



UAW 2865 Union Orientation Fall 2022



INTRO:

Welcome! And congratulations for enrolling at UC Merced as a graduate student. What is different? You are not only a student anymore, you will also be funded by the university. Most of you will be working as a graduate student researcher or a teaching assistant. And that means you are now a worker, employed by the UC. And that means you have rights! Which we will talk about in the following presentation.

Who are we? We are your colleagues - Fellow PhD students working at the University. I am Marie, this is Mark, and this is Carlos.

- **Introduce yourself.** Introduce presenters and other volunteers in the room: name, dept, title in union.
 - [If doing a department orientation, briefly talk about your research/what lab you work in, how many times you have TAed, and why you got involved in union]
- **If you have questions that come up**, please try to save them for the end, we will have plenty of time for questions.

What is a Labor Union?



“an organized **association of workers**, often in a trade or profession, formed to **protect** and further their **rights and interests**”

Slide 1: (This definition is an official dictionary definition)

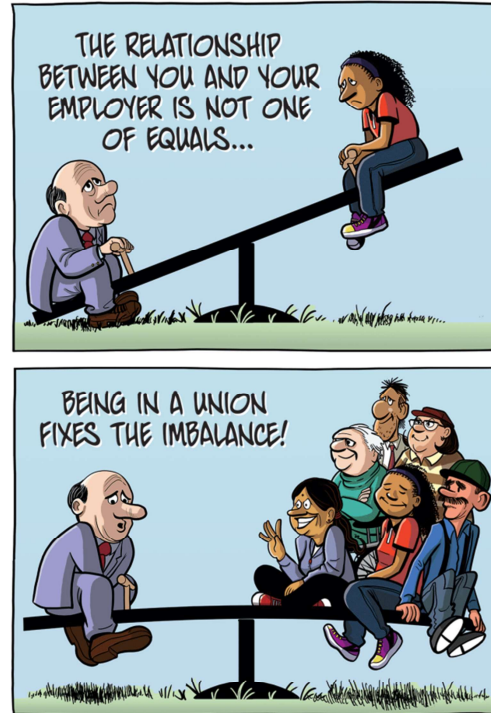
Unions are organizations of the working class, whose role is to achieve the common demands of their members to improve their lot in the workplace and increase protections and services available and provided to workers.

A key aspect of unions is that they start as defensive organizations, say against exploitation or mistreatment from the employer. With a strong support, they can become more active and win rights as well as represent the interests of the workforce.

A strong union is vital to protect and can improve workers' lives, win more leisure time and fight for higher living standards.

BUT: The union can only accomplish its goals, if it has the support of a large majority of its members. (SEE NEXT SLIDES CARTOON)

How A Union Works



Credit:
Barry Deutsch
July 2016

Slide 2: Since we just mentioned some of the goals a Union can have, it becomes fundamental to think about how does a union achieve this?

- **Credit here to cartoonist Barry Deutsch**
- **The relationship between workers and employers is not equal**
 - Your employer (the University) has the power to hire and fire you
 - On your own, it's nearly impossible to fight to raise your salary or improve your working conditions
- **Unions help to fix these imbalances by letting workers face their employer together**

How A Union Works



1. Collective Bargaining
2. Majority Participation
3. Democratic Representation

Slide 3: How Your Union Works

- **Our union functions by three key principles: collective bargaining, majority participation, and representation.**
- **Collective bargaining:**
 - Alone we are weak, together we are strong. (Insert Meme). This helps level the playing field and balance the imbalance in power dynamics inherent to our economic system.
 - In the 1990s after several of years without COLA's or raises, a majority of TA's, tutors, readers banded together and voted to form a public sector union and force the UC to the bargaining table to win a fair contract. Today, collective bargaining gives us the power necessary to win things like wage increases, premium-free healthcare during a pandemic, and protections against harassment and discrimination.
- **Majority participation:** These rights are guaranteed because a majority of student-workers sign up as dues-paying members during orientation, and because workers take action to defend their contract.
 - This past year, we have been in the process of negotiating a new contract with the UC. year we negotiate a new contract with UC starting in January. To protect the rights we have and win more, it's crucial for every one of us to be a member and participate actively in building power. (wording)
- **Democratic representation:** Union members democratically decide on bargaining priorities, vote to ratify the contract, and elect fellow coworkers to be bargaining representatives and officers.

Legal Framework in the US

- The right to form a labor union is a **human right recognized by the UN**
- Unions are **protected by Federal and State labor law**
- Every employee has the right to join a union and participate in Union activity, **regardless of their immigration or citizenship status**

US Bureau of Labor Statistics (Jan 20, 2022):

- **10.3% of workers unionized** (in 1983 it was 20.1%)
- Non-union worker earnings are **83%** of unionized workers

Example: If there is unfair labor practices (too many hours, bullying, not bargaining in good faith when negotiating the new contract) - the workers can vote on actions (like a strike). And CAN NOT BE FIRED as retaliation

Unions Have existed in the US for the majority of it's history and membership was 20% in 1983. Right now it is about half of that.

Unions have been the reason employee are not at will of their bosses, they have fought for rights like no pay-cuts, paid sick-days, vacation times, weekly hours and religious accommodation.

These rights are written down in a contract between the labor union and the employer. (NEXT SLIDE)

Unions are fighting to

- **Negotiate new contracts with:**
 - Fair Wages
 - Better Benefits
 - Good Workplace Environment, meaning fair treatment of you as an employee
- **Enforce our existing contract:**
 - Contract violations are serious issues that the employer is legally required to address
 - At Merced, the union assists with dozens of workplace grievances each year

(Our current contract ends this year and we are working on a new one)

What rights are in a contract:

- Wages, Benefits, Workplace Environment, Job Security, Non discrimination, respect, etc
- Examples when we need to enforce our contract: Issues with advisor, UC forgets to pay you during the summer, you are required to work more hours than your contract states etc...

GRIEVANCES EXAMPLES! UC Merced - what can we do specifically for

you:

Problems with Advisor: negotiate on behalf of/ support student

International Students: Need Time off for visa appointments - your TAing and your prof wont let you go - Union will step in and tell them to fuck off

You are getting pregnant and need time off, you are sick and need a semester off without losing your visa/lab position etc - your Union will make sure administration does not kick you out

Summer funding: You have been offered a position, but the position has been rescinded - your Union representatives will move heaven and earth, because you have a contractual right that offers will be honored

Ur welcome

Our Units



UAW 2865: ASEs (TAs, Tutors, & Graders) at UC campuses

UAW SRU: Student Researchers (GSRs & Fellowship Recipients)

- Recognized in 2021
- **Bargaining for the first time** this year!

All together, UAW represents more than 48,000 UC Academic Workers!

Slide 6: Our Units. At the University of California, graduate student workers are represented by two different Units:

- **UAW 2865**
 - Academic student employees, including TA's, Tutors, and graders have been represented by UAW 2865 since winning our first contract in 2000
- **UAW SRU**
 - GSRs & Fellowship recipients are now represented by the newly created UAW SRU, formed in 2021.

All together, UAW represents more than 48,000 UC Academic Workers!

**Know Your Rights:
Tuition, Fees &
Healthcare**



- Full remission of in-state tuition for ASEs at or above 25% FTE
- Full remission of student services fee, additional \$300 per year of campus fees for ASEs at or above 25%
- Full remission of UC SHIP healthcare premium for ASEs at or above 25%

Slide 7: Our contract: Tuition, Fees, Healthcare

- Your union contract ensures that if you are a graduate employee or graduate or undergraduate TA working at 25% appointment or more, you are guaranteed full in-state tuition remission, full student services fee remission, and another \$100 dollars per quarter/\$150 per semester in campus fee remission.
- Your contract also guarantees that the healthcare premiums of all salaried employees are fully covered

Know Your Rights:

Workload, Paid Training, Appointment Security



- Right to be paid for all work time
- All required trainings paid—including this one!
- Grievance process for overwork, underpay, or late paychecks
- All accepted job offers (even verbal or emailed) must be honored

Slide 8: Workload Protections / Paid Training

- **Workload Protections:** If you work more than your allotted hours, you can file a quick, expedited workload grievance and win back-pay or a change in appointment percentage or work duties to resolve the issue.
 - Log all the hours related to your work - our union can provide a helpful workload grid for salaried ASE's so you can track your hours.
- *For graduate and undergraduate tutors and peer learning facilitators, you also have the right to be paid for any sessions that get cancelled due to reasons outside of your control, or if your student doesn't show up. Before we had a contract, missed sessions often meant not getting paid.*
- **Appointment Security:** In our contract, we have appointment security protections in case classes get cancelled or enrollment goes down. During the academic year, once you've accepted a position, even verbally or by email, you are guaranteed that position.



Know Your Rights: Workplace Equity

- Survivor-centered protections against harassment & discrimination
- Accommodations for workers with disabilities
- All-gender restrooms
- Paid parental leaves & childcare reimbursement
- Paid leaves for immigration & visa appointments

Slide 9: Equity in the workplace:

- Through collective bargaining, we have also won strong equity measures in our contract that help make our workplace safer and more accessible.
- If you face any harassment or discrimination in your workplace, you have access to a **survivor-centered union grievance process** with protections that go far above and beyond the Title Nine process.
 - The grievance process we won includes **clear timelines**, immediate **interim measures**, and **remedies** that ensure any worker experiencing harassment will be safe and have access to employment, academic advancement, choice and dignity.
- Additionally, **workers with disabilities have access to an interactive process** that allows them a say in what their accommodations look like.
- Our union was the first in the country to demand access to all-gender restrooms as part of workers' rights.
- Workers have paid parental leaves and a childcare reimbursement program.
- In our most recent contract, we also won paid time off for workers to deal with visa or immigration hearings and appointments
- **We have all of these rights because a majority of our co-workers signed up as members of their union and fought for them to be in our contract.**

Filing a Grievance

1. Reach out to your Union Reps:
merced@uaw2865.org
1. Step 1 Meeting:
Optional mediation with all parties involved
1. Step 2 Meeting:
With Labor Relations, formal complaint filed with union rep assistance, stating what contract articles have been violated
1. Arbitration:
Independent third party acts as judge

Slide 10: Filing a grievance

If you ever encounter a problem during your time at the UC:

- Reach out to your Union representatives
- They will help you file a formal complaint, known as a grievance, against the university, citing specific violations of the Union contracts
- Your union reps will help argue your case on your behalf with University representatives at every step of the formal dispute resolution process

We're part of a movement

Academic workers are organized with UAW at Harvard, Columbia, University of Washington, NYU, and more!



Slide 11: We're part of a movement:

- Your union is part of a larger movement of over 30 academic workers' unions across the country. Over 80,000 academic workers are organized with UAW, including at Columbia, Harvard, University of Washington, and NYU, with more joining every day.
- Being part of a large union means we have a stronger voice in state and national politics, so together we've collectively advocated for:
 - Protecting international student-workers by winning better visa policies and extended OPT. Our International Students Committee has been leading the national fight against visa restrictions and ICE rules.
 - Fighting for more funding for higher education and research.
 - Making higher education more inclusive and equitable.

At this point, I'm going to turn it over to [partner's name] to talk in more detail about the rights and protections we have through our contract.

Historic Wins by ASEs

TAs and RAs across UC begin organizing and **vote to join UAW**

ASEs win union recognition after **⅔ of ASEs statewide go on strike**

ASEs improve **leaves** and **childcare subsidies** when a supermajority vote to authorize a strike

ASEs win groundbreaking **protections from harassment & discrimination**

ASEs at UCSC take action for a **Cost of Living Adjustment** and highlight the issue of rent burden across the state

ASEs, SRs, Postdocs, and ARs are bargaining **right now!**

What we win is up to us.

1980s

1998

2006

2018

2020

2022

Slide 12: Historic Wins by ASEs

- Getting to where we are now took the collective action of tens of thousands of union members.
- In the 1980s, student-workers voted to form a union with UAW in order to have a say over our working conditions. We won union recognition after ⅔ of all ASEs across the state went on strike in 1998.
- ASEs also won improved rights for parenting workers, like childcare subsidies, after a successful strike vote in 2006.
- In 2018, thousands of ASEs fought for groundbreaking protections from harassment and discrimination.
- Now we're back at the bargaining table, and it's an exciting time to be bargaining for a couple of reasons:
 - As we mentioned earlier, we have more strength in numbers than ever, bargaining as 48,000 unionized academic workers at UC.
 - In addition, the California state budget has also allocated an additional \$200 million in base funding to the University of California for next year, so it's an opportunity to win things like raises that match the cost-of-living and guaranteed year-round funding.

We're fighting for new contracts

- Winning a strong contract depends on **all of us** participating
- Bargaining has been ongoing since January
- Our demands are democratically chosen and worked on by representatives from across the UC system



Slide 13: We bargain this year!

- We're currently bargaining with the UC
- Winning a strong contract this year will depend on all of us participating and taking collective action together.
- Our demands have been shaped democratically, and we will work together to build the unity and power to force the University to make concessions.

Contract Fight: Workload, Paid Training, Appointment Security



What are we fighting for?

- **Elimination of all fees**
- **Multi-year and year-long funding guarantees**, including summer funding
- Departmental **class size caps**, tailored to course requirements
- **Clear job postings** for ASE positions to ensure transparent hiring process*
- Better appointment notification and more transparent work expectations

Slide 11: Fees, Workload Protections, Paid Training, Appointment Security

- We want to eliminate all campus student fees. We should not have to pay the university to work here
- We also want to build on several of our past wins, and demand multi-year and year-long funding guarantees, including summer funding, so that workers aren't scrambling to find employment on a term-by-term basis.
- We're asking for a better system for finding out about ASE employment opportunities to ensure transparency in hiring.
- UC enrollment has dramatically risen over the years, and so have class sizes; we're demanding class size caps to ensure reasonable workloads for ourselves and quality education for our students.
- **It's going to take a lot of power to win these demands, and it's only going to be possible if we have strength in numbers!**



Contract Fight: Equity in the Workplace

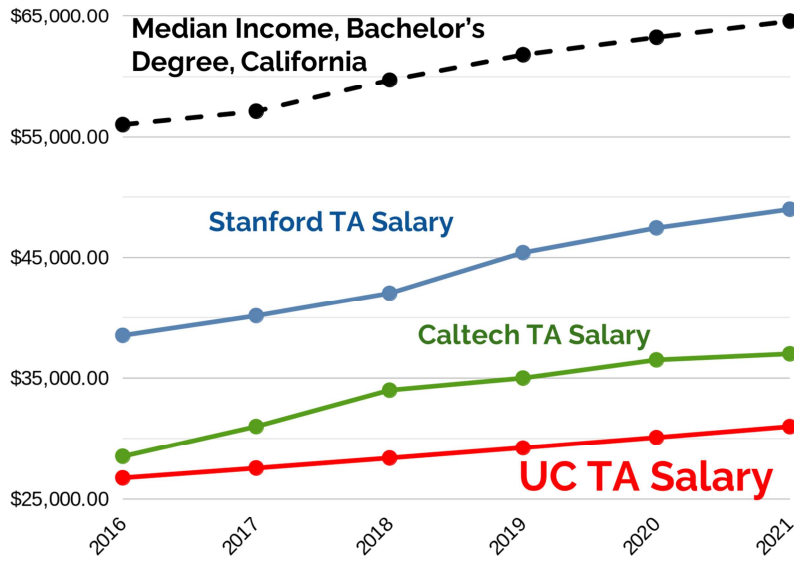
What are we bargaining for?

- More **flexible timelines** for workers to file grievances
- **Expanded paid leave periods**
- **Expanded protections against workplace bullying and harassment**
- **Increased childcare subsidies and access to affordable childcare** for dependents

Slide 12: Equity in the Workplace

- We're demanding anti-bullying protections, longer paid parental leaves, and longer timelines for using the grievance process in cases of harassment and discrimination
- We're also demanding full coverage of UC-affiliated childcare costs and increases of up to \$6000 per quarter or \$9000 per semester in childcare reimbursements
- **The only way we can win these improvements is if everyone continues to contribute to our collective strength by joining as dues-paying members.**

Contract Fight: Wages & Cost of Living



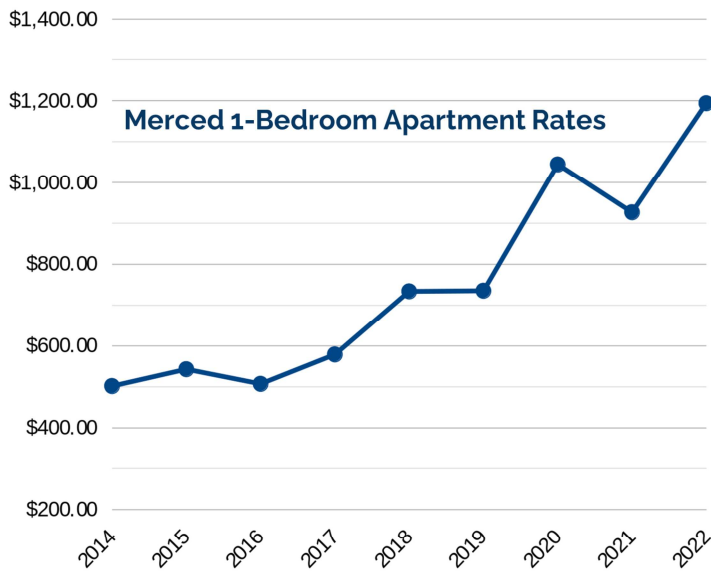
Sources: ACS 5Y Survey, Stanford University, California Institute of Technology, UC Office of the President

- UC Wages lag far behind peer institutions
- Meanwhile, costs of living continue to skyrocket across the state, with **California rents at all-time highs**
- Our new contract proposal will raise appointments **\$54,000**, enough to **lift all workers out of rent burden**

Slide 14: Wages and Cost of Living

- In this chart you can see a comparison between our wages and other institutions. The line you see at the top are the median wages earned by a person living in California with a Bachelor's degree. We're the line at the bottom!
- UC wages lag far behind other in state institutions like Caltech (over \$37,000 for the coming year) and Stanford (over \$50,000)
- The cost of living continue to skyrocket across the state, and California rents are now at all-time highs
- Our new contract proposal will raise appointments to \$54,000, enough to lift all workers out of rent burden and provide us with a decent standard of living

...but what about Merced?



Sources: Zumper historical listings data, Zillow rent index

- Merced housing costs continue to rise; Current 1 Bedroom Apartment rental rates are nearly **\$1200**, which represent **over 45%** of a graduate worker's wages, well beyond Federal Rent Burden
- UCM has **no meaningful supply** of University graduate housing
- Off-campus living poses major transportation issues: our new contract will fight for **improved bus frequency and transportation infrastructure**

Slide 15: Merced is not cheap

- You may have heard that Merced is cheap to live in. Unfortunately, we can see here that this isn't true.
- Merced housing costs continue to rise, with 1 Bedroom rental rates exceeding \$1200. This represents over 45% of a graduate worker's wages, well beyond the federal definition of rent burden, which considers anything about 30% to be excessive
- UCM has no meaningful supply of University graduate housing, which means no other options are available for relief
- Off-campus living poses major transportation issues: our new contract will fight for improved bus frequency and transportation infrastructure

Take a moment to join your coworkers as a dues-paying member!



- **A supermajority of graduate workers** join every year
- **Fill out a card even** if you joined via your hiring paperwork
 - Please include as much information as you can
 - Signing up multiple times **does not** mean multiple charges
- Also, please sign a UAW2865 card even if you are not TA-ing this semester!

Slide 20: Join your coworkers as a member

Carlos -- someone should talk about why paying dues are an important part of a union (i.e. pooling our resources together) and that because UC under-pays us so much to many people that is too much. Let's go out and win our new salaries!

- The only way we will have the power to defend the rights we have and win more at the bargaining table this year is if the majority of workers keep choosing to support our union by becoming members during orientations.
- "Take the next five minutes to fill out the membership card now and become a member. Fill one out even if you think you've already joined as a member before."
- You'll also see a part of the card called "VCAP"; this is if you'd like to make an additional monthly contribution to our union's political fund, which we use to support the pro-education, pro-labor politicians and causes we believe in. This is one of the ways we as workers fight for things like better visa policies at the state and federal level.
- To contribute to VCAP, choose the amount you want, then enter just the last four digits of your social security number, then click to sign again.

Collective bargaining, collective resources

1. We pay dues while working in unit
 - One-time \$10 initiation fee +
 - 1.44% of gross monthly pay as TA, reader, or tutor

1. Dues cover day-to-day costs

WHERE YOUR DUES GO:

28%

Local Union Funds

Local union funds cover day-to-day costs and the organizing staff essential to building membership and enforcing contractual and other rights.

25.5%

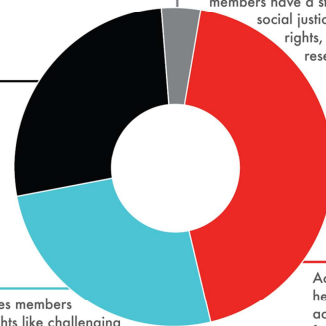
International Union Funds

Being part of a larger union gives members the power to pursue broader fights like challenging the Trump travel bans and ICE restrictions on visa policy. International funds help build the movement of unionized workers across higher education and pay for bargaining expertise and legal help.

2.5%

Community Action Program (CAP)

With 80,000 UAW academic workers across the US, members have a strong local and national voice on social justice issues like international worker rights, racial and gender equity, federal research funding and more.



44%

Strike and Defense Fund

Access to a large strike fund helps keep employers like UC accountable to bargain in good faith toward fair agreements.

Slide 19: Collective Bargaining, Collective Resources

- Our union is of, by, and for us, Academic Student Employees. Because our union is entirely independent, there is no outside funding--member dues cover all of the day-to-day costs of having a strong union.
- All members contribute a one-time \$10 initiation fee and 1.44% of our gross monthly pay, which are deducted automatically only while working as a TA, Tutor, or Reader. [Graduate Student Researchers and grad students on fellowship can join and vote for union officers, but we don't pay dues unless we're working as TAs, Readers, or Tutors.]
- **What do our dues do?** Union resources are broken down in the following ways:
 - One portion is the **Local Fund**, which pays for the day-to-day operations of our union, including organizing staff, who train members to organize and build our collective strength.
 - Another portion goes to the **Strike and Defense Fund**, which adds to our bargaining power by ensuring that we would be able to support ourselves if we voted and decided to strike.
 - Another portion is the **International Fund**, which provides bargaining expertise and legal support, and helps other workers organize unions. For example, our dues helped Postdocs at the UC form a union, and are supporting the current campaign to help Student Researchers at UC form a union.

Next Steps

1. **Join the union** as a full member
2. **Stay informed:** Attend weekly **Organizing Committee (OC)** meetings (Thursdays @ 1pm) for the latest information on bargaining and organizing
3. **Get Involved:** Become a **lab** and/or **department leader!**
4. **Be Prepared:** The UC won't give us what we want without a fight—we all need to be ready to take action



Slide 18: Next Steps

- So how do we win these historic demands?
- Most importantly: Join the union as a full member!
- **Stay informed** by attending our weekly meetings to keep updated about our local organizing strategy and planning. Pay attention to union emails to keep updated with the latest news from the bargaining table
- **Get involved!** As we have said, our union is run by us, the members! In the sign-in sheet, you can indicate if you'd like to learn how to be a cohort or lab leader, and you can also check which committees you're interested in joining.
- Finally, we all need to **be prepared**. Big demands are going to require a big fight, and we all need to be ready take direct action and, if necessary withhold our labor

Question and Answer Session

To reach out -> email: merced@uaw2865.org

Find out about some of the UC Merced leaders!

<https://uaw2865.org/about-our-union/leadership/>



- Please take a few minutes left to sign-in so we can track and make sure you attended the entire orientation. That way we won't send you emails saying you missed it and have to attend another one.
- Have a nice closing to re-motivate people and remind them of the importance continued engagement and participation:
 - Would just like to re-state the importance of everyone supporting and participating this semester. We won't be able to move the needle on these things unless most people are willing to engage.
 - We really have a unique chance to change our own lives and the lives of the people who'll come after us.
 - Ultimately, our goals isn't to fight or yell at admin, our goals is to make UC a better place for graduate students to work, live and thrive.
 - Thank you for your time.
- If you have any questions right now, we're happy to answer those! Also, please feel free to come and talk to us after as well. We'd be happy to discuss anything.