**TEMPLATE COLA SCRIPT, CLASS 1 OF WINTER QUARTER 2020**

**Slide 1: COLA!**

Before we start, I’d like to ask for 5 minutes of your time to give an overview of the graduate student grading strike. We want you to stay updated and have accurate information.

**Slide 2: What is COLA?**

This year, graduate students have been demanding a Cost of Living Adjustment for all graduate students. Currently, graduate student TAs at every UC make $2,434 a month before taxes, for only 9 months of the year. Housing scholars define “rent burden” as paying 30% of your income on housing - most graduate students in Santa Cruz pay 50% of their income on housing, defined as “extreme rent burden”. A Cost of Living Adjustment would make up for the extremely high cost of living in Santa Cruz.

**Slide 3: Our website/ FAQs, instagram, twitter**

I am here to answer any questions you might have, but I also want to point you to the COLA website, that we work tirelessly to update. It features FAQs for undergrads around things like financial aid and academic probation, has an account of the emails sent between administration and grad student organisers, and a folder full of memes.

Follow us on social media to stay updated. Here is our instagram - [https://www.instagram.com/payusmoreucsc](https://www.instagram.com/payusmoreucsc/) and twitter <https://twitter.com/payusmoreucsc>.

**Slide 4: Why a strike?**

This grading strike was called after years of meetings in earnest with administration to address the cost of living - some of this history has been [documented in a letter on our website from graduate student leaders from the past 5 years](https://payusmoreucsc.com/history-of-students-attempts-to-engage-admin/). However, the solutions presented to us by administration are bandaids - like food pantries, Calfresh, and emails sent urging faculty to rent out rooms in their homes to students. Rather than impermanent, short-term solutions, graduate students concretely need a raise, or none of us will be able to live here.

Recently, graduate students have been sending their stories of life without a COLA to administration. You can find them on our website, but some of their details include:

* A grad student who was unhoused for a year, living in an office on campus - in the same year as 7 of their colleagues in their department also slept in offices.
* A grad student who avoided medical care due to the cost, escalating to hospitalizations.
* A grad student who was subject to 5 years of stachybotrys poisoning (mold poisoning) due to a criminally negligent landlord and having no affordable alternatives. They go into debt every month, while skipping meals, and going to the OPERS food pantry three times a week.
* And many more, terrible stories.

**Slide 5: Solidarity from undergraduate organizations/ why this is good for undergraduates**

We care a lot about our undergraduates, and stand in solidarity with them. Any COLA for grad students is contingent on the administration not raising tuition, and not raising any fees for undergrads. We will also fight side by side with you for free tuition and affordable on-campus housing. The demand for a COLA for grad students has also expanded into a coalition of undergrads, grads and workers fighting in the COLA4ALL campaign, which demands a living wage for workers, lecturers, undergraduates, and students at the other UCs.

For those of you interested in going to grad school, or who plan to have any relationship with the university in the future, this will affect you directly!

**Slide 6: Local, National and International Solidarity**

This strike has garnered support from students, faculty, workers, other campuses, labor and academic community, city and across the world. More than 1,800 supporters signed the general solidarity petition, the strike fund collected more than $10,000, and solidarity statements came from more than forty organizations locally, nationally, and globally — including by the United Teachers of Los Angeles, who organized a successful strike this year.

The wildcat strike has had a particularly electrifying effect on other University of California campuses, sparking rallies in support of UCSC’s wildcat strike and conversations about their own Cost of Living Adjustment at UC Berkeley, Davis, Los Angeles, and Santa Barbara. On Monday, January 6, AFSCME K7 workers, UCSC electricians, plumbers, carpenters, HVAC mechanics, are going on an open-ended strike. AFT’s, union representing UCSC lecturers, contract is going to expire at the end of this month. The COLA movement can go in many directions, and as UCSC graduate students are returning from winter break, we will hold multiple meetings, including a Strike General Assembly on January 9, to determine an escalation strategy.