

December 14, 2019

We, rent-burdened and broadly *overburdened* graduate student parents, express our solidarity with the COLA campaign and the grading strike. As students with dependents, and with childcare bills, we need a COLA. We are on strike for COLA, and will not submit until our demands are met. We call on other graduate students to strike with us.

As a diverse group of parenting UCSC students, we spent countless hours in meetings last school year opposing the privatization of campus childcare with the development of Student Housing West. We followed the university's appropriate channels. We went to all the scheduled meetings with Student Housing Services. We met with numerous administrators. We delivered a petition to administration with 560 signatures opposing the developments. With donors and alumni, we proposed specific ways in which alternative childcare centers could be funded, designed and orchestrated. Supported by the Graduate Students Association, we rallied and protested. Since early 2018, we have asked the university put the quality education of its youngest students at the heart of all that it does. But at a later meeting with George Blumenthal, we were told that the decisions were already made - we had *always been too late*.

Therefore, we echo the comments of past years' student government leaders in saying that graduate students have exhausted all the channels the administration has offered to them. A strike is a reasonable, rational response to graduate students' current situation.

Through the conversations last year, at every point the administration was unable to say if it would have any control over providing quality, affordable childcare for graduate students - this control was being ceded to a private, for-profit company, Bright Horizons. Adding to our pre-existing precarity, we were informed that childcare costs, between \$100 and \$875 a month with UCSC's Early Education Services, would be determined by market rates - currently \$2,000-\$3,000 a month. It is no exaggeration to say that, under these circumstances, graduate student parents will not be able to live here.

On Wednesday, day 3 of the strike, the COLA4ALL group offered to provide FREE independent childcare for students attending a meeting at the Science and Engineering Library. We commend this important material and symbolic gesture, which both 1) supports striking graduate student parents, and their undergraduate parent supporters, and 2) draws attention to the limitations on their political organising. It also raises the issue of the kind of environment we want at UCSC for parents; we see support and solidarity everywhere from the campus community, but none such from the administration.

The signs around campus preach "embracing diversity". We need COLA and we need free quality childcare for the student body to *sustainably* remain diverse. NO COLA, NO GRADES. FREE, QUALITY CHILDCARE FOR ALL.

In solidarity,

Parents for Quality Care,

<https://parentsforqualitycare.org/>