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6,500 University of California postdoctoral researchers ratify inaugural contract

Agreement improves postdoc compensation and working conditions that will help UC continue to attract top researchers from around the globe

The UAW and the University of California today jointly announced that UC postdoctoral scholars voted to ratify their first union contract. The union announced that postdocs approved the contract by an overwhelming vote of 2588 to 121, or 96 percent in favor, in balloting that concluded Aug. 11. The postdocs' union, Postdoctoral Researchers Organize/UAW, and UC reached a tentative agreement on July 31.

“We are very proud of this contract,” said Xiaoqing Cao, a cancer researcher from UCLA who served on the PRO/UAW bargaining committee. “Not only will postdoc compensation at UC be among the best in the U.S., but UC postdocs will also have unprecedented rights and protections while carrying out the important work that makes UC the top academic research institution in the world.”

“Postdoctoral scholars are vitally important to the University of California and to our research enterprise, and we are very pleased that they have ratified the agreement,” said Dwaine Duckett, vice president for UC systemwide human resources. “We look forward to a swift implementation of the contract and our postdoctoral scholars continuing to work with our faculty and researchers on the great scientific and technological challenges facing our nation.”

The agreement includes a balanced compensation structure that will include both experience-based and general annual increases based on the National Institutes of Health (NIH) pay scale. Other highlights of the agreement include new provisions for time off, stronger mechanisms for postdocs to enforce health and safety standards, “just cause” protections for discipline or dismissal and improved access to professional mentoring.

“Our members contribute significantly to the cutting-edge research that makes UC great and helps move society forward,” said Jim Wells, director of UAW Region 5. “We are pleased to see that this contract recognizes the important work they do and their many contributions.”

Postdoctoral researchers provide valuable research on cancer, stem cells, climate change, alternative fuels, and many other cutting-edge fields in science and engineering. Postdoctoral scholars at UC represent roughly 10 percent of postdoctoral scholars in the United States.

“We look forward to a productive and cooperative collective bargaining relationship between Postdoctoral Scholars in UAW Local 5810 and the University of California, much like the relationship between UC and UAW Local 2865, which represents academic student employees at UC,” said UAW President Bob King.

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