

UAW 2865 Statewide Membership Organizing Plan, July 2018 - June 2019

Prepared for Discussion at July 2018 JC Meeting at UC Berkeley

I. Purpose

The purpose of this organizing plan is quite simply our Union's survival. In an era of renewed right-wing attack on workers, our Union is at risk of no longer existing in a few years. If we do not bring a supermajority of workers into collective action through union membership, we workers will not have the ability to win our demands. Moreover, our union will go bankrupt and no longer function. Without our union, we, and other UC workers, will not have the power over our work and wages that we have now. We will not have the ability to make enforceable social justice demands, or any kind of demands, on the University. We will not have the power to take concerted action or strike. Our fellow workers in AFSCME, AFT, IBT, UPTA, and CIR will be weakened by losing an ally. The University will have the power to cut our pay, speed up the work, fire without cause, eliminate tuition and health insurance waivers. We will be, in a word, fucked.

Our responsibility is not only to our immediate coworkers - it's to the labor movement, and the movements for social justice, as a whole. Without the additional pressure on management that our union produces, every other campus union will be weakened. When those unions are weakened, their national organizations are weakened in turn - the effect ripples outward.

The right wing will be very happy if our union dies off. They'll be able to entirely remake the public university without our resistance. Public education will become entirely a thing of the past as the University privatizes and becomes a profit-making machine. Education will serve the same function for capitalism that "home ownership" once did: a debt-incumbency machine to repress labor action.

Workers and students can fight back and reverse this trajectory if we organize. Our contract campaign sets us up well to continue winning more workers to collective action through union membership. When we organize, we bring every worker into a position of greater power over our employer. The workers that benefit from that power the most, are those that without their union would have the least. Today, there is a large population of our coworkers who have no rights, even though they are Academic Student Workers: the Research Assistants. To grow our union enough to survive, we must help the RAs/GSRs organize. Winning RAs/GSRs over to collective action will radically transform the power-relationship between the University and its grad students. We will call the question on demands that have eluded us for years. We will begin to transform the university according to our social-justice vision, rather than the whims of the donor class.

We'll face criticism when we organize. Right-wingers will say that we're "selling the union." But as rank-and-file organizers, we know that a signed union card is not merely a dues payment in exchange for representation. A signed union card comes from a conversation, a human relationship that has been built between workers. It is a mutual commitment between those workers - solidarity. And the defense of solidarity is collective action. We also know that given our financial position, a signed union card is effectively a vote for our union's existence. Every worker that does not sign a card is voting against our union's existence. As much as we believe in the majority vote, only an 80% supermajority is sufficient to fight on the terrain of class warfare.

We are starting to see a vision of the university we want. It is not a university where education and research mean the dissemination and production of commodified knowledge and ideology. It is a university where education and research, for the betterment of society, are free activities for every person. We can achieve our vision of the University - but only with the help of 17,000 of our closest friends.

II. Current Membership

1. Current numbers and projection

The projections listed here for the start of the next term use the membership numbers from April 2018 (the last month every campus is was in a full academic semester for the 2017-2018 academic year) after being adjusted for turnover, or “churn”. This turnover calculation is based on the percentage of ASEs that were working for the first time in the Fall 2016 term. This projection is a “worst case” scenario, representing what would happen if we failed to sign up any new members during the orientation period.

	Actual for April '18		Projection for Start of Next Term (before new membership)
Berkeley	59		34
Davis	37		26
Irvine	40		26
Los Angeles	52		34
Merced	41		32
Riverside	47		30
San Diego	37		24
Santa Barbara	50		36
Santa Cruz	51		34
Statewide	47		31

2. Strengths

Our membership is now higher than it has been since 2011. This does not only mean we are collecting more dues - it means that more workers are participating in organizing, standing in solidarity and supporting one another. Our tireless rank-and-file now stand as leaders of our union, leading campaigns for our contract demands, marching on the boss, leading delegations, building organizing committees, and bringing their coworkers into collective action. In a year when the majority of campus unions were bargaining, we built up our relationships with other unions. We are poised to win a successful contract that will build our credibility with workers, while winning them new rights and building their confidence. Thanks to our active organizing committees, and thanks to the successful lobbying of the past elected leadership, we are now ready to launch an ambitious new organizing campaign that will finally bring workplace rights to Research Assistants.

3. Challenges

As hard as we have worked this past year, the right-wing is still outpacing us. The *Janus* decision has depleted our budget. We now collect dues only from members, who are about half of ASEs. The table below shows our budget deficit under various projected membership levels:

End-of-the-year Membership % (FY 18-19)	FY 18-19 Deficit	Deficit % of Starting 2018 Balance	Ending 2018 Balance (all assets)
45%	-\$397,899	55.5%	\$318,670
50%	-\$364,617	50.9%	\$351,952
55%	-\$337,319	47.1%	\$379,250
58%	-\$313,872	43.8%	\$402,697
65%	-\$279,963	39.1%	\$436,606

Even with 65% membership at the end of FY 18-19, we still lose \$279,963. Supposing that we maintain 65% membership for that year, we will become insolvent at the end of FY 19-20.

It is worthwhile to think through what insolvency means for our union. While some have raised the possibility of trusteeship, we think this is, if anything, too optimistic. Trusteeship would, at least, mean receiving resources from the International until we are on stable financial footing. We believe that the International will not be inclined to support us in this way. Therefore, insolvency will mean laying off staff and liquidating all assets. We will become a paper union, unable to organize or bargain.

The closest real-life parallel to this in our sector is the case of COGS/UE, the graduate worker union at University of Iowa. In 2017, Iowa passed right-to-work for the public sector. Iowa's right-to-work law includes a prohibition on dues check-off, and a drastic restriction of acceptable subjects of bargaining. With a dramatic loss of resources, the Union was unable to organize effectively. The current COGS contract contains only one article, a 1.1% wage increase. None of the terms of the previous contract, such as health benefits, leaves, or anti-discrimination, are enforceable by the Union anymore. COGS successfully pressured the University to voluntarily continue the terms of the previous contract, but this is an extremely precarious situation, as the employer may at any time choose to stop honoring its voluntary commitments.

4. Opportunities

Our greatest opportunity for growth is in organizing new workers. Research Assistants are graduate students whose status as workers has only recently been recognized by California law, thanks to the efforts of our Union. Most RAs spend some time in our unit as TAs. Their working conditions are extremely harsh, and they have much to gain from a union. Campaigning to organize GSRs would bring these workers into membership during the campaign - many of them will be motivated to become members during their TAships, because they will see the value of our work to unionize them as GSRs.

III. Assessment of 2017-2018 Strategic Plan

In last year's Strategic Plan, we voted to hold each other accountable to the following benchmarks:

- *Reach a real majority of 55% in-unit membership statewide by March 15, 2018.*
- *Reach a real supermajority of 70% in-unit membership statewide by June 30, 2018.*
- *Reach a minimum of 60% in-unit membership at each campus by June 30, 2018.*

We also acknowledged at the time that the 70% goal was not sufficient to sustain a field program or contract representation. We chose the 70% goal based on immediate budgetary needs, and a sense of what was realistic to achieve. In other words, 70% membership was necessary for our organization to avoid insolvency by 2019, without making cuts.

We finished the 2017-2018 academic year hovering around 52% membership - far short of our goal. Nevertheless, we grew the union this past year. Low-participation campuses grew, and began participating in statewide action. The following table summarizes membership growth on each campus over the past year.

	% In-Unit Membership, Oct. '17		Goal for April '18	Actual for April '18		Goal for June '18	Current Membership
Berkeley	50		73	59		82	58
Davis	34		57	37		65	43
Irvine	34		57	40		66	42
Los Angeles	40		64	52		72	58
Merced	39		62	41		70	44
Riverside	46		70	47		78	53
San Diego	31		54	37		63	41
Santa Barbara	47		70	50		78	65
Santa Cruz	44		67	51		75	53
Statewide	40		61	47		70	51

What worked well, and what needed improvement?

What Went Well

The items examined in the next two sections are tactics proposed in the JC's 2017-2018 Strategic Plan. We analyze how successful we were at utilizing these tactics, relative to our goals for the past year. Later in this document, in the "Strategies" section, we recommend organizing tactics reflecting this analysis, relative to our goals for the coming year.

- **Building Organizing Committees**
The OCs were crucial to our union's growth. An OC is an open committee of members that plans and executes organizing activities. It is a myth that OCs are merely card-gathering clubs. Rather,

the OC is a setting in which our coworkers come together to transform their workplace. They do so by transforming their relationships with their coworkers: from passive and atomized, to determined and solidaristic. If OCs merely plan card-gathering operations, they fail grow fast enough to keep up with the organizing demands. They also cease to function as organizing spaces. Our OC members work together to plan department campaigns, circulate petitions, support one another (“care work”), confront their bosses, and build turnout to mass actions. All that work is made possible by continually bringing more workers into collective struggle.

Today, every campus except Merced has an OC. At most campuses, OCs were responsible for bringing members, including those who gave testimony, to the bargaining sessions. They are primarily responsible for our membership growth over the past year.

OCs relied heavily on our professional organizing staff for knowledge, skills, and support. As we have a very small staff for a very large number of workers, it is important that OCs now begin to share knowledge, skills, and support with one another, cross campus. We have begun to do this through our statewide OC, which has weekly strategy calls.

- **Blitzes**

On campuses where worker participation was too low to sustain an Organizing Committee, we demonstrated statewide solidarity by planning organizing blitzes. The blitzes were a popular organizing tactic because of their concentrated excitement, and easily-demonstrable effectiveness.

Blitzes were successful not only in growing participation, but especially in building organizing committees. Our union now has powerful rank-and-file organizers who were recruited directly through membership blitzes.

Once again, blitzes were substantially supported by staff leadership and organization. Prior to blitzes, staff worked with campus leadership to prepare member lists (what is known as a “universe” of new member conversations). They then helped train blitz organizers, and prepared their walkthrough schedules. Staff also led the nightly post-blitz evaluations, which were mutually-supportive, structured discussion sessions between organizers about the events of the day. The daily evaluations allowed us to quickly assess our strengths and weaknesses during the blitz, and to shift strategies if needed to make the event as effective as possible. Blitzes also helped strengthen existing campus leadership, who built relationships with members from across the state, and coordinated logistics.

At the April JC Meeting, a head steward floated the idea of a blitz strategy that would perpetually shift statewide resources between campuses. However, we believe that blitzes should remain concentrated events for when a boost is needed; too much of effective organizing relies on neighborly relationships of standing and trust for a perpetual blitz to be effective.

- **Block-walking and Section Visits**

These are the main OC tactics for new members recruitment and leader identification. They were highly effective at ensuring that we talked to workers, and brought them into collective action, every week. It is necessary that OCs plan block-walking and section visits in biggest-worst departments every single week. Block-walking is much more effective when we include a member from the department we’re visiting, though that is not always possible. It is also extremely helpful

to block-walk with a membership list in hand, in order to engage workers in mapping conversations.

Block-walking produces diminishing returns, because eventually, easy-to-find workers are all identified. At that point, it becomes necessary to for workers in that department, hopefully with the help of a rank-and-file leader, to regroup and plan section visits. Other creative tactics also become more effective, like organizing department events, petitions, grievance campaigns, deep one-on-one conversations, and so on. For example, at the UCLA Chemistry Dept., workers hosted a “Wine and Whine” event to build worker confidence in expressing dissent, and to raise participation. In the UCLA Physics Dept., a steward hosts sign-making parties before any major action, in order to ensure turnout and to provide a fun setting to sign up new members. Those activities would not be successful unless they were prepared by member identification and recruitment through block-walking and section visits.

- **Phonebanking**
Calling members from our list has been crucial in generating turnout to bargaining and protests, and meetings. Most members deeply appreciate personal, convenient contact from their coworkers. In the next section, we discuss ways that our phonebanking could become more effective.
- **Canvassing large events**
Sending a critical mass of organizers to mass orientation events is an important way to quickly establish a presence early in the year.
- **Orientations**
We calculate that strong orientations are necessary for maintaining our baseline membership from year to year. Without an orientation session at every department in the Fall, our membership level declines. We discuss ways to improve our orientations in the next session.
- **Structure tests**
Tracking structure test response - everything from sign-in sheets at meetings and actions, to petition signatures - has been crucial in maintaining contact between committees and workers in motion. Without these tools, it would be very difficult to build turnout, assess our strengths and weaknesses, and keep workers talking to each other.

What Needs Improvement

- **Following up**
OCs should remember to make time to plan follow-up conversations with new members. This is very important because it identifies new leaders and grows the committee. Without planning follow-ups, the committee quickly overworks itself, because it does not generate enough leadership to cover its turf.
- **Online petitions**
Our SVSH Petition did not get the numbers we had hoped for. We think that during the petition circulation, we needed to very quickly have one-on-one conversations with signers on each campus, and mobilize them as leaders as soon as possible.

- Orientations

It is not adequate, in and of itself, for new workers to hear from a union officer about their contract rights. It is necessary that they hear from a member of their own department about why their participation is important. On some campuses, we are meeting with members from each department to help plan orientations. In departments where we haven't identified a leader yet, we are using phonebanking and one-on-ones to find volunteers. When we meet with these workers, we don't simply show them the orientation to present, but engage them in an organizing conversation about the importance of orientations, and ask for their ideas in planning the orientation session.

Every orientation should involve workers talking to each other about their rights, and about what rights they want to win. Orientations should also allow members to ask challenging questions about our union. Therefore, workers delivering orientations should be thoroughly prepared.

- Phonebanking

Using phonebanking to schedule walk-throughs and one-on-ones - by calling ahead of time to schedule a visit - is a potentially-effective tactic that we have neglected. We should also attempt to improve our answer rate by asking workers who already know each other to make calls. We can also incorporate phone number exchanges into our initial organizing conversations, so that workers will recognize our numbers when we call.

- Regional/National Mobilizations

Our participation in J20 and Grad Tax Walkouts were very important for our visibility and member involvement. Participation in more national actions will bring more members into organizing. It will also enhance our political voice, and enable us to be political coalition partners. It will also give us the ability to coordinate national actions with fellow grad unions.

- Accountability and Checking-In

The October 2017 Strategic Plan contains a section under "Methods and Tactics for Implementation" entitled "Planning, Targeting, Mapping." Unfortunately, this section is hard to evaluate because we lack statewide accountability. Going forward, every campus needs to participate in the statewide Organizing Committee, and report back every week about their organizing plans, their role delegation, their department targets, and their worker targets.

Assessment Summary

Our growth as a union this past year was due to our partial implementation of the 2017 Statewide Plan. Going forward, every campus needs to have a fully-functional Organizing Committee. Organizers, both members and staff, cannot be seen as "card-gophers." They are building active solidarities that bring workers into power. It is necessary for our Organizing Committees to have conversations with new workers every week, and carry out an organizing plan, for our union to survive.

OC participation from elected leadership has been uneven. Leadership participation can, and must, improve. Every Joint Council member must begin attending OC meetings regularly, and participating in organizing activities. That way, the JC will be equipped to make decisions that reflect the needs of our organizing and reflect the concerns of our members.

IV. Goals

Even attaining 70% membership by the end of this year is not enough to eliminate our deficit. However, attaining 80% membership over two years, and maintaining a level above 75% after that, should put us on secure financial footing. Therefore, 70% membership will be our membership goal for this year. The following table summarizes our statewide membership goals for the coming academic year:

Month	Sept '17	Oct '17	Nov '17	Dec '17	Jan '18	Feb '18	Mar '18	Apr '18	May '18	June '18
Membership Growth Goal		2,735	487	487	687	487	487	687	487	487
Membership Total Goal	5,299	8,034	8,522	9,009	9,496	9,983	10,470	10,957	11,445	11,932
Membership Percentage	31%	47.00%	49.85%	52.70%	55.55%	58.40%	61.25%	64.10%	66.95%	69.80%
Unit Size	17,094	17,094	17,094	17,094	17,094	17,094	17,094	17,094	17,094	17,094

The following table shows each campus' new member commitment in order to achieve our statewide goals:

Campus	Month	Sept '17	Oct '17	Nov '17	Dec '17	Jan '18	Feb '18	Mar '18	Apr '18	May '18	June '18
Berkeley	Membership Growth Goal		577	103	103	145	103	103	145	103	103
	Membership Total Goal		1804	1907	2010	2155	2258	2361	2506	2609	2712
	Membership Percentage	34%	49.99%	52.84%	55.69%	59.71%	62.57%	65.42%	69.44%	72.29%	75.15%
	Unit Size	3609	3609	3609	3609	3609	3609	3609	3609	3609	3609
	Membership Growth Goal		362	65	65	91	65	65	91	65	65

Davis

	Member ship Total Goal		951	1016	1081	1172	1237	1302	1393	1458	1523
	Member ship Percent age	26%	41.99%	44.88%	47.75%	51.77%	54.64%	57.51%	61.53%	64.40%	67.27%
	Unit Size	2264	2264	2264	2264	2264	2264	2264	2264	2264	2264
Irvine	Member ship Growth Goal		282	50	50	71	50	50	71	50	50
	Member ship Total Goal		740	790	840	911	961	1011	1082	1132	1182
	Member ship Percent age	26%	42.00%	44.81%	47.65%	51.67%	54.51%	57.35%	61.37%	64.21%	67.04%
	Unit Size	1763	1763	1763	1763	1763	1763	1763	1763	1763	1763
Los Angeles	Member ship Growth Goal		415	74	74	104	74	74	104	74	74
	Member ship Total Goal		1297	1371	1445	1549	1623	1697	1801	1875	1949
	Member ship Percent age	34%	49.99%	52.83%	55.68%	59.69%	62.54%	65.39%	69.40%	72.25%	75.11%
	Unit Size	2595	2595	2595	2595	2595	2595	2595	2595	2595	2595
	Member ship Growth Goal		80	14	14	20	14	14	20	14	14

Merced

	Member ship Total Goal		240	254	268	288	302	316	336	350	364
	Member ship Percent age	32%	48.03%	50.90%	53.71%	57.72%	60.52%	63.33%	67.33%	70.14%	72.95%
	Unit Size	499	499	499	499	499	499	499	499	499	499
Riversid e	Member ship Growth Goal		194	35	35	49	35	35	49	35	35
	Member ship Total Goal		557	592	627	676	711	746	795	830	865
	Member ship Percent age	30%	46.02%	48.91%	51.80%	55.85%	58.74%	61.63%	65.67%	68.56%	71.45%
	Unit Size	121 1	1211	1211	1211	1211	1211	1211	1211	1211	1211
San Diego	Member ship Growth Goal		320	57	57	81	57	57	81	57	57
	Member ship Total Goal		801	858	915	996	1053	1110	1191	1248	1305
	Member ship Percent age	24%	39.98%	42.84%	45.68%	49.73%	52.57%	55.42%	59.46%	62.31%	65.15%
	Unit Size	200 3	2003	2003	2003	2003	2003	2003	2003	2003	2003
Santa Barbara	Member ship Growth Goal		244	44	44	61	44	44	61	44	44

	Member ship Total Goal		794	838	882	943	987	1031	1092	1136	1180
	Member ship Percent age	36%	51.98%	54.88%	57.76%	61.76%	64.64%	67.52%	71.51%	74.39%	77.28%
	Unit Size	1527	1527	1527	1527	1527	1527	1527	1527	1527	1527
Santa Cruz	Member ship Growth Goal		260	46	46	65	46	46	65	46	46
	Member ship Total Goal		811	857	903	968	1014	1060	1125	1171	1217
	Member ship Percent age	34%	50.03%	52.84%	55.67%	59.68%	62.52%	65.35%	69.36%	72.19%	75.03%
	Unit Size	1622	1622	1622	1622	1622	1622	1622	1622	1622	1622

Our calculations include the estimated number of new members we need to organize during orientations in order to maintain our April '18 percentage going into October.

Following the orientations, which will resemble a blitz situation to get the numbers we need, each campus will need to commit to consistent organizing of new members. Here are the numbers each campus will need to hit per week:

Berkeley	25
Davis	16
Irvine	12
Los Angeles	18
Merced	3
Riverside	9
San Diego	14
Santa Barbara	11

These goals may seem heavy, but they are in fact slightly lighter than the goals we set last year. We should also remember that around the country, there are locals which are expected to fall out of existence due to *Janus*. Unfortunately, we are one of them. But if we pull together and all do our part, we can save our union.

Saving our union is not only a matter of our own survival. It's part of our responsibility to the movement, a movement which has put so much work and commitment into us. The Los Angeles Federation of Labor, which helped the UCLA unit organize a membership blitz in preparation for *Janus*, is now asking that all locals show their commitment [by pledging to reach 80% membership, and identify at least 5% of workers as organic leaders](#). We propose that UAW 2865 sign on to that pledge, along a two-year timeline.

V. Strategies

We propose three strategies to attain our organizing goals. None of these strategies are solely about the budget of the union. Each of them strengthens the power of workers on our campus.

1. Orientations

As mentioned above, returning to October with the membership levels we achieved in April will require strong performance at orientations. Orientations are the first experience of a union for many graduate students who are completely unfamiliar with unionism. Every campus will commit to hold new worker or new student orientations in each department. Every campus will attempt to find workers to help deliver orientations in their own department. Each campus will meet with those workers ahead of time to have an organizing conversation and prepare for the orientations. Campuses will also explore other beginning-of-the-year venues to organize and canvas, including international student events. Campuses will attempt to hold international student orientations. The weekly statewide OC calls will devote time to orientation planning.

2. Consistent Organizing

The Unit Chair, or another Head Steward on every campus, will ensure that their campus is present on the weekly statewide OC calls. OCs will meet every week on every campus. All JC members will commit to be present at those meetings, and to take part in the organizing activities.

3. GSR Campaign

As soon as the contract is settled, JC and OC members will immediately begin to build GSR/RA organizing committees. Once both the contract is settled and orientations are over, the weekly OC calls will begin discussing GSR/RA organizing, and will decide on a statewide campaign kick-off. The JC authorizes the Executive Board to allocate staff time to the GSR/RA campaign.

4. Additional Strategies Added at the July JC meeting:

VI. Summary of Decisions

The Joint Council hereby commits to the following proposals:

- JC members will be consistent participants in their campus organizing committees
- Organizing Committees will commit to the above goals, and will carry out organizing plans every week

- Every campus will be present on all OC calls
- The JC resolves to sign the Pledge circulated by the Los Angeles Federation of Labor
- The OC will prioritize orientations until October
- After the contract is settled, the JC and the OC will immediately begin a GSR/RA organizing campaign
- The JC authorizes the Eboard to allocate staff time to the GSR/RA campaign

VII. Implementation

- All campuses will discuss this strategic document at their next OC meeting and at their next Monthly Membership Meeting.
- The JC Listserv will receive weekly numbers from John Simonian
- The JC will discuss progress on this plan at the Fall, Winter, and Spring meetings
- We will be accountable to each other by helping each other. When a campus is behind its goals, we will all support them through discussion, sharing knowledge, and care.
- The week of Oct. 8, the JC listserv will discuss progress on orientations, and plans for GSR/RA organizing, if the contract is settled.
- At least every two weeks after that, there will be discussion on the JC listserv of progress made on this plan