

Statement of Solidarity with UC Santa Cruz Wildcat Strike

We are in solidarity with the striking graduate student workers at UC Santa Cruz, who are demanding a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) of an extra \$1,412 a month. The financial precariousness caused by excessive rent burden in Santa Cruz both 1) results in high levels of stress among graduate student workers, and 2) forces them to work multiple jobs in order to survive. These stressors adversely affect not just the private lives of graduate students, but also their contribution to the institution and, indeed, their ability to do the very work the university requires of them. These workers are necessary for the continued existence of the university as an academic entity, and not listening to their reasonable requests for the rights and dignity of reasonable remuneration is an ill-founded and morally bankrupt stance.

It is obvious that the university has contributed, and continues to contribute, to the higher costs of housing in Santa Cruz. The university brings thousands of people to Santa Cruz; it also owns thousands of rooms of housing for which it charges exorbitant rates, thereby raising the expectations among landlords that they can demand similar rates. Given that the university itself is thus among the main drivers of the rent burden experienced by the graduate students, it falls to the university to support its graduate students and pay them enough to afford housing in Santa Cruz without falling into crushing penury.

Promises to address the housing crisis by building new housing ignore the widely-studied and documented fact that building new housing in-and-of-itself, unless that housing is offered and maintained at well below the artificially-created "market rate," cannot lower rent burden. Furthermore, new housing does not spring forth fully formed like Athena from the head of Zeus. If the university were truly interested in addressing the housing crisis they helped create they would have had to start doing so decades ago. Since the university did not do this, the current promises ring absolutely hollow. In the absence of any meaningful plan to house an increasing student population, the only recourse that graduate students have to decrease their rent burden - now, today, not at some magical time in the future when the university will have built the promised housing - is to demand a living wage.

As people who value direct action and solidarity, we strongly support the tactics of this wildcat strike. We applaud the bold yet necessary action of not waiting for crumbs from an institution that refuses to acknowledge the ways in which it is exploiting workers and students. We also recognize

and applaud the multiple forms of solidarity that the strikers have undertaken, for example, opening the dining hall to workers and students, and supporting the demands of undocumented students.

We call upon the UCSC administration to immediately pay the Cost of Living Adjustment of \$1,412 a month to all graduate students. We condemn any attempts by the administration to intimidate striking student workers. We find laughable, and legally unfounded, the claims that the strike is illegal. And we further demand that there be no retaliation of any kind against the strikers and organizers.

This strike is garnering international attention and support, and this strike is not going away. If you don't care about your workers, you certainly care about your reputation and ranking. A mere glance at the statements of support from around the world should serve as proof of your failure. Your inability to address a reasonable request from *hundreds* of your employees for dignified, sufficiently compensated work is making you look really, really bad, everywhere.

Talk to your striking workers now. Meet their reasonable demands now. Or continue to have UCSC be seen as a sign and symbol of uncaring institutional power. There is no third option. You cannot "win" this fight by ignoring it.

Signed,

Collective members of The Hub for Sustainable Living and its projects: SubRosa Community Space, Indexical, The Bike Church, Hardcore Compost, Sanctuary Santa Cruz, and The Fábrica Textile Arts & Salvage Workshop

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- Blaize Wilkinson, The Fábrica and SubRosa
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