

Unionization Improves the UC Academic Researcher Experience



	Before First Contract	With Current Contract
Compensation	In the 10 years before forming a union, AR salary scales increased by an average of 1.7% per year.	Between salary scale and merit increases the typical AR will receive a wage increase of 34% over the life of the contract.
Health Benefits and Retirement Plans	<p>UC had sole authority to change retirement plans, including employee contribution rates.</p> <p>No AR voice in benefits changes and no recourse when UC failed to enroll ARs in benefits programs.</p>	<p>UC must maintain current employee contribution rates and cannot change pension plans or tiers without bargaining with our Union.</p> <p>UC discusses potential benefit changes with ARs via our union. Problems with benefits enrollment can be addressed via the grievance process.</p>
Promotions and Career Advancement	20% of eligible ARs did not receive a merit increase, most often because they were not informed of or were pressured to defer their merit review. Junior Specialists were often prevented from advancing to Assistance Specialist positions.	All ARs must receive merit reviews on time (every 1 - 3 years), UC must provide the AR with notice of its decision and an explanation, and approved promotions and merit increases must be effective on July 1 in the year of review. In the 2022 contract, ARs won a clear path for Junior Specialists to transition to Assistant Specialist positions.
Appointment Length	No minimum appointment length. ARs could be appointed and reappointed on a monthly basis.	In the 2022 contract ARs won longer appointments before the first merit review. After the first merit review, reappointments must be equal to length of time in a pay step (2 - 3 years at a minimum), providing for increased job security and longer visas.
Family and Medical Leave	No guaranteed parental or family leave, and vacation days could be used to receive pay during leaves. Sick time could only be used for medical-related leaves.	In the 2022 contract, ARs won 8 weeks paid parental leave or family care benefit at 100% pay. No limits on use of accrued sick and vacation days for family and medical leave (including parental leave), and parental leave can be used in a flexible manner.
Vacations and Holidays	UC had unilateral authority to approve or deny vacation. No guarantee of time off on UC holidays.	24 days of vacation and 14 UC holidays per year. Vacation requests may not be unfairly denied.
Transit	UC unilaterally set all parking and transit policies. No guaranteed transit benefits.	In the 2022 contract, ARs won first-ever transit benefits, including a commitment from UC to provide fully-funded transit passes at all campuses and e-bike discounts.

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Non-Discrimination and Inclusive Campus Environment	Instances of discrimination, harassment, and exclusion handled through UC offices or state and federal agencies, which were time consuming, costly, and without representation by elected peer union reps.	In the 2022 contract, ARs won new, industry standard-setting protections against all forms of discrimination, harassment, and bullying. A grievance process with clear timelines — separate from the Title IX process — to resolve abusive or discriminatory conduct and the right to appeal to a neutral arbitrator. The right to survivor-centered interim measures and remedies after reporting in order to continue working in a safe environment.
Discipline and Dismissal/Layoffs	ARs could be disciplined or dismissed arbitrarily, or “at will.” UC could lay off ARs at any time and for no reason with no notice or compensation.	UC must prove “just cause” in order to discipline or dismiss ARs. This means that all discipline must be fair and cannot be arbitrary. Layoffs require very specific conditions and ARs must get 45 days notice.
PI Status and Bridge Funding	No rights to PI status and very few, if any, ARs could access bridge funding due to a lack of dedicated funding.	In the 2022 contract, ARs are now eligible to apply for PI status. The contract also establishes a joint Union-UC committee with the express purpose of finding mechanisms to fund a bridge funding program for ARs.
Access Needs	UC had unilateral control over accommodations for workers with disabilities.	ARs have the right to receive accommodations for access needs. UC must engage in an interactive process that allows the worker to determine what accommodations they need. UC must provide interim accommodations immediately without requiring medical documentation to do so.
Health & Safety	UC unilaterally set and enforced health and safety standards.	ARs have the right to work in a healthy and safe environment.
Dispute Resolution	No neutral, fair contractual dispute resolution process. UC Admin decided disputes.	All workplace disputes are resolvable by a fair and expedient grievance procedure and, ultimately, appeal to a neutral arbitrator.
Fighting for Immigrant and International Scholars’ Rights	No protection against UC’s delays in visa processing. No unified researcher voice in immigration and visa policy making.	ARs must be compensated for any losses suffered due to UC delays in work authorization processing. Through our union, ARs and Postdocs have fought to expand rights for J-, H- and F- visa holders.
Improving Research Funding and Policy	No unified researcher voice in state or national policy making.	Through our union, UC ARs and Postdocs have successfully lobbied for greater federal research funding.

NOTE: This document is a summary.
Please go to www.uaw5810.org for more information.
Email uaw5810@uaw5810.org with questions.