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November 4, 2010

President Mark Yudof
University of California
1111 Franklin Street
Oakland, CA 94607

Dear President Yudof:

I am writing to follow up on John Oakley's letter of October 22, which summarized discussions of the UCRS Advisory Board during our recent meeting of October 21. I am writing to briefly offer additional comment and clarification regarding my October 21 statements.

Before I begin, I want to express my sincere appreciation for the leadership and earnest consideration shown by the Office of the President while undertaking the difficult issue of post-employment benefits reform. The decision to make faculty and staff concerns an integral part of the President's final recommendation to the Regents is a decision that commands applause.

I am among the majority of Advisory Board members who, to quote John's letter, "expressed the view that Option C was the best option given current circumstances." Among the options presented, Option C undoubtedly does the best job of preserving a decent retirement benefit for University workers. This is of special consequence to lower- and middle-income workers who stand to lose the most retirement security under Options A and B.

I was very much heartened to learn that the Office of the President will recommend a plan that resembles Option C and preserves many elements of the UCRP. I believe a plan that synchronizes the multiple vantage points of UC's stakeholders, as Option C does, will prove to be the most successful plan for reform. As the University goes forward with implementing post-employment benefit reform, I feel it is my duty to speak on behalf of UC's lower-income and blue-collar workers. Specifically, I wish to raise three concerns of importance to the University and its staff.

First, I want to underscore the need for clear, visible leadership from the University in holding the state accountable to its obligation to UCRP. As you mentioned in your October 26 letter, the UCRP is in need of a solid funding plan that includes adequate state contributions. By taking a visible leadership and advocacy role, UC can galvanize its many motivated stakeholders towards powerful advocacy and action in Sacramento on behalf of UCRP.

Second, concerning future employee contributions to UCRP, I want to call your attention to the guaranteed disproportionate impact of large increases on UC's lower-income workers. These workers will be the first to reach the threshold at which employee contribution increases become unsustainable. I encourage you to please consider this as your office sets future contribution rates.

Finally, I want to flag the costs of increasing the retirement age of blue-collar workers and employees who engage repetitive stress work. Raising the minimum retirement and maximum accrual ages to 55 and 65 will make a full retirement benefit less accessible to future workers in jobs like mine, and will compel these workers to exceed their physical limits. This translates into higher rates of employee injury, increased disability claims, and additional cost to the University. Workers and the University would be well-served by investigating alternatives to these unseen costs.

In closing, I want to reiterate that UC's effort to invest in its employees and preserve a decent, equitable retirement is appreciated and commended by new employees and by long-term workers such as myself. I look forward to continuing my contribution to the growth of our University.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kandy Piper". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Kandy Piper
UCRS Advisory Board Member
Lead Building Maintenance Worker, UC Berkeley

cc: Members of the UCRS Advisory Board
Director Gary Schlimgen