



**Wednesday 29 April 2020**  
*news on the digital picketline*



# FOR A ULP STRIKE IN SPRING

In a collective decision, most grade withholders at UC Santa Cruz are submitting Fall and Winter grades in the week of Monday April 27. The wildcat strike stood at the heart of the COLA movement for four long months. But it is a mistake to believe that the end of the wildcat tactic is the end of the movement. Our movement has never been synonymous with any individual course of action. Its core is resistance against the rot of public higher education in the United States and the demand that educators earn enough to live decently where they work.

For us—and with the wave of striking teachers and educators in West Virginia, Oklahoma, Arizona, Kentucky, throughout California, and beyond—this remains our fight, and, in the context of this pandemic, it is a fight made more urgent with each passing day. The question in front of us is how to continue this struggle, how to press ahead in precarious times.

## Why Was the Wildcat Defeated?

Back in February, it looked as though we were on the cusp of a statewide wildcat strike movement, catalyzed by rank and file militancy in response to the summary firings at UC Santa Cruz and the demand for a cost of living adjustment. COLA campaigns were launched at every UC campus. UC Santa Barbara were on full strike. UC Davis and UC San Diego had committed to withhold grades. More than a quarter of UC Berkeley's departments had declared strike readiness.

The first day of Berkeley's full teaching strike coincided with the first day of online instruction. From there, the pandemic extinguished capacity for rallies, picket lines, and other in-person disruptions. Our movement lost much of its hard won momentum and visibility. At Santa Cruz, the proximate cause for the end of the wildcat grading strike was the decision, by the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), to unilaterally convert all missing grades to P (Pass) grades. This means that we are, in effect, no longer withholding grades. In a characteristically underhanded move, the UCSC administration has opted to shift the burden of missing grades from itself to our undergraduate students. However, repression and pandemic have both been truly significant dampeners on the wildcat strike reaching and maintaining a critical mass of workers. The firing of the Santa Cruz 82 carries different weight now, as we watch historic millions of workers across the country file unemployment claims.

These are the considerations that comprise the current political position of the movement — the end of the wildcat as we've known it so far, and the rather dim prospects for the planning and execution of future wildcat actions of similar scale and tenacity. It is the assessment of a growing number of UC Santa Cruz wildcats that the Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) strike, currently organized under the banner of UAW 2865, is the most effective tactic available to us at this present moment for continuing the COLA struggle. In much the same way that UCSC graduate student workers led the statewide wildcat action, the prospective ULP strike is being organized and led by rank and file at UCSC and elsewhere, from the bottom up.

## Same Ends, Different Means!

We must remember that the possibility of a legally sanctioned ULP strike is itself a tangible victory of the wildcat strike, which pushed our union

leadership into action on our soaring cost of living and dismal wages. Our union, UAW 2865, has filed multiple ULP charges against the UC for refusing to bargain directly with the union over a Cost of Living Adjustment to your salary and for illegally firing 80 strikers. Our statewide union is charging the University of California with breaking federal laws through its response to the wildcat and has assembled to bargain a COLA. This was inconceivable before the wildcat.

The ULP strike is not the opposite of a wildcat strike. Both forms of strike are nothing without the power of the rank and file. Our union leadership is cautious in its political outlook, and will only become action-oriented when pushed from below: when union members muster up strike readiness in large numbers. Otherwise, they will hesitate and postpone, and allow the remaining weeks of Spring quarter to pass by and head into a summer of negotiation. In other words, rank and file workers determine the timeline of the ULP strike by their readiness to organize and strike. The ULP filing features a proposed settlement framework which includes the reinstatement of fired Santa Cruz wildcats and an increase in the wages of graduate student workers to \$40,000 annually. This should be seen as a further articulation of the demands we've been raising all along. Furthermore, the legality of the ULP is not in question, allowing us to legally go on strike without threat of retribution.

This is a time of crisis, and close observers of the UC these past two decades know that the institution is unrivaled at using crises to double down on its austerity regime, tightening its budget where it hurts workers the most. We must have no illusions. Our exploitative employer will take every latitude to rebalance power in its favor, assure its revenue and funding streams through bloated student debt, and cut away all labor it assumes that it can do without. But it is worth remembering that even in "normal" times, student workers provide more than half of the UC's total teaching time while receiving less than two per cent of the operating budget. This indexes the extent both of our exploitation and our power at UC.

If we flex our power in this moment by setting out on strike across the state, we will have a say in the administration's response to the COVID emergency and the crisis of our living conditions. If we pause, delay, or postpone, we will have to react and catch up to the top-down austerity measures of an opportunistic and brutal management. We must continue to intervene in ways that animated our wildcat actions, understanding that the terrain is quickly shifting, demanding new forms of action, as a result.

- **Sign the ULP Strike Pledge:**  
[www.surveymonkey.com/r/ULP\\_Strike\\_Pledge](http://www.surveymonkey.com/r/ULP_Strike_Pledge)
- **Join the UAW if you have not already:**  
[uaw2865.org/join-your-union/](http://uaw2865.org/join-your-union/)
- **Share this flyer and the strike pledge with everyone in your department and division. Talk to them. Get them to sign the pledge. Share with your department colleagues on other campuses.**
- **Write to UAW leadership and tell them to call the strike vote now:** [uaw2865@uaw2865.org](mailto:uaw2865@uaw2865.org)

twitter @spreadthestrike  
 send images to share on social media  
 and with the press [payusmoreucsc@gmail.com](mailto:payusmoreucsc@gmail.com)

Stay up to date at: [www.payusmoreucsc.com](http://www.payusmoreucsc.com)  
 + COLA campaigns from all UCs on social media  
 UC Instagram: @payusmoreucsc + @cola4all  
 twitter: @payusmoreucsc + @cola4all