April 15, 2011

Nurse Bargaining: UC Offers Improved Wages and Benefits Assurances

Bargaining between UC and the California Nurses Association continued this week. The University offered enhanced wage and benefits proposals. Nurse staffing at the medical centers was also a key discussion topic.

Wages

- Under UC’s updated wage proposal, the average wage offer for UC nurses is now about 3.44% per year, totaling roughly a 10.67% wage increase over a three year contract. These proposed increases are in addition to salary increases of up to 10% that UC nurses have received since the beginning of 2009. UC’s latest offer provides nurses with wages that are slightly above their local markets, on average across the five major medical centers.

- This proposal includes an updated combination of step and range increases in each year of a three year agreement.
  - UCSF, UCI, UCLA and UCSD: Proposed increases for all nurses of 2.0% in each year of a three year contract, in addition to a July step increase each year.
  - UCD: Proposed increases for all nurses of 4.25% in 2011, 2.75% in 2012 and 2.25% in 2013, in addition to a July step increase each year.

Benefits

- UC discussed several new options with CNA for how UC and nurses would share health care cost increases and also maintain competitive medical benefits for nurses. These additional options included the following assurances:
  - UC will continue to contribute at least as much toward health insurance costs for nurses as it does in 2011;
  - UC nurses will not be asked to pay more for health insurance than faculty and other non-unionized employees;
  - Bargaining “triggers” regarding monthly premium increases for individual nurses in Pay Bands 2 and 3 in the HealthNet Blue & Gold plan, meaning that the UC could not increase nurses’ monthly premiums for 2012 and 2013 above the “trigger” amounts (which are only around 0.5% - or 50 cents per $100 – of nurses’ annual salaries) without first bargaining with CNA about the proposed premium increases.

- All of the options UC discussed with CNA retained the following key features:
  - UC will continue its progressive salary-based approach to health insurance whereby lower-paid employees pay lower monthly premiums than other employees.
  - UC will continue to shoulder the bulk of health insurance costs, paying on average over 80% of the cost of health care coverage, even taking into account large year-to-year cost increases by the health plans.
  - As a general rule, increases in monthly contributions for nurses – regardless of salary level – would be proportional and substantially less than 1% of nurses’ annual salaries. All employee contributions to health and welfare benefits are pre-tax.
  - Nurses enrolled in UC’s HealthNet Blue & Gold plan may take advantage of UC medical centers (but are not required to do so). This is a new feature specific to UC employees in the Blue & Gold plan and gives employees additional freedom of choice and access to world-class health services offered by UC medical centers.

Additional bargaining sessions have been scheduled for May 11, 12 and 13 in Oakland. We will keep nurses updated with regular updates and additional information available at www.UCNurses.com.