FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Jesus Canchola Sanchez, jsanchez@seiu73.org, (312) 588-7534

[UIC worker interviews available upon request.]

UIC Workers Demand Above Market Rate Increase in Pay

Workers propose basic principles for UIC to lead in higher education and health care

Chicago - This week, approximately 50 University of Illinois Chicago workers, represented by SEIU Local 73, showed up to bargaining to tell their story about what a raise would mean for them and their families. Management walked out of the room as soon as workers arrived to the open bargaining session.

After workers left the bargaining session, management returned and the session turned out to be quite productive. Workers were able to reach their first tentative agreement since bargaining began eight months ago.

About 4,000 clerical, professional, technical and service & maintenance workers work at the main campus in Chicago, the University of Illinois Hospital and Health and Sciences System, Peoria, Rockford, Champaign, and UIC Specialized Care for Children. Four contracts are being negotiated and the workers have been demanding that the four contracts be negotiated as one universal contract. The University has refused to accept.

The workers presented the following principles at the table:

1. The fact that UIC is exempt from the Chicago minimum wage ordinance is no excuse for paying less than $15 per hour. The current starting wage for Building and Service Workers at UIC is $12.65 per hour. According to payroll records and contracts, there are at least 16 job titles in use that start below $15 per hour. The fact that UIC is exempt from the Chicago minimum wage ordinance is no excuse for paying less than $15 per hour.
2. UIC workers should be making wages and salaries above the market rate. For the good of our city and our state, UIC must be a leader in health care and higher education. Average is not good enough. UIC should be offering competitive rates so that we are recruiting and retaining quality people.
3. Every worker deserves annual salary step increases, honoring their experience on the job and their commitment to UIC.
4. UIC must provide premium pay for relevant certifications and advanced degrees earned by workers.
5. There must be regular, annual across-the-board raises so as not to diminish workers' economic gains and to make up for their past sacrifices.

Governor Pritzker has committed to increase funding for higher education. In his first budget, UIC saw an increase of greater than 4% in funding. Making workers whole for their past sacrifices and keeping up with the rising cost of living requires a 5% across-the-board raise for all workers for every year of the contracts.

"We want to bring both sides together to make UIC a leader in health care and higher education. Workers walked into negotiations with these principles to show UIC that we mean business. We're ready to move forward in a meaningful way. Every job and service we provide matters. We will use our collective power to win for our families and communities," said Dian Palmer, SEIU Local 73 President.

UIC President Tim Killeen recently received a big pay raise, 40%. Workers are asking how the University is investing in them. University administration has often told low wage workers that it's simply too broke to afford bringing them up to market rate for their positions.

"It's important that Building and Service Workers make more than $15 an hour not just to ensure that we are paid fairly for the work that we do, but so that we can have a better way of life. It's a disgrace that UIC has been exempt from the city-wide minimum wage laws. I'm tired of struggling paycheck to paycheck. We deserve more," Sharon Geddis, UIC Building and Service Worker.

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SEIU Local 73 represents more than 29,000 workers, primarily in public service and publicly funded positions in school districts, municipalities, social service agencies, and many other job classifications in Illinois and Indiana. We are dedicated to imporving the lives of workers and their families.