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## **Impasse Reached During Final Bargaining Session with CNA**

### *UC and CNA seek mediator to help reach agreement*

After four sessions of collective bargaining between the University of California (UC) and the California Nurses Association (CNA), the two parties have not reached an agreement. The four issues on the table – wages, health benefits, meal and break periods and retiree health plans – are unresolved, prompting the groups to jointly request that the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) certify the negotiations to impasse and appoint a mediator. This neutral mediator will assist the parties to reach an agreement and avoid labor disruptions.

“Impasse was reached after UC made many efforts to get an agreement,” said UC’s executive director of labor relations Howard Pripas. “We value our nurses and put forth proposals during scheduled negotiations that reflected our appreciation for their work. We are hopeful that bringing in an independent mediator will help us resolve any remaining issues.”

Mediation will begin as soon as possible and the University intends to work hard to resolve the impasse.

During negotiations, UC proposed:

► **A continued commitment to competitive wages for nurses.**

UC offered market-based salary increases for nurses at each of its five major medical centers and ten student health clinics. This proposal is on top of the 13.5 percent average increase UC nurses received in 2005.

In spite of UC’s suggested increase, low vacancy and turnover rates, a higher than market number of paid holidays and exceptional retirement benefits as compared to key competitors, CNA demanded above market salary increases between 10 and 19 percent for 2006.

“Contrary to CNA claims, UC remains competitive during a continuing national nursing shortage, attracting and keeping nurses on staff who continue to offer the best care to our patients,” said Pripas. “Our compensation is very much aligned with the market and our salary proposals will help us retain our competitive position.”

UC presented CNA with salary information from published salary surveys conducted by third-party consultants that showed UC either leads or is at the market average for RN wages in most locations.

In response to CNA allegations of high turnover and vacancy rates, UC also presented the union with information revealing low rates of turnover and vacancy at each UC location, including vacancy rates that do not exceed or are significantly below the state hospital association survey’s regional averages. Turnover rates also beat the state’s regional averages.

► **Accommodating meal and break periods while maintaining the flexibility to care for patients.**

It has been CNA's position that nurses are unable to take meals or breaks, despite information from nurse managers that breaks are generally taken and that nurses prefer the ability to schedule breaks in accordance with their professional judgment over a rigid break schedule.

In response to CNA's demand for penalty pay for missed meals and breaks, the university proposed a system that would allow for the enforcement of a break schedule if a majority of nurses in a work unit claimed that missed breaks were a problem. In such a case, members of management would work with the nursing unit to design a fitting schedule.

"The university takes very seriously the concerns expressed by the CNA about our nurses' meal and break time," said Pripas, "but we also trust our nurses' professional judgment when it comes to balancing patient care and their personal needs. We do not believe that the CNA's one-size-fits-all plan is a fitting solution."

► **Safeguarding the standard of healthcare enjoyed by all UC employees.**

UC currently provides a variety of healthcare plans for more than 100,000 employees, including nurses, faculty, environmental services, management and other healthcare professionals. The plans use a salary-based approach, in which lower paid employees pay less while receiving the same coverage as others, a system that was approved by all unions affiliated with UC, including the CNA, at the time of its passage.

CNA's new proposal demands keeping all current health plans at the same cost for nurses through next year, as well as adding a free health plan option. Assuming university-wide funding levels for all other employees are the same, this proposal would make UC unable to provide the same coverage for all other employees.

"UC's goal is to provide the same benefits to all employees and to subsidize the costs for those most in need," said Pripas. "Assuming funding levels remain consistent, CNA's demands would result in either the university paying more for RN health benefits than it pays for other employees, or other employees subsidizing the healthcare cost of RNs, options unacceptable to UC standards."

UC offered a final proposal that guarantees an aggregate funding increase of two percent for calendar year 2007. If UC is able to fund healthcare increases for other employees at a higher rate, UC will provide the same increase amount to nurses.

► **A commitment to the current retirement health benefit plan for current working nurses.**

Barring any changes in legislative or regulatory requirements, or changes in the health care marketplace that directly affect the plans offered (such as a merger among the plans UC offers), UC proposed no change to the retiree health plans through June 30, 2007, including the benefits within those plans, unless changes are made in current employee health benefits. Consistent with current practice, annual adjustments in retiree contributions would be made to reflect the increased costs of providing retiree health benefits and any change in state funding levels.

For more information about the university's negotiations with CNA: [www.ucnurses.com](http://www.ucnurses.com) or [http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/employees/policies/labor\\_relations/index.html](http://atyourservice.ucop.edu/employees/policies/labor_relations/index.html).

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