



Representing Contract Faculty, Teaching Assistants, Graduate Assistants,
and Part-Time Librarians and Archivists @York University, Toronto

Canadian Union of Public Employees/Syndicat canadien de la fonction publique local/section locale 3903

December 19, 2019

The CUPE 3903 Executive Committee stands in solidarity with University of California Santa Cruz graduate student workers who began a wildcat strike on December 6th to demand a cost of living adjustment in a city where the cost of living has skyrocketed. We support the UCSC Graduate Student Association (UGSA) in resisting the transformation of educational workers into underpaid and overworked service providers.

Like many graduate students across the sector the striking UC Santa Cruz workers are struggling to pay their rent and afford necessities while providing essential education services for their university. To fight back against this exploitation members of the UC Santa Cruz UGSA are refusing to hand in final grades until the administration meets their demand for a monthly cost of living adjustment.

We recognize that the decision to withhold final grades was not made lightly. This current wildcat strike is the consequence of union campaigning that has been met with consistent hostility from the UC Santa Cruz administration. The UCSC administration relied on a Student Conduct Handbook to disavow valid student protestation and have vilified their graduate students in the media. These underhanded tactics are very familiar to our members.

Whether at York or UC Santa Cruz these actions are representative of an administration that seeks to stifle dissent and discontent from struggling graduate student workers rather than respond in good faith around the bargaining table. Student Conduct charges and an aggressive media campaign are nefarious tactics used to create a docile student-worker population that is forced to absorb the costs of austerity at the expense of their physical and mental wellbeing.

A wildcat strike sends a powerful message to UC Santa Cruz's administration that cost-cutting tactics will be met with resistance from a militant student-worker body. In withholding their final grades, graduate student workers at UC Santa Cruz are demonstrating the power of their labour against the neoliberal onslaught on public education.

We recognize that the wildcat strike at UC Santa Cruz is indicative of a larger struggle against austerity in higher education that we are all subject to as both students and workers. Strike action that demonstrates workers' essential function to the operation of the university remains the most effective tool we have against repressive administrative regimes that attempt to offload cost-cutting onto the backs of graduate student workers.

We call on the UC Santa Cruz administration to immediately meet the demands of UGSA members by paying out the Cost of Living Adjustment needed to support the welfare of UC Santa Cruz's graduate student workers. We also call on UC Santa Cruz faculty to support the strike and to not undermine their colleagues, graduate student workers.

In solidarity,

The CUPE 3903 Executive Committee