

Virtual Speakout: Faculty Statements of Support for Graduate Students

I hope there can be a rapid resolution of this labor conflict that respects the graduate students and their needs for housing and support, does not discipline striking students, and seeks to build an academic community with sustainable living conditions for the long haul.

--Ron Glass, Education

Graduate students are an essential component of a research university and the academy. Their work is impeded by housing challenges and food insecurity. I urge the university to respond with a solution and a non-punitive resolution to this conflict. I am appalled by how the administration has handled COLA thus far the stress they have put on students and faculty.

--Margarita Azmitia Psychology Department

I am gravely concerned with graduate student housing needs and urge a speedy and meaningful resolution to the conflict that does not exacerbate tensions between the administration, faculty, and graduate and undergraduate students. The future of graduate studies at UCSC is imperiled by both the lack of financial support and the increasingly contentious nature of discourse surrounding this issue.

--Carolyn Dean, History of Art & Visual Culture

I am writing to express concern for graduate student housing needs and to affirm my support for graduate student efforts to gain greater financial support. I oppose the proposals to discipline graduate students for their activism, and urge you to find a speedy and meaningful resolution to the conflict.

--Neda Atanasoski, Professor of Feminist Studies

Our graduate students should be praised, not punished, for requesting a COLA.

--Tsim Schneider, Anthropology

I support the right of graduate students to be able to have quality of life (right to safe housing) while pursuing their degrees and working for the university. They should not be punished as students ("misconduct" etc) for actions they were forced to take as employees of the university.

--Josefina Lundblad-Janjić, Languages & Applied Linguistics

My graduate students are essential to my job as a researcher and a teacher. If they can't afford basic necessities like housing, they can't do their jobs, and neither can I. I will not cooperate with any actions that seek to punish students for seeking a living wage.

--Owen Arden, Computer Science and Engineering

The graduate students are to be congratulated for focusing the campus on a problem that is hurting everyone: the cost of living in Santa Cruz. Punitive action against the graduate students is nonsensical. We need to all work together to address what designers call a "wicked problem," the cost of living, a problem that is entangled with many others.

--Warren Sack, Professor, Film + Digital Media

The precarity of graduate life in Santa Cruz makes it increasingly difficult to recruit prospective grads from diverse backgrounds. This is a social justice issue. We can't become an institution that only grants PhDs to the already-privileged.

--Madeleine Fairbairn, Environmental Studies

Dear UCSC Administration, I would here like to express my support for the UCSC graduate students in their search for higher wages to offset the high cost of living in Santa Cruz. In particular, I reject proposals to discipline them for their activism and urge both parties to work towards a speedy and meaningful resolution to the conflict

--Stacy Philpott, Environmental Studies

As a faculty lecturer, I am concerned about the situation of the graduate students and empathize with their cause. How are they supposed to concentrate on their research if they are on a day-to-day basis, not only about their precarious conditions as graduate students, but also with the adjunctification of university systems, their futures? What is happening at universities also has a negative effect on universities themselves, as well as the quality of education at large. Perhaps in the future less young people will want to embark on the route to become Ph.D. researchers if there is such a stark scenario on the horizon. I really hope that the university will listen to the graduate students and work with them.

--Juli Hazlewood, Rachel Carson College

It is heartbreaking that our "radical" campus (a campus in one of the wealthiest states in the US) is not even able to engage in constructive dialogue—without threats of retaliation—with our grad students about how, given the current housing market, to fairly compensate their essential work. No one can live in Santa Cruz on the amount that we pay our students (everyone knows that even faculty struggle to live in this astronomically priced community), and no one can be expected to study, do research, grade papers, and mentor students when their basic housing needs are completely inadequate.

--Irene Lusztig

I support a speedy, meaningful, and non-punitive resolution to the graduate students' request for additional financial support in light of the especially high cost of housing in Santa Cruz. Besides helping our current graduates students, additional support would help in recruiting and retaining new graduate students--as we regularly lose prospective students due to the high cost of living here.

--Campbell Leaper, Psychology

Graduate students are essential colleagues in all our core endeavors as a university: teaching, research and service. The lack of adequate planning to date and the resulting crisis calls for strong and proactive leadership to address the problem; threats of punitive measures are counterproductive. I urge the administration to work with the students toward a speedy and equitable solution to the current situation, and to begin a comprehensive planning effort to address graduate student quality of life issues in the future (including sustainable growth).

--Karen Bassi, Literature

I support the graduate students in their efforts to achieve a solution to their housing crisis.

--Nicolas Davidenko, Psychology

Santa Cruz is the most expensive small city in America and it's only reasonable to provide the necessary financial support to graduate students who live here and who do so much to make UCSC a top-flight university. Housing in Santa Cruz is obscenely expensive, when it is even available. UC administration from the Regents to the UCSC Chancellor must be actively responsive to this ongoing crisis and rather than penalize grad students who are exhausted by their precarity, to cooperate with them in finding a lasting solution that takes the high cost of living in Santa Cruz into account.

--Todd N Thorpe Cowell College

I'm pleased about the new five-year support for students and look forward to details on how departments and divisions will be funded for it, but I remain concerned that the cost of living situation has not yet been adequately addressed in the Chancellor's plan. I hope that rather than disciplinary action, the administration can enter into dialogue with students via the UAW so that there may be a quick resolution to an escalating situation.

--Peter Limbrick, Professor, Film and Digital Media

Our graduate students are being forced to live in substandard conditions due to their low wages. This is not a good way to run a university. Teaching assistants need better wages now.

--Anna Tsing

Our graduate students are hard working, thoughtful and talented scholars. They deserve respect and support from local campus administrators and from the University of California Office of the President. I hope the current student actions, and their UAW union representation, will bring all parties to the negotiating table for an amicable resolution. More financial support for education is the long-term goal of all concerned, administration and students alike. The real enemies are state legislators and pundits who seek to dismantle our university system through sustained budget cuts and divisive politics, profit-hungry landlords, and basic greed. As we support our students' right to a COLA, let's also reinvigorate our demands for higher state funding for education and support local rent control laws.

--Jennifer A. Gonzalez, History of Art and Visual Culture

I strongly urge the administration to speedily and meaningfully address graduate students' economic precarity and to resolve the conflict in a way that avoids disciplining participants and those who have supported them.

--Janette Dinishak, Philosophy

I fully support students' use of the only strategy that has gotten due attention paid to their urgent financial and housing needs. Punishing them for such activism would produce nothing but more obstacles to students pursuing training and research.

--Amanda Lashaw

Our UCSC graduate students should be commended for bringing attention to such urgent problems of housing insecurity, food insecurity, and economic precarity. Graduate students are the backbone of this institution, and their labor is what allows the university to fulfill its missions of high-quality undergraduate education and cutting-edge research production. I support the graduate students in their efforts, and urge the administration to work toward a speedy resolution that meaningfully addresses the skyrocketing cost of living in Santa Cruz. I wholeheartedly oppose any punitive measures against graduate students struggling for dignity in their living and working conditions.

--Camilla Hawthorne, Sociology

I support the graduate student efforts to address their housing needs and to have open conversations with the administration. The unwillingness of the administration to talk to students about their concerns AND to, in turn, punish them for taking action, is disturbing. There were several legal professionals available to the admin to figure out how to proceed in an ethical way. The fact that disciplinary action is on the table for students who are in otherwise great academic standing is not something I support.

--Shelly Grabe, Psychology

I support UCSC graduate students in their efforts to secure a living wage. Faculty have had regular increases over the past several years, and the university should ensure the same for graduate students whose pay has not kept up with the rising cost of living. I call on the administration to open direct communications with the students and to end punitive responses that only deepen everyone's frustration.

--Neel Ahuja, Feminist Studies/CRES

I believe our graduate students as employees and students at the University have the right to a living wage that allows them to work and live well in Santa Cruz and the surrounding areas. There should not be any retaliation for their efforts to demand a COLA. I urge the administration to come to a dialogue and negotiate with the strikers through UAW to come to a resolution.

--Nidhi Mahajan, Anthropology

UCSC should be committed to producing successful graduate and undergraduate students, and contributing to diversity in academia and beyond. These core goals cannot be fully realized as long as graduate students -- particular those from less privileged backgrounds -- are burdened by a deeply unrealistic wage-to-rent ratio.

--Ryan Bennett (Linguistics)

I am deeply concerned about the well-being of our graduate students, who face extreme rent burden to pursue their studies at UCSC. As an assistant professor with children, I also struggled with rent burden my first years here and, therefore, know firsthand the toll it takes on research and quality of work in general. I cannot even imagine trying to survive in Santa Cruz on the graduate student stipend. I support graduate student efforts to gain greater financial support through the COLA campaign and am deeply disappointed in the administration's move to discipline them for their actions. I support a speedy and meaningful resolution to this conflict that involves administration working directly with the UAW.

--Amanda M. Smith, Literature

The wildcat strike carried out in Fall Quarter, and the one planned for Winter Quarter, are a reasonable response to 15 years of gradual abandonment of the basic needs of graduate students by an institution that relies on them for its business model. The administration must do more than it has proposed to meet these students' needs, in order that the transformation of UCSC into a research institution be sustainable. And the administration should recognize its contribution to the conditions that led to this action by not pursuing disciplinary actions against these students, who are acting responsibly out of extreme duress.

--Dean Mathiowetz, Politics

Graduate students and adjunct lecturers carry so much of the teaching load at this campus and they cannot survive on the wages they receive. It's as simple as that. The administration needs to take this seriously -- and the failure to take this seriously is why this strike is happening.

--Madeline Lane-McKinley, Writing, lecturer

I stand in solidarity with striking Graduate students and reject as reprehensible, myopic, and authoritarian (to say it mildly) the threat and implementation of disciplinary actions against them. With a profound lack of vision, these ill-advised measures by the administration are further undermining our community. Listen to our graduate, and undergraduate students with the same attention and interest, you listen to your risk-averse and tunnel-vision legal advisers. Students are rising worldwide against the neoliberalization of education. Open your eyes, your hearts, and your wallet!

--Fernando Leiva, LALS

UCSC's grad students are one of the main faces of UCSC to undergrads, and -- if they are not stretched too thin -- of UCSC as they move forward in their professional lives. The reputation of this university is on the line if as a university we do not support -- materially and substantially rather than just rhetorically -- these hard working young scholars who sacrifice so much for their students, even in the context of the very difficult living conditions in Santa Cruz and environs. Please, UCSC: put the needs of your students -- all your students -- first!

--Derede Arthur, Writing Program

I wholeheartedly support our graduate student's efforts and hope for pragmatic and effective change.

--Marianne Weems

UCSC administration needs to rescind the charges against graduate students who are being accused of violating the student code of conduct because they apparently deleted grades from Canvas. Pursuing those charges will only make this conflict more intractable. Instead, our administration should focus its work on resolving the conflict quickly and meaningfully. Graduate student activism has raised awareness about how acutely untenable their financial situation is in the context of our local housing market. Whether the programs recently announced are a sufficient response to that problem is unclear. However, it is clear that a very unhelpful approach is to simultaneously pursue trumped-up judicial charges against those graduate student activists whom the administration needs to engage.

--Megan Thomas, Politics

I, too, am concerned that our graduate students are unable to find affordable housing--and I support their efforts to come away with more substantial income. I do not think they should be disciplined for those efforts. And I support and hope for a resolution of the conflict by prompt adoption of a COLA.

--Margaret Amis, Writing Program

Student activism has been and continues to be absolutely vital to the long-term project of creating a more just, democratic, and inclusive university. Disruption and social movements are necessary responses to structural inequalities and enduring social problems. If our campus truly believes in social justice and equity (as it proclaims), then our administration should be actively working alongside our graduate students to find real solutions and to address their demands, and should NOT be punishing them for their collective efforts to improve our campus.

--Jessica Taft, Latin American & Latino Studies

I hope both parties can sit down and negotiate a non-punitive resolution of this conflict

--Sara Niedzwiecki, Politics Department

Modern universities are complex things and yet for all their complexity, I keep coming back to a simple reality. Nearly half of all undergraduates at UCSC now major in the Social Science Division. As a result, we can say that UCSC is disproportionately dependent on the Social Science Division. The Social Science Division in turn is disproportionately dependent on TAs in order to be able to offer the large classes that are necessary for such a large number of undergraduates to complete their degrees. TAs in turn must be paid enough to live in Santa Cruz if we are going to continue to ask them to perform the work that is so essential to our viability as an institution. To summarize: UCSC depends to a great degree on the Social Science Division, the Social Science Division depends to a great degree on TAs, and TAs simply have to be able to live here in order to work here.

--Kent Eaton, Chair of Politics

I am deeply concerned about how the cost of living in Santa Cruz adversely impacts our graduate students. I believe they are striking for justified reasons and should not, in any way, be punished for their struggle and bravery. Students at UCSC are hit especially hard by housing costs and the administration should prioritize a resolution. I sincerely hope that the administration can engage in a dialog with graduate student representatives and arrive at an equitable and just solution.

--Jason Samaha, Psychology

Graduate labor is essential for a thriving university, and the ability to pay for affordable housing is essential for thriving graduate students. I support the graduate students in their efforts to gain greater financial support from the university.

--Robbie Kubala, Philosophy

I support a proactive, solutions-oriented dialogue between all necessary parties to resolve what is a difficult and nuanced situation.

--Robin Hunicke - AGPM

I support our graduate students and their struggle to achieve affordable housing in Santa Cruz. I am confident that the administration and our students can achieve a non-punitive resolution of this conflict that provides students with immediate financial help. In the long term, the university must find a way to build more affordable housing for students and other members of our campus community so that they are no longer hostage to ever increasing rents.

--Nathaniel Deutsch, History

I support our students' grievances concerning the cost of living in Santa Cruz, I call on the university administration to offer them adequate financial support for their needs, and I call for a speedy and non-punitive resolution of the conflict.

--Banu Bargu, History of Consciousness

Punitive measures do not support communication or advance the common goal of a true resolution.

--Noriko Aso, History

I am concerned about the housing situation facing UCSC students. I urge UCSC's administration to continue working on this issue (current plans do not seem to address the matter fully) and to move forward without taking punitive actions against graduate students who have been active in the struggle for a COLA.

--Eric Porter, History, HistCon, CRES

Rather than punishing grad students for protesting a situation that puts them into economic precarity, UCSC's administration could vociferously and publicly protest UCOP's bad labor politics and drive home the actual untenability of a university which is utterly dependent on grad student labor but unwilling to pay them enough to live here.

--Debbie Gould, Sociology

The precarious living situation of our graduate students due to inadequate pay in an out-of-control housing market is unconscionable and clearly at a crisis point for the future viability of the university. I am writing to urge the administration to meet with the graduate students to find a resolution to this situation, and to do so without disciplinary action of any kind—but instead with recognition of their willingness to risk so much and to invest so much time in courageously trying to address a serious instability and contradiction in the university's mission.

--A. Laurie Palmer

Our grad students need support in their campaign for housing and adequate pay.

--Ronnie Lipschutz, Politics

I urge the University to negotiate in good faith with the graduate students, and without imposing punitive sanctions.

--Andrew S. Mathews

Graduate students at UCSC have reached a crisis of no return, where their economic precarity has made it impossible for them to live where they study and work. This exacts an enormous toll on students, and furthermore discourages excellent prospective graduate students from accepting admission here. I strongly support our graduate students, and support a speedy resolution to this crisis without penalty to striking students or their supporters.

--Anna Friz, Film & Digital Media

UCSC graduate students, like all members of our community, face major cost-of-living challenges. The university's refusal to meet with striking students and threats to punish them are counterproductive. The university administration needs to talk with striking students to seek solutions and resolution together.

--Greg O'Malley, History

The high cost of housing has been a barrier to attracting students to our new LALS graduate program. The administration must honor students need for support and there should be no retaliation for those exercising their right to organize collectively. I stand in solidarity with graduate students who demand housing equity.

--Pat Zavella, Latin American and Latino Studies

I write in support of graduate students and share their concerns about the high cost of housing. I am in support of a speedy and meaningful resolution to the conflict.

--Gabriela Arredondo

I strongly support the call for dialogue and a quick resolution of the conflict surrounding the grade strike, in a way that meaningfully addresses graduate students' needs for adequate financial/housing support, and refrains from disciplinary actions against individual students.

--Eva Bertram, Politics



--Jerry Zee, anthropology

Graduate student labor is essential to this university and our students are struggling to survive in Santa Cruz. The administration should be advocating on students' behalf, rather than threatening to punish them for their efforts to be heard.

--Hillary Angelo, Sociology

I support our graduate students as they organize to get out of housing insecurity and massive rent burden. Graduate students and staff who do not have to worry about having a roof over their heads help make for a stronger and flourishing university; no one who works here should have to worry about not having enough money to make rent or buy food. I encourage the administration to sit down with graduate students and come to a meaningful resolution soon. Moreover, no disciplinary action should be taken, as it is counterproductive to punish students who are seeking a living wage, especially when administration has refused to talk with them.

--Regina Day Langhout, Psychology

I recognize that low wages, a housing shortage and extremely high costs of living mean that UCSC graduate students struggle to make ends meet. I believe that a living wage is a fundamental right. But beliefs aside, I know that I rely on the labor of graduate students to fulfill my mission both as a researcher and as an educator. I refuse to participate in any punitive actions against any students, and urge both sides to hasten negotiations in order to end this ugly and embarrassing dispute.

--Peter Alvaro, CSE

I am deeply concerned about the housing crisis our students face, and I support their efforts to gain the consistent financial support they need. I am troubled by recent efforts to discipline students for their activism, but remain hopeful that a meaningful resolution can be made quickly.

--Jeffrey Erbig, LALS Department

Our campus's inability to make graduate study financially feasible may break the back of the unique doctoral programs that we have spent years--decades--trying to build. These students are here because we saw a special fit with us. It breaks my heart that they will have to tell prospective grad students, in all honesty, that one cannot live here.

--Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Literature

Please do not take punitive disciplinary measures against our graduate students. You know as well as I do that COLA is a just cause; please negotiate with them to resolve the situation for now. Most important too is that UC must take on the big real estate interests all over the state and in Santa Cruz driving gentrification, and unconscionable rents, sometimes in conditions that should have owners criminally sanctioned. This is both a local and state-wide struggle, but we in Santa Cruz can be more compassionate and pro-active, and kind to truly brilliant young scholars.

--Bettina Aptheker, Feminist Studies

I am deeply concerned about grad student housing needs and the need for greater financial support. I am also concerned for a meaningful resolution to this conflict that doesn't punish grad students strikers.

--Lindsey Dillon, Sociology

The affordable housing crisis in CA is the worst in the U.S., and in Santa Cruz, among the worst in CA. The majority of our grad students are experiencing this crisis just as local low-income renters do: facing extreme rent burdens that force them to go without basic needs; lack of access to safe and adequate housing; frequent forced moves and housing precarity, including bouts of homelessness; and/or "extreme commutes" from outside the region or even state. Grad students are the backbone and heart of our teaching, research, and public mission at the UC, and we all know this is untenable, and unconscionable. It is my hope that UCSC, and ultimately the UC, can reach a meaningful resolution to both increase grad student wages and create affordable graduate student housing—and that this is the first step in committing to just and equitable living conditions for students, staff, and faculty across the UC.

--Miriam Greenberg, Sociology

Graduate student well-being is central to the intellectual vitality of the university. They must be supported at sustainable levels. We should resolve this conflict quickly and justly.

--Craig Haney, Department of Psychology

Graduate students are a vital part of our university and are central to the mission of the institution. Their health, well-being, and academic achievement are dependent on their economic security. A swift resolution of the current conflict through dialogue is the best way to ensure the long-term health of our institution and all of its constituent communities.

--Phillip L. Hammack, Psychology

Graduate students are indispensable for a top notch research university and I support UCSC finding affordable housing solutions. I lament that housing has become increasingly stressful and burdensome for grad students, UCSC staff, and all civil servants who work for the public good.

--Christine King, Kresge & Porter Colleges

I would like to see admin open a dialogue with students and cease the inflammatory and punitive rhetoric. Grads are trying to survive as they live, work, and study in one of the most expensive regions in the country. To deny them the dignity of a COLA, or even a serious conversation, is simply unconscionable.

--A.M. Darke, Games and Playable Media, DANM

The university cannot thrive without its graduate students, but its graduate students must be able to support themselves. We urge you to provide subsidized housing and to put pressure on the city to build affordable housing. Meanwhile, we also urge you to offer a financial subsidy that compensates for the exorbitant cost of housing in Santa Cruz. Please work swiftly to address the critical cost-of-living needs of UCSC graduate students.

--Carla Freccero, Literature

I strongly support the graduate students' and others' struggle for a COLA. The response by the administration has been painful and angering. I support the announced strike, and I will support it any way I can.

--Robert Majzler, Psychology and College 10

In light of the (incredible) way the administrators' salaries have gone up, graduate students deserve at least COLA. Exercising power by disciplining the students for their activism would only make the matter worse.

--??, Languages and Applied Linguistics

I support the COLA strike and a livable wage for all UCSC employees, and I would like to see a speedy and non-punitive resolution to the situation.

--Hunter Bivens, Literature

I support the striking graduate student's demands for a COLA. UCSC's mission is to use innovative practices to work for social and environmental justice, and in this situation, the graduate students are the ones working towards that mission. The brilliant analysis, by the strikers, of the local housing crisis as an example of global neoliberal crisis, and of the moral responsibility of the university administration to provide a solution, should be a wake up call to us all to restructure the university in a way that is both sustainable and ethical.

--micha cárdenas, Critical Race and Ethinc Studies, Digital Arts and New Media, Games and Playable Media

I am in support of our graduate students and in creating a speedy and non-punitive resolution of this important issue.

--Rebecca Covarrubias, Associate Professor of Psychology

Dear UCSC administration, I urge you to start discussions with our graduate student community immediately and to remove any threat of punitive action for winter quarter's withholding of grades. I applaud the administration's willingness to seek new solutions for the financial burden of our students, and urge you to move into negotiations with them to resolve this situation as soon as possible.

--Elaine Sullivan, History