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UC POSTDOCS RATIFY NEW CONTRACT WITH 98.8% OF THE VOTE

One-year contract makes important advancements for postdocs, includes no concessions

Berkeley, CA – UC postdocs at all ten UC campuses voted to ratify a new contract this week by 3,471 to 42, a 98.8% margin, making a set of key improvements to their working conditions and setting the stage for meaningful advancements over the course of the next year.

"We're proud to win key improvements for postdocs in a number of important areas" said Anke Schennink, president of UAW 5810, the union that represents UC postdocs. "These include maintaining guaranteed annual raises, improved health benefits and new protections for recent immigrants. UC managers wanted wage cuts and less job security, but we held firm and fought off all concessions. We know there is more work to be done, but this contract sets the stage for even more improvements."

Among the contract's highlights:

GUARANTEED ANNUAL RAISES: Although UC proposed a series of wage cuts, postdoc minimum salaries will continue to be linked to the NIH/NRSA pay scale, meaning that all postdocs will get an annual raise of at least 2 percent and many will see raises of at least 6 percent over the next year.

IMPROVED HEALTH BENEFITS: Medical plans will now have preventative care and contraception coverage without co-pays, dental benefits will improve and there will be a new supplemental life insurance option. Monthly costs for both plans will stay low – for the HMO plan rates will decrease by 4%, and PPO rates will stay the same as 2015.

NEW DUE PROCESS PROTECTIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL POSTDOCS: After a long fight, we won protections to ensure that international postdocs facing termination can defend themselves in person at an arbitration hearing.

IMPROVED FAMILY-FRIENDLY BENEFITS: The union and UC will form a Family-Friendly Committee that will meet at least twice in the next year with the express purpose of designing a childcare reimbursement program for UC postdocs. Use of Sick Leave will be expanded to include taking care of family members.

MORE RIGHTS FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT: Postdocs won the right to participate in career development activities on paid time and UC will be obligated to fund these career activities (such as travel to conferences).
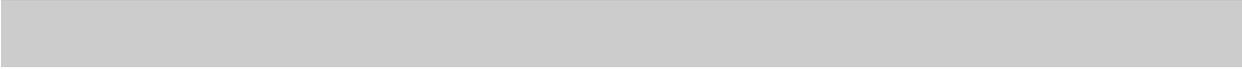
Postdoctoral scholars, or postdocs, have already earned their Ph.Ds and perform cutting-edge research in departments across UC. They work on subjects that range from new cures for cancer to clean energy to new models of the universe and beyond, and are crucial to UC's research mission. Many of them are international academics who have recently immigrated to the U.S.

Despite their high skill level and expertise, until postdocs secured their first contract in 2010 some were being paid as low as $18,000 a year by UC, with no stable benefits. The first contract postdocsnegotiated five years ago made progress by establishing steady benefits and experience-based minimum salary steps. The union is continuing to work to increase postdoctoral compensation to levels that reflect the value of labor to the research mission and cost of living near UC campuses, to improve UC's sexual harassment complaint procedures, and to better family-friendly policies and gender equity.

"We're proud of this contract – but we know there is a lot left to do," said Schennink. "We will be back in a year to address policies that force so many women out of the academic research pipeline, and continue to improve working conditions for UC postdocs."

Learn more about UAW 5810 and the new contract online at **www.UAW5810.org**, or join us on **Facebook** and **Twitter**.

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