

Rutgers AAUP-AFT And Part-Time Lecturers Executive Board Stand with University of California, Santa Cruz Graduate Workers

Graduate workers peacefully mobilizing around a reasonable demand for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) from one of the largest employers of the city of Santa Cruz should not be met with suspensions, arrest, and termination from an institute of higher education. The Graduate Steering Committee and Rutgers Part-Time Lecturers Executive Board (PTLFC-AAUP-AFT) stand with UCSC graduate workers in their fight for a living wage.

We also stand with all UC graduate workers who, inspired by UC-Santa Cruz, have led demonstrations on their respective campuses, including UCLA, Berkeley, Santa Barbara, and UC-Davis.

Today, UC President Janet Napolitano has authorized the unconscionable, unethical action of an initial firing of 54 graduate workers with an additional 28 essentially blacklisted from returning to employment. Despite what Napolitano wrote about grads “holding up their end of the bargain” in her most recent threat of loss of employment sent to workers, 83% of grads opposed the contract ratified in August of 2018 that included a 3% wage increase- one that is not representative of a COLA. Clearly, UCSC has not honored its commitment to serving the graduate student community in providing its graduate instructors and researchers with a living wage. Graduate workers and other contingent faculty—specifically, adjunct professors—across the United States have been increasingly fighting back against university exploitation. Higher education in America is in crisis: As university administrations continue to cut costs, they place more burdens on graduate workers and adjunct professors, but do not provide them with the living wages, funding, job security, or health benefits that they deserve. Graduate workers cannot afford to pay their rents and bills, and are increasingly forced to take on extra low-paying adjunct teaching positions to cover their expenses. No one benefits from this—except for university administrations.

UCSC graduate workers have calculated a COLA adjustment of an extremely conservative \$1,412 per month for every employee to offset the rent burden they currently experience where rent costs equate to 50-75% of their pretax income. Rutgers University Postdoctoral employees experience a similar burden, where the majority of postdocs are spending more than 50% of their income on housing costs. These employees are currently bargaining with the Rutgers administration for a fair contract with a base salary that covers the cost of living in the local housing market, and stand in solidarity with UCSC workers fighting for the same basic human rights.

It is abhorrent that UCSC management has taken no action as their graduate workers face police brutality at the picket lines. UCSC graduate workers are peacefully asking for deserved adjustments to their income in order to meet the cost of living. It is an inspiration that these workers stand in solidarity with one another despite the extreme retaliation from the university that some have already faced. We stand with these brave workers that are already experiencing retaliation from the university in addition to physical violence, simply because they have been ignored in all their attempts to have the university meet them halfway for their service to the institution.

In Solidarity,

The Rutgers Part-Time Lecturers Executive Board: PTLFC-AAUP-AFT

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