



FACULTY ORGANIZING GROUP

March 2, 2020

Governor Gavin Newsom
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814
Phone: (916) 445-2841

Dear Governor Newsom,

We write as the UC Santa Cruz Faculty Organizing Group, formed in 2009 to respond rapidly and flexibly to social, political, and legal crises affecting our campus and the University of California system as a whole. We are against the privatization of the public university. Currently, our immediate concern is UC's response to the UCSC graduate student wildcat strike for a cost of living adjustment (COLA), which began on December 8, 2019 and is ongoing. In a letter dated [February 14, President Janet Napolitano](#) threatened students that if they failed to submit Fall 2019 grades and persisted in striking beyond Friday, February 21, their positions for Spring 2020 would be terminated. Since that time, and in response to that threat, we have witnessed a groundswell of support across the system and nationwide for the striking graduate students. This support includes:

- 1) On February 18, the Council of UC Faculty Associations (CUCFA)'s [letter to the President](#), calling for de-escalation and negotiation;
- 2) On February 19, [two statements](#) from the UC Academic Council, one calling for an agreement to be reached through new collective bargaining to address demands by graduate students for housing and food security ("Statement on UCSC Graduate Students' Strike") and one condemning the UC administration's use of armed police at UC Santa Cruz ("Statement on Police Presence at UCSC");
- 3) On February 19, the passage at the senate meeting of a UCSC [Academic Senate resolution](#) censuring the use of police on campus; urging the suspension of retaliatory measures, including already issued disciplinary summons and the threats of termination; and calling for substantive dialogue between the UCSC administration, UCOP, and the graduate students on a matter of system-wide urgency;
- 4) The issuing of 10 [statements pledging non-retaliation](#) against graduate students withholding Fall 2019 grades from departments across UCSC (Education, Sociology, Psychology, Latino and Latin American Studies, Politics, Literature, History, Digital Arts and New Media, Art and Design: Games and Playable Media);
- 5) News that graduate students at [UC Davis](#) and [UC Santa Barbara](#) launched a grading strike and full teaching strike, respectively. Students at [UC San Diego](#) have also pledged to strike should UC administrators follow through on the threats to terminate UCSC students from current or future employment;
- 6) The issuing of at least three faculty statements of non-retaliation, now signed by nearly 600 UC faculty, in support of graduate student workers who choose to participate in COLA-related actions at [UCLA](#), [UC Davis](#), and [UC Berkeley](#);

- 7) On February 21, a march at UCSC that drew an estimated 1,000 protesters, including graduate students, undergraduates, faculty, lecturers, and staff;
- 8) On February 21, solidarity strike actions at [7 other UC campuses](#);
- 9) [Statements from graduate students](#) in 13 UCSC departments and divisions to date (Anthropology, Arts Division, Biomolecular Engineering, Chemistry, Earth and Planetary Sciences, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, Education, Environmental Studies, Feminist Studies, History of Consciousness, Literature, Physics, Sociology) collectively pledging to refuse Spring appointments for positions vacated by disciplinary actions taken against the striking students;
- 10) A [pledge of solidarity](#) with UCSC student workers and supporting “a more equitable standard of living,” signed by 3,000 faculty from around the world.
- 11) Renewed demands from the UCSC faculty – affirmed in [an all-campus letter](#) with nearly 200 signatures – to support a robust graduate student COLA and condemning firings and other retaliatory actions.
- 12) A call from the [California Labor Federation](#) for the UC to bargain with the UAW-2865.
- 13) On Friday, February 28, [the announcement](#) by interim EVC Lori Kletzer that 54 graduate students who are withholding fall grades were dismissed from their spring appointments, with further emailed notifications indicating a possible 80 students have been fired.

The need for a COLA is clearly not unique to UC Santa Cruz, and a system-wide demand for living wages is growing. The largest and best public university system in the world depends on its pedagogically trained graduate students to provide indispensable face-to-face learning in a time of increasing undergraduate enrollments throughout the state of California. Here at UC Santa Cruz, which has the [highest student-faculty ratio](#) in the UC, a faculty of outstanding instructors and talented and skilled graduate teaching assistants make it possible to deliver a first-rate education. Graduate students receive extensive, field-specific pedagogical training in inclusive teaching methods, thus enabling the professional success of an increasingly diverse undergraduate student body at a time of institutional underfunding.

Our graduate students are central to the everyday functioning and long-term future of the UC in many ways – not only as teaching assistants, but as research assistants, lab workers, and writing collaborators. Yet many, if not most, graduate students cannot meet their basic needs given the high cost of living in Santa Cruz, the third most expensive and the number one least affordable metro area in California, and indeed, in the entire United States. It’s not surprising then, that 60-70% of Santa Cruz renters are “rent burdened” and spend over 30% of their income on rent, while many attempt to make ends meet by living in overcrowded or unsafe conditions, enduring lengthy commutes, or facing periods of homelessness. The “California Dream” that you, Governor Newsom, so eloquently invoked in your [State of the State speech](#) in February 2020, is fundamentally built on the UC system. One of the most robust systems of public education in this country, the UC stands for social mobility and social justice; this is especially the case for our campus. These very values risk being dismantled as our graduate students face extreme housing precarity and higher education becomes available only for those privileged few who do not need a wage-earning job to pursue their degrees.

The firing of teaching assistants will seriously erode our ability to deliver a world-class undergraduate public education and to maintain the renowned doctoral programs that keep the UC at the forefront of cutting-edge research. Students whose appointments are rescinded will lose valuable training, incur further debt, become unable to continue in their doctoral programs, and in some cases lose visas and be obliged to leave the country.

The last two weeks have witnessed tremendous solidarity across UCSC, the UC system, and the country. Graduate and undergraduate students, faculty, and lecturers (who perform some 40% of teaching in the UC and whose own contract expired on January 31, 2020) have joined together. We urge you to listen to the thousands of people calling

upon the University of California to become a national leader in promoting cost-of-living adjusted wage equity for the student workers in the UC. Do not allow the core mission, reputation, and future of the University of California to be compromised on your watch.

We ask you, Governor Newsom, to:

- 1) Encourage President Napolitano and the UC Regents to return to the bargaining table and negotiate with UAW for a cost-of-living adjustment for graduate students;
- 2) Work together with President Napolitano and the UC Regents to address the need for additional funding to expand affordable student housing at UCSC and other UC campuses;
- 3) Invest state resources in the University of California to fully support the unfunded graduate growth initiatives undertaken over the last decade, and ensure that UCSC receives a fair share of these investments;
- 4) Allocate \$310 million per year to the permanent budget of the University of California from the present state surplus, and earmark those funds for cost-of-living adjustments in the form of graduate student fellowships, teaching assistantships, and research assistant positions for MFA and doctoral students. This amount is based on the “UAW 2865 Framework to Address Cost of Living Issues Facing ASEs at the University of California” document, which specifies COLA amounts per campus excluding UCSF. We have used these numbers as the basis for FTE calculations for a COLA systemwide.
- 5) Appoint additional UC Regents who understand the California housing crisis and the importance of a world-class public university, and who will strongly advocate for the University of California system.

In this educational emergency, we call upon the State of California to work together with UCSC and all the UC campuses, UCOP, and President Napolitano to find a fair and lasting solution to the present crisis. California depends on this. A group of UC faculty is ready to meet with you, at your earliest convenience, to discuss this urgent issue.

Sincerely,

The Faculty Organizing Group, undersigned below

cc: UC President Janet Napolitano
California State Senator Bill Monning
California State Assemblymember Mark Stone
UC Santa Cruz Chancellor Cynthia Larive
UC Santa Cruz Interim Executive Vice Provost Lori Kletzer
UC Berkeley Chancellor Carol Christ
UC Davis Chancellor Gary S. May
UC Irvine Chancellor Howard Gillman
UC Los Angeles Chancellor Gene D. Block
UC Merced Interim Chancellor Nathan Brostrom
UC San Diego Chancellor Pradeep Khosla
UC San Francisco Chancellor Sam Hawgood
UC Santa Barbara Chancellor Henry T. Yang
Superintendent Tony Thurmond
UC Regent John Perez, Chair
UC Regent Laphonza Butler
State Senator Connie Leyva, Chair, Senate Standing Committee on Education

State Senator Maria Elena Durazo, Member, Senate Standing Committee on Education
Mike Miller, UAW 2865
Kavitha Iyengar, UAW 2865

Signatories of the Faculty Organizing Group

1. A. Laurie Palmer, Professor, Art
2. A.M. Darke, Assistant Professor, Digital Arts and New Media, Games and Playable Media
3. Amanda M. Smith, Assistant Professor, Literature & Spanish Studies
4. Amy Mihyang Ginther, Assistant Professor, Theater Arts
5. Amy Vidali, Associate Teaching Professor, Writing Program
6. Anna Friz, Assistant Professor, Film & Digital Media
7. Anjali Arondekar, Associate Professor, Feminist Studies
8. Anjali Verma, Assistant Professor, Politics Department & Legal Studies Program
9. B. Ruby Rich, Professor, Film and Digital Media
10. Camilla Hawthorne, Assistant Professor, Sociology and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
11. Camilo Gomez-Rivas, Associate Professor, Literature
12. Carla Freccero, Distinguished Professor, Literature & History of Consciousness
13. Chris Benner, Dorothy E. Everett Chair in Global Information and Social Entrepreneurship, Professor of Environmental Studies and Sociology
14. Chris Hables Gray, Continuing Lecturer, Crown College
15. Christie McCullen, Lecturer of Sociology & Oakes College
16. Christine Hong, Associate Professor, Literature and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
17. Christopher Connery, Professor, Literature
18. Cynthia Ling Lee, Assistant Professor, Theater Arts
19. David Shaw, Right Livelihood College Coordinator
20. Deborah Gould, Associate Professor, Sociology
21. Dorian Bell, Associate Professor, Literature
22. Felicity Amaya Schaeffer, Associate Professor and Chair, Feminist Studies
23. Fernando Leiva, Associate Professor, Latin American and Latino Studies
24. Flora Lu, Professor, Environmental Studies
25. G.S. Sahota, Assistant Professor of Literature
26. Gail Hershatter, Distinguished Professor, History
27. H. Marshall Leicester, Professor of Literature
28. Hillary Angelo, Assistant Professor, Sociology
29. Hunter Bivens, Associate Professor of Literature and German Studies
30. Irene Lusztig, Professor, Film and Digital Media
31. Jeffrey Erbig, Assistant Professor, Latin American & Latino Studies
32. Jennifer Kelly, Assistant Professor, Feminist Studies and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies
33. Jennifer Maytorena Taylor, Associate Professor, Film and Digital Media
34. Jessica Taft, Associate Professor, Latin American & Latino Studies
35. Karen Barad, Professor, Feminist Studies
36. Katherine Seto, Assistant Professor, Environmental Studies
37. Kirsten Silva Gruesz, Professor, Literature
38. Lindsey Dillon, Assistant Professor, Sociology
39. Linnea Beckett, Assistant Adjunct Professor, College 10
40. Madeleine Fairbairn, Assistant Professor, Environmental Studies
41. Marcia Ochoa, Associate Professor, Feminist Studies and Interim Provost, Oakes College
42. Maywa Montenegro, Assistant Professor, Environmental Studies
43. Megan McNamara, Lecturer, Sociology
44. Megan Thomas, Associate Professor, Politics

45. micha cárdenas, Assistant Professor, Digital Arts and New Media, Critical Race and Ethnic Studies, Games and Playable Media
46. Muriam Haleh Davis, Assistant Professor, History
47. Neda Atanasoski, Professor of Feminist Studies and CRES
48. Neel Ahuja, Associate Professor, Feminist Studies and CRES
49. Nick Mitchell, Associate Professor, Feminist Studies and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
50. Nidhi Mahajan, Assistant Professor, Anthropology
51. Per Gjerde, Professor Emeritus, Psychology
52. Regina Day Langhout, Professor, Psychology Department
53. Robert Majzler, Lecturer, Psychology
54. Ronnie D. Lipschutz, Professor of Politics
55. Sara Abrahamsson, Assistant Professor, Electrical and Computer Engineering
56. Sheeva Sabati, Lecturer, Feminist Studies, College 9/10, Oakes College
57. Shelley Stamp, Professor, Film + Digital Media, UC Santa Cruz Presidential Chair
58. Shelly Grabe, Professor, Psychology
59. Stacy Philpott, Professor, Environmental Studies
60. Steve McKay, Associate Professor, Sociology
61. Thomas Serres, Lecturer, Politics
62. T. J. Demos, Professor, History of Art and Visual Culture
63. Vilashini Cooppan, Professor, Literature and Critical Race & Ethnic Studies
64. Zac Zimmer, Assistant Professor, Literature