

# *Will the University of California force its clerical employees to strike?*

**Dear Chancellor Orbach and Regent S. Sue Johnson:**

We are writing you because our union begins a second round of mediation with UC negotiators on November 2 and we respectfully request that you pick up a phone and ask President Atkinson to bring these negotiations to a fair and reasonable conclusion in this session.

As you know, the Coalition of University Employees is the representative of 18,000 clerical employees in the UC system; we are a grass-roots union with no national affiliation, run by UC staff during our off hours. We have been working for over two years to negotiate a fair contract with the University.

Don't get us wrong – we are proud of our work at the University. But pride won't feed our families or pay our rent. Our salaries are far behind the going rate for the jobs we perform. UC's own figures show that clerical employees earn an average of 21% less than employees doing comparable jobs elsewhere!

This is why we were so distressed to hear of UC's last wage proposal. UC is currently proposing that we either give up our merit increases for one year, or trade away some portion of our COLAs in order to maintain the merit increases that we have already earned. This is unacceptable.

CUE is asking for a raise of 11% over two years, and two new steps at the top of each pay range; this makes a good start toward addressing salary inequities and will help employees who are "topped out" and may not have seen a merit-based raise in over a decade. (As you know, clerical employees who were here in the 90s took a salary cut when UC faced budget difficulties. The money that was cut has never been restored to our salaries.)

In hearings before the state legislature and in its publications, the University has declared its commitment to achieving pay equity for staff and improving relations with employee unions. Yet CUE, like other UC unions, has had to spend more than two years bargaining for a first contract. This kind of behavior is what caused one member of the California State Assembly to describe UC as "the worst public employer in the state."

CUE has a dozen charges against the University under review with the State of California Public Employment Relations Board (PERB). On October 20, 2000, in case no. SF-CE-563-H, PERB found that the Regents of the University of California "engaged in unfair practices in violation of California Government Code section 3571." If the University has any real intention of improving employee relations, it should start by obeying our state's employment laws.

We call on you, as leaders of a world-class university, to exercise that leadership on behalf of your staff. Contact UC President Richard Atkinson today to urge him to bring bargaining with CUE to a swift and satisfactory conclusion.

Sincerely,

The Clerical Employees at UCR

**CUE**

***Coalition of University Employees***

5225 Canyon Crest Drive #71-428  
Riverside, CA 92507  
909.485.5185  
www.cueunion.org