



TEACHING ASSISTANTS

Graduate students serving as teaching assistants play an important role in the undergraduate instructional program of the University of California. As TAs, they work in close partnership with faculty members in apprenticeships that are an integral part of graduate education and a primary form of student financial support.

UC values the contributions of teaching assistants and demonstrates its concern for their well-being by providing highly competitive compensation. The university is committed to fostering an open dialogue with TAs about issues of concern to them, and UC will work diligently to address areas that need improvement.

COLLECTIVE BARGAINING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The state Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA) sets out who is and is not eligible for collective bargaining in public higher education in California. HEERA charges the state Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) with resolving disputes over collective bargaining status, subject to review by the courts.

In 1992, in a case originating at the Berkeley campus, a state appellate court ruled that teaching assistants are not eligible for collective bargaining under HEERA. The court found that bargaining would interfere with the educational process, and the California Supreme Court declined to review the appellate decision. **UC has abided by the decision of the courts.**

Now, the United Auto Workers (UAW) and its campus affiliates are indicating that teaching assistants will strike in order to obtain voluntary university recognition for purposes of collective bargaining. **UC continues to believe that the legal process established by state law is a more productive means of resolving these disagreements.**

TEACHING ASSISTANTS, READERS AND TUTORS

During the past year, UC has re-examined the issue of which graduate students are employees, as defined by HEERA, and therefore eligible for collective bargaining. To do so, UC looked at the link between the services that graduate students provide and their educational goals. The university also considered the nature of the relationship between TAs and faculty members.

Consistent with the 1992 court decision and with the university's educational interests, UC's policy is not to bargain with advanced-degree students who perform the duties of a teaching assistant, teaching associate or teaching fellow. However, the university will recognize readers and tutors as employees eligible for collective bargaining, consistent with a recent PERB decision at the San Diego campus.

- **Teaching assistants, teaching associates and teaching fellows (TAs)** are graduate students working toward an advanced degree who are given duties in undergraduate courses that may include conducting discussion or laboratory sections, grading students' work, and providing students with individual help in the subject. **UC believes that TAs are students first and foremost, rather than employees, because their TA duties are an integral part of their own graduate education. TAs are engaged in learning how to teach, working closely with faculty mentors. This mentoring relationship with faculty members is a unique characteristic of the graduate academic experience and is quite distinct from the typical employer-employee relationship. Collective bargaining, the university believes, would intrude upon this important relationship and interfere with academic decision making.**

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Teaching assistants —continued

- **Readers and tutors**, many of whom are undergraduates, provide more limited services. Readers are assigned duties that generally include grading students' papers and examinations. Tutors provide assistance to individual students or small groups of students who need additional help in a subject. While readers and tutors derive some educational benefit from these duties, their positions are a form of employment more than a part of the student's own academic program. Also, the relationships of readers and tutors with their supervisors are less characterized by educational mentorship than is the case for TAs. Therefore, UC will recognize the eligibility of readers and tutors for collective bargaining if and when they select a union, according to state law, to be their exclusive representative.

There are approximately 6,700 TAs in the UC system. There are approximately 2,300 readers and tutors on UC campuses. The campus-by-campus breakdown, as of spring 1998, is as follows:

	Teaching assistants	Readers and tutors		Teaching assistants	Readers and tutors
Berkeley	1,508	754	San Diego	724	480
Davis	844	252	San Francisco	17	22
Irvine	792	183	Santa Barbara	784	130
Los Angeles	1,225	268	Santa Cruz	375	172
Riverside	427	49			

COMPETITIVE COMPENSATION FOR TAs AT UC

TA appointments are part of an overall support package provided to assist graduate students financially and minimize their need to pursue non-academic outside employment that would detract from their studies.

Teaching assistants typically have appointments of about 20 hours per week (50 percent) for nine months of the year. Those with appointments of 25 percent or greater receive partial university reimbursement of student fees and full reimbursement of health insurance premiums.

A 1997-98 independent survey of more than 25 top public research institutions indicates that compensation of TAs at UC campuses is highly competitive – particularly when compared to institutions with unionized TAs.

Compensation (annual salary minus student fees) averages \$11,463 for resident TAs at UC who have a typical half-time appointment. **Average TA compensation levels for California residents at the eight general UC campuses occupied eight of the top nine slots in the survey.** Six of the comparison institutions have collective bargaining for TAs, and compensation at all six institutions was lower than at any UC campus.

UC'S COMMITMENT TO STUDENTS

With or without collective bargaining, UC will continue to recognize the valuable contributions that graduate students make in the academic enterprise of the university. UC will continue to encourage open discussion of issues that are a source of concern to teaching assistants.

UC also will uphold its commitments to the thousands of undergraduates throughout the state who have entrusted the university with their education. UC will make every effort to maintain undergraduate instruction, regardless of any strike activity, so that students may receive their grades and continue to make progress toward their degrees in a timely fashion.