UC Reaches Tentative Agreement with AFSCME to Avert Union Strike

The University of California announced today (Feb. 27) that it has reached a tentative agreement with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees for a four-year contract covering more than 8,300 service workers. AFSCME agreed to call off its five-day strike scheduled for March 3-7 at UC campuses and medical centers.

"It is good to have this bargaining wrapped up with a deal on its way to our valued service employees," said Dwaine B. Duckett, UC's vice president of Human Resources. "We worked hard to bridge gaps on the issues. Ultimately both sides chose compromise over conflict."

AFSCME-represented service staff are expected to vote on the tentative contract soon.

Highlights of the agreement include:
- Wages: 19.5 percent wage increase over four years
  - 4.5 percent increase and a signing bonus, distributed 60 days after the contract is ratified
  - 3 percent across the board and 2 percent step increase in 2014, 2015 and 2016

- Health benefits: No rate increases in Kaiser and Health Net pay bands 1 and 2, to protect take-home pay for lower-salaried employees.

- Pension benefits: Per AFSCME's request, the same pension and retiree health care programs as CNA and UPTE, in which employees contribute 9 percent of pay. UC previously offered alternatives in which workers would contribute as little as 5 percent, which AFSCME rejected.

- Job security: Improved job protections from layoffs and use of outside contractors.

The university and AFSCME have been in contract negotiations for more than a year. UC has shown flexibility on key issues in order to reach today's tentative agreement. No other union has been offered the freeze on health care costs, which means that an AFSCME worker will continue to pay $11.78 a month for Kaiser or $35.21 for an entire family. That same AFSCME worker at the California State University system would pay $149 a month as an individual and $392 for a family.

AFSCME service members at UC — employees such as janitors, maintenance workers, gardeners and food service workers — currently earn an average annual salary of more than $37,000, in addition to benefits worth an additional 36.5 percent of salary.

UC and AFSCME negotiators are scheduled to return to bargaining today and Friday in an effort to reach an agreement for the union's nearly 13,000 patient care technical employees.

AFSCME's last two strikes in May and November cost the UC system more than $30 million to maintain critical services for patients.