

Graduate employees across the United States understand well what it means to have our labor exploited with marginal or insufficient remuneration. In terms of procuring basics of life like food and housing, our lives are often precarious. Few of us experience this precarity more consistently than the graduate employees at UC Santa Cruz, who make \$2400 per month in a city where average rent for one month is somewhere between \$1800 and \$3200, depending on whom you ask.

The implications of these numbers are clear. At best, the average graduate employee at UC Santa Cruz is spending 80% of their monthly income on rent. At worst, they are going into debt just to rent an apartment in the city where they are employed, before spending a single penny on food, gas, hygiene, medical care, or other basic necessities.

The federal government defines "severe rent burden" as the highest category of housing precarity for those lucky enough to not be homeless. Clearly, UC Santa Cruz graduate employees are being subjected to rent and labor exploitation sufficient to push them deep into this category. This situation is unacceptable on multiple levels.

For one thing, every human being deserves shelter in which to live in safety and health. For another, no employer should remunerate their employees so poorly that those employees are forced into rent burden by the simple arithmetic of living in the same city where they work. This situation is especially outrageous given that UC Santa Cruz is a major public institution within one of the wealthiest states in the wealthiest country on the planet, and can easily afford to pay its workers better.

Graduate employees are the labor backbone of university research and teaching in the modern United States. UC Santa Cruz is no different, and their administrators are aware of this fact. This makes their unwillingness to provide a living wage to some of their most vulnerable employees all the more appalling.

As such, AFT 6069, the Coalition of Graduate Employees at Oregon State University, stands in solidarity with the striking members of UAW 2865 at UCSC, and calls on UCSC administration to immediately provide to their graduate workers the living wage they rightfully deserve.