

## Talking Points for Library Bargaining 10/29/08

The following points (not necessarily in order of importance) are among those important to make in references to fall 2008 Librarian bargaining:

1) **UC salaries lag the market.** Salaries for UC librarians are significantly below market salaries for professional librarians in California. Currently UC librarians make thousands of dollars a year less than CSU (California State University) librarians for comparable positions.

- At every level, UC librarians are 15% behind their counterparts at CSUs,
- It currently would take more than a decade of employment for a UC librarian to make as much as the starting salary for a professional librarian at CSU hired right after completion of his or her library degree
- UC Librarian salaries also lag far behind those of many California community college librarians and public librarians.

2) **Recruitment and Retention Problems.** Unreasonably low salaries for librarians at UC hurts not only the librarians and their families – since they have now fallen far behind the cost of living in pay increases over the past ten years and many have begun moonlighting with second jobs—but the University of California as an institution is also damaged by low salaries. Low salaries for UC librarians have resulted in serious recruitment and retention problems on virtually every UC campus.

- There are far too many failed searches, which is what happens when the candidates selected decline the appointment offered when they discover how low the salary actually is compared with the cost of living in California.
- There are far too many highly trained and skilled UC librarians who are leaving for better paying library jobs, including jobs at CSUs and California community colleges
- The result of the retention and recruitment problems is an overabundance of vacancies and heightened turnover in virtually every UC library. This puts unfair workload burdens on the librarians who remain.

3) **Underfunding of Libraries.** In general, most UC campuses under-fund their libraries and their librarians.

- UC libraries have been steadily falling in their standing compared to other major research libraries over the past ten years. For example, UC Davis has fallen from 35<sup>th</sup> to 60<sup>th</sup> in the Association of Research Libraries rankings.
- While the number of students (and administrators) and the size of UC budgets have grown steadily over the past decade, the library budgets for both library staff and materials have fallen relative to the number of new UC students and faculty.

- A system of low-salaries and high turnover may work well in some casual labor markets (Walmart), but it is a “penny wise and pound foolish” strategy for running an institution of higher learning that depends upon highly skilled and expensively trained professional librarians. The money saved with lower wages ends up being wasted on constant retraining, dislocation and declining service in departments with high vacancy rates, and under-productivity resulting from serious morale problems in the libraries at UC.

4) **UC has the resources to support librarians but chooses not to do so.** Despite the current melt-down in global financial markets, UC’s investment portfolio and other assets continue to be relatively stable.

- Official fact-finding studies done in 2005 and 2007 for other employee unions found that UC had more than enough money to fully fund employee demands for increased compensation, but that the University chose to spend its resources on other priorities than employees and educational materials (mostly on new buildings).
- Unrestricted funds at UC have grown at an exponential rate over the past ten years. In its 2006-07 audited financial statement, UC reports accumulated unrestricted net assets of 6.5 **billion** dollars. UC can access these funds for any purpose at any time.
- Despite the current financial problems in world markets, and since the onset of the U.S. banking crisis, UC has signed decent new contracts with hospital workers and University police, has funded substantial “equity” increases for attorneys who work for UC, and has continued to offer special golden parachutes to retiring top UC executives. It is not a question of the resources necessary to fund decent library salary increases, but of UC’s priorities.

5) **Librarians are more critical than ever in a new information age.** Despite the misguided view held by some that the internet has replaced or will soon replace libraries as the key component of higher education research, people forget that it is librarians, and particularly UC librarians, who are responsible for getting much of the data one finds on the web onto the web. UC librarians play a key role in helping students, faculty, staff, and the general public access information from databases and other web sources.

6.) **Professional development for UC librarians must be adequately supported.** Librarians are also bargaining over the level of professional development funds. These funds are critically important to librarians at UC having access to conferences, travel, publications, and other resources that allow them to stay on the cutting edge of their fields.

- Funding is currently at the 2006 level and this is insufficient. Many UC librarians are forced to pay out of their own pockets to maintain and improve their professional expertise, which adds insult to the injury of low salaries.
- UC librarians regularly forgo opportunities for professional development because they cannot count on UC support.

- Funding for professional development varies widely from campus to campus, but a reasonable minimum needs to be established in the contract so that UC libraries and the campuses they serve do not fall further behind in their ability to keep up with the explosion in information resources.

7.) **UC Librarians are ready to fight for fair treatment.** Librarians are often stereotyped as shy, retiring, and non-confrontational. However, at UC the crisis in low salaries for librarians and all of the workload, morale, and other issues that flow from low salaries have resulted in a new level of militancy among professional librarians. For the first time ever, in large numbers, librarians are beginning to come to union meetings, wear union buttons and t-shirts to work, gather petitions and pass out leaflets about their pay and working conditions, join their brothers and sisters from other unions at UC in solidarity actions, demonstrations, and other activities which express their growing frustration with the lack of responsiveness on the part of the UC administration.

Finally, as the new President of UC is quoted as having said at a meeting earlier in October, “I can imagine a university without labs, but not without a first-rate library.”