BARGAINING BEGINS FOR NEW NURSES’ CONTRACT

The University of California has begun negotiations with the California Nurses Association (CNA) on a new contract for Registered Nurses. Wages, benefits, staffing, paid educational leave entitlements and other topics will be included in these negotiations. The first bargaining sessions were held August 11-13 at UCLA Medical Center, and additional bargaining sessions are scheduled at each of the UC Medical Centers. The current contract expires on September 30, 2010.

Discussions covered several issues, including:

- **Wage Increases:** At the first bargaining session, UC proposed within-range step increases for nurses in each year of a four-year contract, beginning in 2011. These within-range step increases would be in addition to the July 2010 step increase and upcoming September 2010 two-percent (2%) range increase guaranteed in the current contract. CNA has proposed immediate wage increases of up to 13% or greater.

- **Educational Leave:** UC emphasized its support for paid educational leave for classes relevant to the practice of nursing and has proposed that, "to be approved, course content must be relevant to the practice of registered nursing and must be related to the scientific knowledge and/or technical skills required for the practice of nursing, or related to direct and/or indirect patient care.”

- **Staffing:** The University’s track record on nurse staffing includes high marks in national rankings, extremely low turnover and vacancy rates, and a remarkably low frequency of meal or rest breaks being reported as missed due to patient care needs (due to a variety of break relief plans at the Medical Centers). The University considers maintaining nurse staffing levels that are both safe and in full compliance with state law to be a top priority and relayed to the union that it will investigate any specific and supported claims about understaffing.

- **Union Business Leave:** The union has proposed several increases in paid time for nurses to conduct union business. CNA’s proposals could result in many thousands more paid hours for nurses for time spent on tasks other than caring for patients. The University remains focused on ensuring high quality patient care, rather than on funding union business with public sector money.

**UC GOALS FOR NEGOTIATIONS**

- Preserve UC’s ability to provide excellent, cost effective health care services to communities throughout California.
- Maintain UC’s ability to offer attractive total compensation packages in order to attract and retain talented, well-qualified nurses and in recognition of the vital role nurses play at UC.
- Provide a high-quality yet affordable health benefits package that addresses the needs of all UC employees.
- Maintain existing standards of excellent patient care through safe nurse staffing levels.
- Ensure the financial solvency of the UC Retirement Plan.
- Conclude negotiations swiftly through efficient, respectful, good faith negotiations.

To ensure nurses stay informed, we will provide additional updates following each bargaining session at www.UCNurses.com. If you have questions, please feel free to ask your supervisor or call Human Resources at 734-2718 throughout the negotiation process.