

for the past two days and they consider it unusual because

✓ **Similar** **Strikers** **60** **UCSC** **1990** **reject UC** **1989** **proposal**

BY RENÉE KOURY

Mercury News Staff Writer

BERKELEY — Graduate students and administrators at the University of California, Berkeley, held negotiations Wednesday in the first sign of progress toward ending the five-day strike by graduate teaching assistants.

But during a 90-minute meeting requested by university officials, the administration presented a proposed agreement that was promptly rejected by the Association of Graduate Student Employees. Talks will continue this weekend.

"It's definitely a positive sign and a step forward that they asked us to meet, but we weren't terribly encouraged by their proposal," said Russ Paulson, spokesman for the association. "We will be meeting on Sunday in the hope of reaching a resolution, but we're not optimistic."

UC-Santa Cruz strike

There was no report of any breakthrough in a coinciding three-day strike of graduate teaching assistants at the University of California, Santa Cruz, however.

Wednesday's negotiations at UC-Berkeley were the first since the graduate students walked off their jobs as teaching assistants, research assistants, tutors and readers who grade class papers and exams.

At issue is the university's refusal to allow the graduate students, who are affiliated with the United Auto Workers, to bargain collectively.

Administrators argue that state law doesn't require UC to recognize the students as employees with legal bargaining rights. But the students contend their work is essential to the undergraduate program and that the university should recognize them as a union. Though they aren't fighting for more pay, they want assurances that benefits and working conditions won't deteriorate because of the current UC budget crisis.

Classes canceled

The graduate students say their strike has forced cancellation of 70 percent of classes at the 31,000-student flagship campus, but administrators say only 15 percent were called off.

To show solidarity with the Berkeley strikers and demand bargaining rights of their own, graduate students at UC-Santa Cruz walked off their jobs Monday. No bargaining sessions have been scheduled on that campus.

The graduate teaching assistants typically are assigned to teach "sections" of 25 to 30 undergraduate students from large lecture classes. They meet with the students to discuss the material covered in the professor's lectures, go over difficult areas, answer questions and generate discussion.

They are paid about \$6,000 per semester to teach two sections.