

Mike Rotkin
VP for Organizing
Quarterly Work Report for Period Ending October 2011

Hours Worked:

August 68 hours
September 69 hours
October 101 (includes estimate for last week)

My Activities:

Bargaining—

The majority of my work during this period has been focused on bargaining contracts for the Librarians and Lecturers. I am the Chief Negotiator for the Librarians (Unit 17) at UC. The work there includes both direct bargaining time, which has been fairly extensive during the past three months, but even more time spent preparing for bargaining. This work involves both information gathering from various University sources and informal lobbying behind the scenes, but probably more importantly, organizing and mobilizing work with Librarians on the campuses to both build a common perspective on our bargaining situation and response and to work with the Librarian Bargaining Committee and the Field Reps to develop activities on each of the campuses in support of bargaining. I wrote all of the regular bargaining updates and several articles for union publications, spoke at several campus and community events about our bargaining issues, developed media contacts and did several interviews, and developed several strategy proposals, which ultimately became the basis for the unprecedented activism on the part of the Librarians on almost every campus – activism which in the end was probably the decisive factor in our getting a contract with a 3% salary increase, retroactive merit increases, and a recognition by the University that we still have a serious Librarian salary problem at UC. It is affecting recruitment and retention and I want to into the next bargaining with clearer evidence of such problems to present to the UC Administration.

I was also a member of the Lecturer (Unit 18) Bargaining Team and in addition to attending all but one of the bargaining sessions, I spent a significant amount of time preparing for bargaining sessions in studying various proposals and, more importantly, checking with lecturers on several campuses about their views on where the bargaining was going and bringing those views to the bargaining process.

A great deal of this work is done on email and the phone, including periodic conference calls with staff and with the Librarian Bargaining Committee because we are such a spread-out union in California. I also responded to calls from individual librarians from several campuses each week about the progress of bargaining.

Based on the high percentage voting to approve both of our tentative agreements, I think it fair to say both teams did a good job of representing our members. In the case of the Librarians, I worked hard throughout the bargaining process to not only secure an acceptable settlement with respect to our salary and related issues, but to prepare us for bargaining again next year when the entire contract (MOU) will be open for negotiation.

Executive Board Work –

Most of my work here was in preparing for the quarterly E-Board and Council meetings. We have had extensive email traffic and phone calls among the E-Board, staff, local leaders, and others concerning a large number of topics. We also had several E-Board conference calls in addition during this period to resolve issues as they arose. I spent a small but important amount of time trying to resolve communication issues among staff and between staff and the E-Board.

Campus Work—

I continue to spend a significant amount of time working to resolve Unit 18 contractual issues at UCSC and in consultation with field staff on other campuses. Often these are informal resolutions where the contract, unfortunately, does not provide clear resolutions for what appear to our members as abuses of one kind of another. My informal contacts with campus administrators over many years allows me a certain level of success in resolving problems informally. I also have been working on numerous grievances, usually related to layoff issues. Again, at least at UCSC, these are often resolved informally before formal grievance hearings or between step one and two of the grievance process. A great deal of time is spent just talking with individual members about various complaints and grievances. There continue to be serious discussions about resolving some of the workload issues in the writing, core course, and language programs. Fortunately, we now have a new grievance officer at UCSC who is quickly coming up to speed and will soon be able to take over most if not all of the local grievances.

I also have worked, as a local President, to continue to improve our recruitment of new members, the effectiveness of our Collective leadership group, and generally to build an increased sense of solidarity among campus lecturers and librarians and among the various campus unions that belong to our campus University Labor United group. We are so fortunate to have Allison Guevara as our field rep because she has allowed me to reduce some of this work while I have been so busy with the bargaining work for the two units whom we represent. I also am playing an active role in a new organization that includes representatives from all of the colleges and universities in the Monterey Bay area. I wrote a draft manifesto for that group called. We are the 99%.

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What's Next?

Unit 17 starts the process again in November, (although not at the table until later next the spring) and the two parties have agreed to try and do a lot of informal work early in the bargaining process to try and address the serious gap between salaries for UC Librarians and Librarians at CSU and the California community colleges. A great deal of this work will be conceptual in trying to resolve the issue of the barrier step at UCLA and elsewhere and the need for larger increases at the bottom and middle of the Librarian scale but the need to find a way to do that which does not increase compression of the lower salaries into the Librarian series. I also will be working to develop materials demonstrating that the work of Librarians at CSU is not significantly different than that at UC – a point that the Administration has yet to concede. I hope, with the direct support of the Librarian Bargaining Committee, to develop workable proposals to address these issues early on and then work with some of the University Administration to see if we can get agreement to implement the solutions we develop.

I also hope that with at least some of the bargaining work at least reduced, that I will be able to focus some more energy on helping all of our campuses increase their recruitment of Fee Payers into the union. I know this is difficult work, but we have had some successes at UCSC that I think can be exported to other campuses. All of the campuses have been doing better at this lately, but we still have a long way to go. Frankly, it is embarrassing that we do not formally have membership from a majority of the people whom we represent. I certainly understand how difficult it is to recruit new members when we have so many part-timers, so much turnover among the lecturers, such limited staff resources, and, perhaps most importantly, such bad data from our employer about the unit members among whom we are trying to recruit. Nonetheless, I think we can make some significant headway in getting fee-payers to join the union and I am going to work with the Field Staff to beef up (not a Santa Cruz term I must say) our efforts in this area. Depending on the availability of funds, I intend to do a lot of organizing work on campuses other than UCSC this coming winter and spring quarters.