

MAP Statement of Solidarity for COLA Strikes- December 2019

Dear Minorities & Philosophy Community,

We wanted to directly address the current COLA strikes occurring on campus and express our support for the graduate students fighting for COLA. As a chapter of both undergraduate and graduate students, and organized on a volunteer basis by minority undergraduate and graduates in philosophy, we realize that the cost of living in Santa Cruz and stress that income and housing precarity causes impacts us all as a university community. Students should not be going hungry, living in their cars or experiencing homelessness, commuting long distances for their education, working multiple jobs, and experiencing mental health issues as a result of these stressors. We fully believe that we are in this together! As a chapter, we value teaching and educational equity and social justice; the very social justice movements that are taught in our classroom.

With the ever-increasing cost of living here in Santa Cruz, spending 50% or more (usually more) of our income on rent is typical for students, leaving students in a position of economic precarity and constant stress on top of our academic responsibilities. This cost of living adjustment is necessary for graduates to continue to function as quality graduate students and teachers on this campus. In regards to the administration's consistent inaccurate phrasing of the "illegality" of the strike, it should be known that there is a precedent for administrators within the UC system to distribute support packages when necessary, most recently at UCSF for their graduate students in response to the cost of living. This does not require a renegotiation of contract. We have also seen in the cases of teachers strikes in Virginia and graduate student strikes at Harvard (where administrators have negotiated with their employees during the strike). Hence there is nothing legally preventing the administration to meet with employees during a strike and it is merely being used as an intimidation tactic. Especially since there has been and will not be any work stoppage (everyone is still proctoring final exams, doing their regular tasks, and grading for now) until the last moment of the final grade submission deadline.

It should also be noted that graduate students have tried for several years to negotiate a stronger contract. This latest contract ratified in August 2018 had 82.89% of UCSC graduate responders vote **against** its ratification and yet the administration pushed it through. Graduates have also tried to organize in favor of rent control through Measure M, and bring their concerns directly to the university administration- but the administration has not taken those concerns seriously and has not been transparent about what these "short-term and long-term plans" for alleviating graduates students of their economic burden are or WHEN they will be implemented.

The strike is in response to this dismissiveness and inaction. The strike carried overwhelming support both in a straw poll circulated on Friday, December 6 among the rank and file members of the graduate student worker union (with almost 500 responses, with a clear majority indicating a willingness to strike immediately) and in the general assembly held on Sunday. The strike is now in effect. Its rallying call is "No COLA, No Grades".

Organizers have the backs of their undergraduate students and are continuing to proctor exams, do the literal grading of students' work, and they intend to continue supporting their students. Organizers have also been working with the registrar's office to find a way to submit individual grades for students with specific situations requiring them to have a timely transcript (student-athletes, students with scholarships contingent on grades, etc.). Graduate students

want to make it clear that ALL students will receive their grades eventually, and no one's GPA will be impacted by the temporary withholding of grades.

This email is only meant to be an open line of communication and some information for those who are not aware of the reasons behind the strike and the plans being made by organizers going forward. Please don't hesitate to reach out to us at our MAP email account with any questions, concerns, or even inquiries about how you can support your graduate student teachers during this time. We will keep an eye on our email and respond as quickly as possible throughout the remainder of the term.

For more information see the FAQ section of the website for undergraduates, graduates, etc.: <https://payusmoreucsc.com/f-a-q-for-undergrads/>

In Solidarity,
Your MAP Organizers