



UC workers vote to strike statewide

By Matt Krupnick
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Thousands of University of California employees have voted overwhelmingly to strike over low wages, union leaders said Friday.

About 20,000 custodians, patient care workers and other service employees will walk off the job unless UC agrees to contract demands, said Lakesha Harrison, a UCLA nurse and president of AFSCME Local 3299. The strike would start no sooner than June 2 and would last "a few days," she said.

The union, which represents some hospital workers and the lowest-paid campus employees, has asked UC for a 20 percent pay raise, noting that some of its members must rely on food stamps. The lowest-paid workers earn about \$10 an hour, Harrison said.

About 97 percent of the "thousands and thousands" of voting members approved the strike, Harrison said, although she declined to say how many voted. The UC system has 10 campuses and five hospitals.

In a written statement, UC administrators said they have told the union they are willing to provide pay increases and other benefits to thousands of employees. If a strike does occur, replacement workers would be used to provide patient care, UC said.

"AFSCME's strike threat is very unfortunate as it does not help move us closer to an agreement, but we will not be deterred from our goal of getting good contracts for our dedicated employees," said Howard

Pripas, the university's labor-relations chief.

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