

Our University

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESIDENT FOR THE UC COMMUNITY



February 2010



By Anne Wolf

On location and behind the scenes, UC faculty and staff have been responding to the devastating earthquake in Haiti.

Emergency department doctors from UC San Diego Medical Center, anesthesiologists and infectious disease doctors from UC San Francisco, and numerous others have been on the ground in Haiti, responding to the enormous medical and human need. The latest is a group of UCLA Health System nurses and an anesthesiologist; they left February 14 for a two-week assignment on the USNS Comfort, the Navy's floating hospital.

Back on the UC campuses, faculty and staff are filling in – on the job and in the classroom – for their volunteering colleagues. They've also been gathering medical supplies, donating vacation time and coming up with other creative ways to help the Haitian people and support the relief effort.

"We could never, ever go without the support of our colleagues," said Colleen Buono, an emergency department doctor at UC San Diego Medical Center. She and fellow doctors Sean-Xavier Neath and Chris Sloane recently returned from a two-week stint in Port-au-Prince. "I called on our pharmacy team and materials management department to help with supplies," she said. On very short notice, Buono and her team had more than 500 pounds of medical supplies to take with them.

At UCLA Health System, more than 50 employees responded almost immediately to an email call for volunteers to travel to Haiti. The medical center is sending three teams of medical personnel for two weeks each to help staff the USNS Comfort. "We're in the business of putting people back together, said Dr. David Feinberg, CEO of the UCLA Hospital System. "Whether we do it here in Los Angeles or across the world, we know how to heal people and we should help."

UCLA is working with the U.S. military in organizing its response. "We're trying to match our available staff with the Navy's needs," said Shannon O'Kelley, associate director of operations for clinical services and organizer of the Haiti mission. "We've had to be really, really flexible."

The medical center staff who organized the project have been amazing, Feinberg said.

"At the send-off for our first team, our staff had UCLA hats and sweatshirts for everyone, satellite phones, laptops with instructions. Our child-life staff brought two young patients who delivered valentines and Barbie backpacks filled with toys for the kids in Haiti. It amazes me!"

The organizers also provided an orientation on Haitian culture so that the volunteers would know what to expect.

UC San Diego's Buono, who has worked on several other disaster response teams including Hurricane Katrina, would tell them "Nothing holds a candle to the devastation in Haiti."

She and her team treated more than 250 patients a day, many with compound fractures, head injuries and other serious medical problems. The situation was more difficult because they frequently worked without electricity, water and advanced medical equipment.

"The Haitian people are so stoic," Buono said. "They tolerated an amazing amount of pain, often for a week or more."

Among Buono's patients was a five-year-old boy found in the rubble eight days after the earthquake. Amazingly, he had no broken bones or other major injuries. By the time Buono left Haiti, he was doing well.

"I feel lucky that I could go, and it's an experience I will seek out again," Buono said. "But it's so important to acknowledge those who made it possible."

For more about UC's response to Haiti, see UC Haiti Relief on Facebook or view:

UC Irvine team helps Haitians find families

(http://www.uci.edu/features/2010/02/feature_chenli_100208.php)

UCLA Operation Haiti video

(<http://www.uclahealth.org/body.cfm?id=561&action=detail&ref=1346>)

UCSD doctors in Haiti (http://ucsdnews.ucsd.edu/thisweek/2010/02/08_HelpingHaiti.asp)

UCSF anesthesiologists return from Haiti (<http://today.ucsf.edu/stories/ucsf-doctors-return-from-medical-mission-treating-haitian-earthquake-survivor/>)

Berkeley architecture prof heads to Haiti

(http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2010/02/16_comerio.shtml)

Irvine Change for Change program (<http://www.parking.uci.edu/public/changeforchange.cfm>)

Anne Wolf is the systemwide coordinator in UC Office of the President's Internal Communications group.

Systemwide News

Answers to your questions about the restart of pension contributions

After a holiday of nearly 20 years, UC and employee members of the UC Retirement Plan (UCRP) will begin contributing to the plan in mid-April. Contributions are needed to support faculty and staff pension benefits. Gary Schlimgen, director of pension and retirement programs, answers questions about the restart of contributions.



When do our contributions start?

As planned, contributions begin in mid-April and apply to your May earnings. So, depending on how often you get paid, you'll see the UCRP contribution on your pay stub beginning anywhere from May 12 to June 1.

Who will be contributing?

All UC employer funding sources will be contributing, and employees who are members of UCRP will contribute. Safe Harbor employees, who are not UCRP members, will continue to pay into the Defined Contribution Plan (DC Plan) in lieu of Social Security.

How much will I be contributing?

For now through June 2011, members of UCRP will contribute the same amount they currently contribute to the DC Plan. So contributions won't affect employees' take home pay. For most employees contributions are roughly 2 percent of their pay, on a pretax basis.. Those who earn more than the Social Security wage base (\$106,800) will pay 4 percent on wages above \$106,800.

Is the amount likely to go up?

Yes. As previously announced, both employer and employee contributions are expected to increase over time in order to sustain the pension fund. The annual cost for an additional year of service for active members is about 17% of pay – this is the combined total amount UC and employees eventually should be contributing each year to cover the annual increase in liability.

Ultimately, UC's long-term approach is intended to be similar to CalPERS' approach to contributions for its members. Currently most CalPERS members contribute anywhere from 5 to 7 percent of pay and Governor Schwarzenegger wants to raise that even higher – to 10 percent. The Post-Employment Benefits Task Force is evaluating appropriate contribution levels and will be making recommendations to the President about the level of future employer and employee contributions.

How much is UC contributing and where will those contributions come from?

The employer contribution will be 4 percent. The money will come from all of the sources that fund employee salaries, including the medical centers, contracts and grants, the Department of Energy, the state and other payroll sources.

What happens if the state doesn't provide funding?

Both UC and its employees will begin contributing, even if the state does not provide funding. Campuses will have to cover the state share from other sources. That's why the University's current advocacy efforts are so important. We want the state to contribute to UC employees' pensions, just as they do for other state workers. I encourage faculty and staff to join the

advocacy campaign at UCforCalifornia.org; our legislators need to hear from us about this issue.

At the same time, we can't wait for state funding. By restarting contributions, UC can capture employer contributions from the other payroll funding sources mentioned earlier. Approximately two-thirds of UC employee pay comes from contracts and grants, medical centers and other non-state sources. UC cannot ask those funding sources to contribute if UC and/or the state are not contributing.

My union hasn't agreed to contributions yet. What happens to my pay?

You will continue to make mandatory contributions to the Defined Contribution Plan (DC Plan) until such time as your union agrees to participate. I want to stress that UC has been and will continue to meet all collective bargaining obligations for those employees who are exclusively represented.

How do I keep track of my contributions?

Your contributions are in an individual account for you; interest will be credited to your account at an annual rate of 6 percent. You'll be able to see your contributions on your pay stub and by signing in to your personal account on At Your Service. The employer contributions are on behalf of all members and are placed in a general account, not individual member accounts.

If I leave UC employment, what happens to my contributions?

You can choose to leave your contributions on deposit with UCRP or take them as a rollover or distribution. If you are vested — that is, if you have five or more years of service credit — and take your contributions, you forfeit a lifetime pension.

What happens to my Defined Contribution Plan account?

If you're a member of UCRP, you will no longer make mandatory contributions to the DC Plan. You keep your current balance and can continue to manage it through Fidelity Retirement Services. That means you can change the fund or funds you invest in at any time. It will be available to you as an additional source of retirement income when you retire.

If you are not a member of UCRP, but a Safe Harbor participant, you will continue to make mandatory contributions to the DC Plan in lieu of Social Security.

You can read answers to other questions about the restart of contributions or ask a new question by visiting the Future of UCRP website: (<http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/ucrpfuture/q&a.html>).

President Yudof reports on budget advocacy progress



By Carolyn McMillan

Working to combat a steep slide in state support for higher education, advocates for the University of California are planning large rallies in Sacramento this spring to persuade lawmakers that public higher education should be a funding priority.

The UC Student Association on March 1 will hold a rally and press

conference at the state Capitol. University of California President Mark G. Yudof, along with several UC regents and chancellors, will join student organizers later in the day for meetings with key legislative leaders.

"Our students are a critical voice in delivering our message to Sacramento, and it's great to see them engaging in this way," said Yudof. "We are honoring the wishes of the UCSA leaders and not taking a role in their public rally, but we will be visiting legislative leaders together that day to show our solidarity and to express how much we all care about UC's future."

A second rally, on April 27, is being hosted by a coalition that includes UC, the California State University and California Community Colleges. Leaders and key stakeholders from the three public higher education systems will be joined by a select group of community leaders from throughout the state for a joint advocacy day in Sacramento.

Organizers hope to draw a broad spectrum of participants, from parents and students, to community organizers, business leaders, faculty and staff.

Jesse Cheng, the UC Student Regent Designate, has been working to organize participation in both rallies. It is important that lawmakers see involvement by students, faculty and staff at all three systems of public higher education, he said.

"Sacramento is facing really tough budget decisions and they need direction from the public," Cheng said. "This is our chance to give them that direction, and to give them a clear mandate about priorities."

State support for UC has been eroding since the 1990s, but last year, amid a severe recession, lawmakers slashed UC funding by 20 percent. The resulting financial crisis brought layoffs, employee furloughs, reduced class offerings and higher student fees.

The UC Board of Regents in November proposed a proposed 2010-11 budget that asks the state for \$913 million more in funding, an amount that would allow UC to restore core funding for university operations.

UC efforts to build support for the restored funding include the launch of an online, grassroots movement to educate lawmakers and the public about all the ways that UC serves California and its people. The group is now nearly 300,000 strong — with more than 130,000 people added to the list of UCforCalifornia.org advocates since November.

Campuses have also been active, hosting teach-ins, visiting the district offices of local lawmakers and sponsoring "write-ins," like the one at UC Irvine that resulted in 150 hand-written letters being sent to Sacramento. In addition, the directors and presidents of UC's alumni associations met in January to begin mobilizing their members.

President Yudof, meanwhile, has been meeting with influential groups and people across the state, asking that they join the cause.

"I am committed to preserving UC as a place of academic excellence and opportunity, and I hope others will join me in this worthy fight," Yudof said. "The investment in higher education is critical to California's future."

The president and all 10 chancellors have made frequent trips to Sacramento and Washington D.C. in recent weeks, advocating on UC's behalf and highlighting the university's contributions to California and the nation in terms of research, economic growth and public service.

On Jan. 12, Yudof and UCSF Chancellor Susan Desmond-Hellmann met with Assembly Speaker-elect John Perez (D- Los Angeles). They discussed the need to re-establish higher education funding as a priority in the state budget, and also talked about how UC and its campuses can help the state recover from the current recession.

The pair met later in the day with Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger on both fiscal and policy matters.

Yudof returned to the Capitol on Jan. 25, accompanied by UC San Diego Chancellor Marye Anne Fox, this time meeting with Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento) and Senate Appropriations Chair Christine Kehoe (D-San Diego), among others, to once again press the case for increased funding.

UC advocacy continues on the federal level as well. President Obama's 2011 budget request included increased funding for Pell Grants and key research agencies including the National Institutes of Health, National Science Foundation and the Department of Energy's Office of Science.

As the budget process moves forward, UC's Washington office will continue working with advocates, students, Regents and chancellors to persuade policymakers to provide strong and stable funding for higher education in the areas of education and research, as well as in infrastructure and other areas. UC is also working with national policymakers to reexamine the federal role in supporting higher education and to expand its support for other areas that are critical to the university's operations.

The concerted advocacy efforts seem to be working. Gov. Schwarzenegger's proposed budget restores \$371 million in funding for the university, one clear signal that the university's message is being heard.

It's a positive development, but lawmakers must fund the full \$913 million if the university is to repair the damage brought by last year's steep cuts, Yudof said. Building support for UC's budget request remains his top priority.

"Adequate state funding is vital if UC is to avoid declining educational quality, access and research," Yudof said. "It's the best investment California can make for its future."

Find out more about UC's advocacy efforts at www.UCforCalifornia.org.

Carolyn McMillan is managing editor with the UC Office of the President Internal Communications.

Advisors bring staff views to Regents' table

Last year, when the Regents were discussing the furlough program, Ed Abeyta of UC San Diego and Juliann Martinez of UC Berkeley were at the table, telling the Regents and UC administrators what UC staff employees thought about the proposed program.



Abeyta is the current Staff Advisor to the Regents and Juliann Martinez is the Staff Advisor-Designate.

The staff advisors, as non-voting members of designated Regents' committees, have direct input during the board's deliberations and decisions. That has been particularly important over the past year, with Abeyta and Martinez providing a staff perspective on furloughs, student fee increases and post-employment benefits.

Abeyta will step down in July and Martinez will take his place. Applications, due by March 1, are now being taken for a new Staff Advisor-Designate to serve a two-year term.

The staggered terms allow a new staff advisor to learn the ropes from an experienced colleague.

"It took me about five months to figure [the role] out," says Martinez. As staff advisors, they spend time with leaders at the Office of the President learning about the issues facing the University; they talk to campus colleagues, meet with staff assemblies, and hold town hall meetings to solicit staff input on key issues. They share their "notes from the field" with Regents and University leadership.

The furlough program is a good example of the contribution the staff advisors can make, says Abeyta.

"There was a strong perception that the options the Office of the President first introduced would be the program, but the recommendations we put forth based on the emails we received resulted in changes to the furlough program that made it better for employees."

Both Abeyta and Martinez are enthusiastic about their service, but say the position is not for everyone.

"If you believe work is more than checking in and checking out, the position provides a great opportunity to see all aspects of UC and to know you're part of a system to provide input to the Regents and leadership at the Office of the President," Abeyta says.

Staff representation at the Regents' meetings "completes the family," says Martinez. "You have Regents, faculty, students and now staff. Having the opportunity to comment right when an issue comes up is very valuable."

The role requires a big time commitment. Martinez, director of the gift program at UC Berkeley, relies on her staff and a supportive manager to help get her regular work done when she's traveling or in meetings. And she often spends her evenings making phone calls or doing background reading.

"It's been a tremendous learning opportunity so far," she says. She recommends that in-coming staff advisors find an area or issue to focus on. Martinez chose to focus on advocacy for the University. She is working with UC's governmental relations staff in Sacramento and Berkeley to define the advocacy role employees may play as UC presses the state legislature for full funding in the 2010-11 budget.

Applications for the next Staff Advisor to the Regents are due by March 1, and the new Staff Advisor Designate begins a two-year term on July 1. For more information and the application, see the Staff Advisor website: <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/staffadvisors/>.

More Systemwide News

Berkeley launches initiative on equity, diversity, and inclusion

http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2010/02/18_haas_jr_fund.shtml

Rare Science Fiction Book Time Travels to UCR

<http://www.insideucr.ucr.edu/cgi-bin/display.cgi?id=1448>

Handheld laser scanner improves detection, diagnosis and treatment of breast cancer

http://uci.edu/features/2010/02/feature_breasttumor_100216.php

Hungry Garden: Where nature builds a better bug trap

http://www.dateline.ucdavis.edu/dl_detail.lasso?id=12320

Solutions: A healthy California

UC's schools of public health are tackling some of California's biggest health issues: obesity, environmental health and disaster preparedness. Read more about California's biggest health issues at: <http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/article/22772>



Ask It!

Q: Do poisons, as well as their antidotes, expire and lose effectiveness?

A: Poisons encompass a large variety of substances—drugs and medications, pesticides, chemicals, cleaning substances, plants and berries, insects and spiders, snake bites, bad food, automotive products, fumes and vapors, personal care items, etc. Because of the variety of substances that may be considered poisonous or dangerous, it is difficult to make a general statement about expiration dates and retention of effectiveness.

Drugs and medicines eventually lose their effectiveness over time. Natural substances such as plants and insects and food will eventually turn to dust so they will no longer be poisonous. Chemicals and pesticides and substances stored correctly in their original containers will probably retain their potency as long as they exist.

Most antidotes are drugs. Manufacturers of these antidote drugs provide their products with expiration dates. Over a period of time, it is expected that the drug antidotes would lose their effectiveness.

Dr. Judith Alsop is a Health Sciences Associate Clinical Professor of Pharmacy with the Department of Clinical Pharmacy in the School of Pharmacy at the University of California in San Francisco. She is the Director of the Sacramento Division of the California Poison Control System at UC Davis Medical Center, where she teaches pharmacy and medical students and residents and manages the poison center staff.

HRbriefs

March 1 deadline approaches for taking post-employment benefits survey

It's not too late to share your views about UC pension and retiree health benefits by taking a short, confidential, online survey.

Just go to the Future of UC Retirement Benefits website (universityofcalifornia/news/UCRPfuture/emp_tsk.html) before 5 p.m. March 1 and select the survey button. The survey takes less than 10 minutes to complete and all answers are confidential. Participation is voluntary.

Your responses will help the President's Task Force on Post-Employment Benefits better understand employee preferences about financially sustainable options for future retirement benefits.

UC has discussed with its unions how represented employees might participate in the survey. At this time, union leadership has not agreed to participate in the survey process. Represented faculty and staff should direct their questions and opinions about UC pension and retiree health benefits to their union leadership.

The independent consulting firm Towers Watson, in partnership with UC Human Resources, developed the survey. Towers Watson is hosting the online survey and will compile the results for UC.

The Task Force will share survey results with faculty and staff when the analysis is complete. Results will likely be ready by April, when the Task Force holds a second round of forums at each UC location. The survey results will help inform the Task Force as it develops recommendations for ensuring UC's benefits are financially sustainable over the long term. Their recommendations will be presented to UC President Mark G. Yudof this summer.

TIP OF THE MONTH

Use your remaining 2009 flexible spending account funds by March 15

The grace period for using any remaining funds from your 2009 Health and Dependent Care Flexible Spending Account ends March 15.

If you had money left in your FSA at the end of 2009, you have until March 15 to use the balance. If you don't spend the money, you lose it.

CONEXIS, UC's FSA plans administrator, will pay from 2009 balances to reimburse claims on eligible expenses made between January 1 and March 15, 2010. You have until April 15, 2010, to submit claims for expenses incurred during the 2009 plan year through March 15.

For more details, see the At Your Service website (atyourservice.ucop.edu/).