Due to a lack of progress despite a year and a half of bargaining, the University of California has informed UPTE that it plans to pursue a state declaration of impasse in negotiations for a contract covering health care professionals’ staff.

The university has worked very hard to bargain in good faith since October 2011 and is deeply frustrated no agreement has been reached over more than 30 bargaining dates. It is the university’s hope that formally filing for an impasse declaration from the state Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) will pave the way for an impartial state mediator to help resolve differences.

UC believes it has been reasonable and collaborative throughout negotiations. It has offered a fair multi-year contract that includes wage increases, excellent benefits and good working conditions. At one point when faced with UPTE’s resistance to responsible pension reform, UC offered three different alternatives on the key issue of post-employment benefits in an effort to advance discussions. UPTE rejected them all.

UPTE has steadfastly resisted the need for pension reform that is designed to protect the long-term viability of the university’s retirement programs for current and future employees. Instead, UPTE seeks to have its members pay less for the same benefits than their colleagues — a position UC views as short-sighted and unfair to other employees.

Pursuing an impasse declaration is a move that UC takes very seriously and has given considerable thought to. UC asked UPTE during the most recent bargaining session April 15-16, 2013 to join the university in seeking state mediation; the union declined.

UC remains committed to working through issues with UPTE and is hopeful that a multi-year contract can be reached that fairly compensates employees for the valuable work they perform every day.

The university will provide an update on how PERB rules on the university’s impasse declaration.