



DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY  
505 MCCONE HALL 94720-4740

DR. CAROL CHRIST  
Office of the Chancellor  
University of California, Berkeley  
200 California Hall #1500  
Berkeley, CA 94720

February 20, 2020

To Chancellor Christ,

We, Graduate Students of the UC Berkeley Department of Geography, write to express our strongest support for the striking graduate students at UC Santa Cruz. We write as part of a broader coalition of graduate students across UC Berkeley and in solidarity with movements emerging across other UC campuses. We condemn all efforts to silence the demands of UCSC students, staff, and faculty by means of threat, retaliation and direct physical and psychological violence. The University of California Board of Regents explicitly recognizes a commitment to “nurture and maintain a diverse academic community.” In working collectively to achieve a living wage, the graduate students at UC Santa Cruz are asking the University and the Regents to make good on this promise and ensure that all members of the graduate student community can meet their own basic needs and human rights such as food and shelter.

Inequalities of wealth and income directly call into question the Board of Regents’ commitments to students’ health and wellbeing, equal access to education, and diversity. The graduate students at UC Santa Cruz, fighting on behalf of many more than themselves, have taken important leadership on an issue that the University and the Regents are bound to support by their own Charter and Principles of Community. We recognize the obligation of UC Santa Cruz and the Regents to work with students in a collaborative and supportive way to meet all of the demands made by the strike, and we ask that you, as Chancellor of UC Berkeley issue an immediate statement in support of the striking students and condemning the retaliatory actions against them in the harshest terms. That University officials should authorize violence against students is unconscionable and must be held to account. This abuse of authority is compounded by the way in which UCSC has specifically targeted international students, undocumented students, and those with student visa status. Those responsible for barring students from their housing, intimidating students, and deploying police against the strike should be compelled to resign immediately. Our administrators must never use their authority to suppress students’ political rights and collective speech. These public officials must be held fully accountable for injuries and damages to those whom they are bound by law to protect and whose rights they must respect.

The students on strike at UC Santa Cruz represent all of us, undergraduate and graduate students alike, as we struggle to access higher education in light of conditions of extreme financial precarity. The strike at UCSC is a response to the urgency that debt and skyrocketing costs of living have placed upon us, which have made our lives as scholars, educators and supporters of our public university system untenable. Furthermore, income inequality compounds other forms of structural inequality and creates a less accessible and less diverse public University. That such inequalities currently undermine the mission of the University should inspire urgent action, and indeed, their very persistence should cause us shame, given the power and the means the University of California wields and its responsibility to address these issues. There is a clear pattern of behavior in the University’s contentious, adversarial negotiations with students and systematic devaluing of our many union-represented University employees.

We stand in solidarity with the wildcat strike and we call upon the leadership of UC Berkeley and the University of California system to take immediate action to support students and to ensure that UC Santa Cruz meet all of the demands of the strike.

Signed,

Chris Lesser

Nick Anderman

Jane Henderson

Ailén Vega

Alexander Arroyo

Xiaowei Wang

Sam Stein

Robert Moeller

John Elrick

Jeff Martin

S.E. Freeman

Caralyn Gorman

Yanlei Feng

April L. Graham-Jackson

Xander Lenc

Brittany Meché

Will Payne

Caroline Tracey

Adam Jadhav

Lauren R. Pearson

Kaily Heitz

Morgan P. Vickers

Sherine Ebadi

Brittany H. Young

Kerby Lynch

Keith Brower Brown

Leonora Zoninsein

Alex Chow