

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor of California
1303 10th Street, Suite 1173
Sacramento, CA 95814

Ms. Janet Napolitano
President, University of California
Office of the President
1111 Franklin Street, 12th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607

Mr. John A. Perez
Chairperson, Board of Regents
Office of the Secretary and Chief of Staff to the Regents
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor
Oakland, CA 94607

Chancellor Cynthia Larive
Chancellor's Office
Kerr Hall, University of Santa Cruz
Santa Cruz, CA 95064

March 6, 2020

Dear Governor Newsom, President Napolitano, Chairperson Perez, and Chancellor Larive,

We write on behalf of the membership of Tenure for the Common Good, an association of college and university faculty that advocates for fair wages and stable employment. We wish to register our dismay at the termination of fifty-four graduate student workers at the University of California-Santa Cruz on Friday, February 28, 2020.

We do not dispute that you have a legal and contractual right to this decision; the termination letter makes the grounds clear. However, we find your decision ethically bewildering. The students have been asking, nearly begging, for help affording housing for months with no substantive reply from management. Not until the strike actually began did university leadership offer even to meet with them, though the results of that meeting, at least as reported by the students, were insufficient to call off the strike. The implicit recognition by leadership that the students have a legitimate claim makes clear that your decision to fire them has nothing to do with solving the actual problem.

The decision to fire the striking graduate students helps nobody. Doing so does not get the withheld grades distributed any more quickly. It does not bring housing prices down. It does not reduce the number of complaints to deans and department chairs. This decision, instead, actively harms the institution and the entire system. The students you fired will almost certainly leave the university; they no longer have

income or tuition coverage. The students who remain have to wonder if they will be next when they dare to ask for a basic necessity. The media coverage of this situation, along with the attention it is garnering on social media, will not encourage prospective students to apply to, much less attend, UCSC--and as more campuses follow, as have Santa Barbara and Davis already, the optics will worsen.

We know that you have power to help resolve this situation in a way that advances the interests of institution and system, as well as the graduate students in your programs. Resolution is certainly better than erasing students and hoping attention dissipates. We are calling on you to use your power well. We call on you to revoke the termination letters immediately. Ideally, you would issue an apology, but call it a clerical error or whatever it takes. The important point is that the students, who were already in a terrible situation, are now being treated in a way that they do not deserve. You can fix that with a stroke of the pen.

You can easily enter good faith negotiations with the students, via their union, toward meeting their financial needs. They have done careful analysis, reaching the figure of \$1412/month, the amount that they demand, and we have seen nothing that disputes the reasonableness of their calculations.

Our organization represents faculty at institutions ranging from two-year/community colleges to small liberal arts colleges to regional comprehensive state universities to large research institutions. Until you agree to reinstate the students you fired and to work in good faith with them to solve the housing problem you have agreed is serious, we will actively discourage students from applying to your graduate programs, and discourage our graduate students from applying to open faculty positions; we will recommend that speakers decline invitations to appear on your campuses; we will continue to work together with graduate students and faculty across the nation to publicize your harsh treatment of the striking students; where possible, we will work with other graduate programs to offer spots to UC graduate students whose dismissals are retaliatory.

The power to fix both the firing mistake and the financial distress that caused it is largely in your hands. You have already demonstrated that you are willing to use the power you have. We call on you to use it again, but productively and ethically.

Sincerely,

Tenure for the Common Good Executive Committee
Aaron Barlow, New York City College of Technology
Carolyn Betensky, University of Rhode Island
Rachel Burma, Swarthmore College
Seth Kahn, West Chester University of PA
Talia Schaffer, Queens College and CUNY Graduate Center