VP of Canada’s Alberta Investment Management Corporation, was hired at January’s regents’ meeting to manage pension and investment funds. His base pay is $615,000 plus incentives, which could bring his total compensation to more than $1 million. Several other executives also received hefty pay increases at the meeting.

“Once again, UC stands for Ungodly Compensation,” the Los Angeles Daily News exclaimed in an angry editorial.

UCB library gets $6 million in cash, after outrage over cuts

In what the San Francisco Chronicle described as a “rescue mission,” UC Berkeley’s library system will receive an infusion of $6 million from other internal UC budgets.

The change in priorities was the result of organized faculty intervention, following widespread alarm at library management’s abrupt behind-the-scenes decision to eliminate branch libraries and slash collections and staff in 2012. Students, staff and faculty concluded library “teach-ins,” and over 100 faculty members signed an open letter strongly objecting to the plan.

“No other resource on campus is so central to the daily conduct of teaching, learning and research by every member of the academic community; when the library falters, the institution as a whole falters,” wrote UCB Art History professor Marguerita Lovell in a report to the Academic Senate.

Even with the new cash, cuts to Berkeley’s libraries under the cover of a “digital revolution” are still being hotly contested, according to a recent article in California Magazine. Management has announced plans for a vast downsizing of the print collections of two of the campus’ largest libraries – the Business Library and the Education/Psychology Library – a move which strikes many as sad and ironic at a university whose official seal portrays an open book.

Barging into bargaining at Mt. San Jacinto Community College

UPTE-CWA’s community college members are pushing the envelope as they seek a stronger voice in their wages and working conditions. UPTE represents part-time associate faculty at three community colleges: Mt. San Jacinto, Butte Community College, and College of the Sequoias.

After more than six months of no response from management and a contract that expired June 30, 2013, the union’s bargaining team wrote to the president of Mt. San Jacinto College to say it would be showing up at his office to bargain on January 24, with or without an appointment.

The aggressive move worked and a bargaining session was scheduled immediately.

Mt. San Jacinto has one of the lowest pay rates of all California community colleges. “We have the largest bargaining team ever at this college, and all members have been invited to come witness bargaining,” said UPTE’s president, Jelger Kalmijn.

“Our members have experienced significant threats to their job security,” Kalmijn added, “even when the classes they have taught for years continue.”

Associate faculty wages and conditions need improvement

Meanwhile, UPTE has commissioned a study of faculty wages, benefits and working conditions from UC Santa Cruz labor studies scholar Sara R. Smith. The study, Supporting California’s Community College Teaching Faculty: Improving Working Conditions, Compensation and the Quality of Undergraduate Education, is available on UPTE’s website at <www.upte.org/cc/supportingfaculty.pdf>. Here are a few of the report’s findings:

- **Associate**, or “contingent” faculty, make up the vast majority of faculty nationally and at California’s community colleges. Nationally, 75.5% of all faculty are non-tenure track. In California, 68.9% of faculty at community colleges are part-time/contingent faculty, while only 31.1% of faculty are full-time. This is the highest percentage of contingent faculty working at California’s community colleges in over three decades. In contrast to tenured and tenure-track faculty, such faculty have little job security and often do not know whether they will have classes to teach from term to term, making their lives economically precarious.

- **Despite a 1988 system-wide goal that 75% of classes at the community college level be taught by full-time faculty, this goal remains unmet.** In 2012, 56% of all classes were taught by full-time faculty, while 44% were taught by part-time faculty.

- **Associate faculty at California community colleges earn on average half (55%) the salary (excluding benefits) of tenured and tenure-track community college faculty for the same work.** Essentially, a system of unequal pay for equal work prevails with regard to faculty salaries in the community college system in California.

- **This low pay makes contingent faculty teaching at community colleges the lowest paid faculty at California’s institutions of public higher education.**
University of Akron workers ratify first CWA contract

Administrative workers at the University of Akron have ratified their first contract with the Communications Workers of America (CWA). The union represents 241 workers in food service and trades at the University of Akron.

The Amazon Germany workers, members of the union Ver.di, have been holding a series of rolling strikes to push the company to negotiate with Ver.di. This was the first time Ver.di had taken the struggle to the overseas doorstep of the corporation. Long-running complaints by workers include unreasonable production standards, shorted paychecks, mistreatment of workers (many of whom are immigrants), constant surveillance, and workplace injuries.

Currently, the Amazon workers aren’t covered by the negotiated agreement for the German retail and mail order trades industry. That means Amazon workers in Germany earn several thousand dollars a year less than other warehouse workers because Amazon sets its wage rate arbitrarily.

The Amazon workers also have fewer benefits and a more hostile work environment. There are about 9,000 permanent and approximately 6,000 to 10,000 non-permanent Amazon workers at eight locations in Germany. – CWA News

World’s richest 85 people worth same as poorest 3.5 billion

A report by the non-profit organization Oxfam has found that the combined wealth of the world’s richest 85 people, or $110 trillion dollars, equals that of the poorest half of the world, some 3.5 billion people.

Worldwide, the top 1 percent controls nearly half the world’s wealth. In the United States, the wealthiest 1 percent have captured 95 percent of all economic growth since the financial crisis of 2009, while the bottom 90 percent of people have gotten poorer.

And the wealth gap in the U.S. is greater than almost every other developed country, according to the Organization for Economic Development and Co-operation. Read “Working for the Few,” Oxfam’s briefing paper here: <http://goo.gl/5OIxk>

Take note: new UC safety policies

By now, many members should be aware of the rollout of UC’s new safety policies. The latest rollout is UC’s policy regarding Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) such as gloves, aprons, eye protection (safety glasses, goggles, face shields), respirators, and other equipment that will be provided to workers (as well as postdocs, students and visitors) at no charge based on an assessment of hazards they are likely to encounter at work.

Principal Investigators (PIs) or their designated supervisors are required to have assessed hazards that workers were likely to encounter, and to have informed them of the need for PPE so they can be properly fitted and trained to use the required equipment. The effective date of the policy is March 31, and “full implementation shall occur 60 days past receipt of PPE scheduled delivery.”

If you think your work or workplace is hazardous and your supervisor hasn’t informed you of any PPE selection decisions, ask about it — and, if necessary, continue up the chain of command: PI (if different from your supervisor), department chair, and Environment, Health & Safety. And contact your union representative.

An earlier safety policy on Laboratory Safety Training at <policy.ucop.edu/doc/3500998/LabSafetyTrainings> established “minimum safety requirements for all university workers” and established “minimum safety requirements in laboratories/technical areas” became effective on October 31, 2013. If you work in a lab or technical area where “the use or storage of hazardous materials or equipment may present a potential hazard,” your supervisor was required to assess your work and you should have received training — at least in the fundamentals of safety, and any further training considered necessary.

Workers need to know training requirements

According to the policy, workers need to know what training they are required to take, and for completing it. They are also responsible for informing their coworkers if they see unsafe conditions, and reporting those conditions to the supervisor or EH&S. Noncompliance should be handled through your union contract or, if you’re not covered, by the university’s “complaint resolution processes.”

UC developed new safety policies as part of a settlement agreement with the Los Angeles County District Attorney as a result of criminal charges filed against the university and UCLA professor Patrick Harran following the death in January 2009 of staff research associate Sheri Sangji. (Charges are still pending against Professor Harran.) VPTE members were actively involved in making sure UC met Cal/OSHA safety requirements, and pressing for criminal charges.

Sangji, an UPTE-represented worker, was burned severely in a preventable fire in Harran’s chemistry/biochemistry lab in late December 2008, during her eleventh week on the job. UC extended the agreement, which first applied only to campus chemistry/biochemistry labs, to all of its labs and facilities, including medical schools. – Joan Lichterman, UPTE’s health & safety director