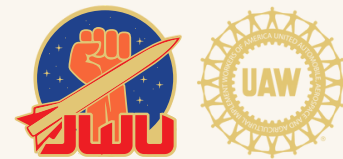


COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WORKS

JPL Workers United - UAW



As JPLers form our union, we can build off of past advancements enshrined in union contracts before us. Every time a workplace unionizes and wins stronger protections and better benefits, new standards are set for all workplaces. Our own union contract will be democratically decided and will reflect the priorities of all JPL employees.

	Current JPL Policy	Peer Institution Union Contracts and Actions
Lab Funding	JPL management by itself lobbies for federal and state funding through an opaque process. JPLers are laid off without recourse even if funding reductions result from illegal impoundment.	Workers at Caltech, USC, UC and more with UAW are organizing to advance a California state bill that would establish a \$23 billion fund for California research institutions [1]. UC and CSU workers with UAW helped reverse a planned cut of \$771 million to their institutions in the California state budget through collective action and lobbying elected representatives [2]. NIH Fellows United-UAW and other UAW members brought a lawsuit that led to an injunction of over 400 unlawful federal research grant terminations [3].
Layoff Mechanics	Layoffs at JPL currently are performed using secret criteria that do not adequately take into account the impact of the losses on the lab's missions. JPLers have no avenues to contest unjust termination, and JPL has no obligation to re-hire laid-off workers first if opportunities do open up.	Faculty and staff organizing as CalArts United-UAW won their union election and immediately began bargaining with CalArts administration over layoff policies stemming from decreased funding. Faculty and staff negotiated a 1-year base salary and 18-month base salary voluntary separation programs, depending on years of service, as well as coverage for healthcare costs [4]. California Association of Professional Scientists (CAPS)-UAW won a provision stating "Whenever the State determines it necessary to layoff employees, the State and CAPS shall meet in good faith to explore alternatives to laying off employees such as, but not limited to, voluntary reduced work time, retraining, early retirement, and unpaid leaves of absence," as well as the establishment of a reemployment list in case opportunities open up soon after the layoff [5].
Remote Work	JPL employees are expected to be fully on-site at their primary work location." A large majority of telework waiver requests were denied at the group supervisor, division, or HR level with no explanation provided. The change to the telework policy was made unilaterally by management.	CAPS-UAW won a provision in their contract with the CA state government stating "no employee's request for telework shall be unreasonably denied" with a neutral grievance resolution process backing it, and the CA state government must bargain with scientists over changes to the telework policy. [6].
Workload	JPL management solely manages JPLers' workloads and has a strategic incentive to have employees work over 40 hours per week, which is unpaid except via the rarely-used EWW mechanism.	At the University of Washington, researchers and postdocs with UAW won a worker-centered process to reconcile workload issues [7].
Bridge Funding	JPL management decides how to allocate the burden budget to support bridge funding (e.g. CRITICAL tasks), as well as who receives this funding.	At the University of Washington, Research Scientists and Engineers won the right to apply for Bridge Funding themselves, which expanded access to financial assistance between grants. [8]

	Current JPL Policy	Peer Institution Union Contracts and Actions
Career Advancement	Managers typically review employee pay during the annual salary review period. The decision to provide an annual salary review program is made by senior management. Pay decisions are made by management, and there is no accountability for their impacts. Each of the last two years, annual salary review raises were significantly delayed.	At the University of California, Academic Researchers have a merit-based review process, which includes clear timelines for promotion and regular salary increases. [9] Union researchers at UW can independently request a position review (promotion) without any preapproval requirements. Performance evaluations are conducted at least 1x per year and must meet standards. [10]
Immigration	Foreign national workers at JPL currently get no paid time off for visa renewal visits. They are also not reimbursed for visa fees. In the event of a layoff, no re-hiring protections exist to protect a foreign worker's visa status. On a discretionary basis, foreign workers are allowed by HR to work remotely from outside the US while on a visa renewal trip. This policy has also evolved over the years with periods where no remote work from abroad was permitted. The process of gaining permission for telework abroad is not transparent or consistent.	Graduate students and postdocs at Caltech won 7 days of paid time off for visa-related travel so they do not have to use their vacation time for required visa visits. They also won visa fee and travel reimbursements of up to \$500. Their contract also guarantees that postdocs receive a 2-year minimum appointment to reduce the burden of visa renewal. [11] Postdoctoral scholars at the NIH won contractual protections for timely processing of visa applications for submission to the USCIS. [12]
Discrimination & Abusive Conduct	Caltech handles complaints internally, following its written policy on Unlawful Harassment, Discrimination, and Abusive Conduct. JPLers have no enforceable timelines to resolution, no right to representation, and no commitment to interim mitigation measures while the investigation occurs.	Graduate student workers and postdocs at Caltech won an enforceable set of protections against discrimination and abusive conduct including set response timelines, a process for neutral 3rd-party arbitration if the HR response is unsatisfactory, and a formal process for interim mitigation measures including modification of work schedules, mutual restrictions on contact between the parties, and non-punative leaves of absence [13].
Accessibility	Upper management unilaterally decides whether or not to grant accommodation requests, and also makes the final decision in the appeal process. There are no timelines.	At UW, union researchers have the right to a worker centered, interactive process to determine accommodations for access needs. Immediate, interim accommodations are guaranteed without requiring medical documentation. [14]
Health Benefits	Health insurance premiums paid by employees have increased an average of 16% for JPL's HMO plans (employee pays 23% total cost) and 38% for its PPO plans (employee pays 10% total cost) in the last 3 years. Many types of critical care are not guaranteed and are vulnerable in the current environment.	Graduate student workers at Caltech won a reduction in their health insurance premiums from 16% of the total plan cost to 10%, saving an average of \$442 per individual annually and \$794 per dependent . They also won contractual protection for reproductive care, mental health care, gender-affirming care, and access to specialty prescriptions. [15]
Leaves	Vacation accrual is capped at 320 hours, which are paid out upon termination or retirement only, and sick hours are capped at 960. Leave cannot be transferred between employees under any circumstances. Jury duty is paid for 10 days, and after that begins eating into vacation hours. Other leaves are unpaid except where the law requires compensation, and management may require employees to use sick/vacation depending on leave type.	CAPS-UAW won a 640-hour vacation cap with the option to cash out up to 80 hours annually, as well as no limit on sick hour accrual. Leave can be transferred to an employee when the receiving employee's principal residence is impacted by a natural disaster, or between family members to care for a family member. Jury duty is paid without touching vacation for the entire length of service. [16]

[1] https://www.sfoxaminer.com/californias-23-billion-plan-to-restore-federal-cuts-to-scientific-research/article_89f85cd7-1f42-535a-aab2-69a7dd27db26.html

[2] <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-05-15/uc-csu-higher-education-newsom-california-budget>

[3] <https://litigationtracker.law.georgetown.edu/litigation/american-public-health-association-et-al-v-national-institutes-of-health-et-al/>

[4] <https://calartsunited.org/updates/>

[5] https://capsscscientists.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/CAPSUAUW_BU10_MOU_2024_0701-2027_0701.pdf Article 16

[6] https://capsscscientists.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/CAPSUAUW_BU10_MOU_2024_0701-2027_0701.pdf Section 7.10

[7] <https://www.uaw4121.org/member-center-2/know-your-rights/contract/> Article 35

[8] <https://www.uaw4121.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RSE-23-26-Contract-Final.pdf> MOU - Retaining Institutional Knowledge

[9] https://drive.google.com/file/d/1UQsCT_z5JxIOFwRjlyBR7BWKQg8Kqtcu/view Articles 21, 22, 26

[10] <https://www.uaw4121.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RSE-23-26-Contract-Final.pdf> Article 13

[11] <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sGzMaQLMiFrVWylmC9XOKRO-Kd7htUq3/view> Section 26

[12] <https://www.nihfellowsunited.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/02/NIH-and-NIHfU-CBA-Effective-12-20-24.pdf> Article 26

[13] <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sGzMaQLMiFrVWylmC9XOKRO-Kd7htUq3/view> Section 26

[14] <https://www.uaw4121.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/RSE-23-26-Contract-Final.pdf> Article 29

[15] <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1sGzMaQLMiFrVWylmC9XOKRO-Kd7htUq3/view> Section 15

[16] https://capsscscientists.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/CAPSUAUW_BU10_MOU_2024_0701-2027_0701.pdf Article 3

