

Monday 2 March 2020
day #16 – news on the picketline

AN INJURY TO ONE IS AN INJURY TO ALL

The true consequences of this week's mass firings are beginning to ripple across campus. There is no greater confirmation of the inadequacy of this administration's leadership, nor clearer evidence of the interconnectedness of undergraduate and graduate student struggles, than the harmful action that the administration has taken against us all.

UCSC administration claims to have fired 54 of us for engaging in strike activities for a Cost of Living Adjustment. From our own count so far based on those who have received letters of termination, we believe the number is in fact closer to 80. They have terminated 10% of the approximately 750 TAs who work at UCSC during any given academic quarter.

The fight for a COLA is also a struggle for greater control over our working conditions; and our working conditions are simultaneously your learning conditions. At UCSC, class sizes are not determined by the availability of space (many classrooms are already too small), nor by any educational principle (they have shown us that they do not care about "not harming undergraduates"), but by an economic mandate to increase enrollments. Classes continue to grow even as the time between them—as anyone forced to sprint from one end of campus to the other already knows—becomes more and more compressed. The administration, in its drive to admit more and more students, actively chooses to increase the sizes of sections, lectures, and labs, and to cram more classes into each day. And now they are choosing to take away your teachers, too. The Sociology Department alone (one of the most popular majors on campus) reports up to 570 seats removed from their Spring course offerings as a result of lost TAs.

Class size and enrollment cap numbers are matters of social and political struggle. As any teacher will tell you, class size is a crucial labor issue. And as any student knows, class size affects how we learn. To teach 40 students and give quality feedback on every assignment and midterm takes time. To do the same for 80 students means both overwork

and impoverished teaching. And, of course, this almost always means less academic support for the students who need it the most—those who come into the university worst-served by their prior schooling and by society at large. All this makes it that much more difficult for your teachers to challenge the race, gender, and class hierarchies that public universities tend to reproduce.

In 2014, grad and undergrad students organized together at UCSC to improve the quality of education, with class size as a top priority. Our boss, the UC, simply refused to negotiate over class size in contract bargaining. This hurts undergrads most of all. Already faced with more tuition hikes and diminishing job prospects, you are the first to encounter the crowded lecture halls and cramped dorm rooms that are by now the status quo at UCSC.

What drives the university to keep pushing up both enrollment numbers and tuition? When we use words like "privatization," we refer to the transformation of the UC's financial structure over the past 40 or so years. Simply put, the main source of funds has shifted from California state funding to your tuition dollars. State money, from California taxpayers, comes with definite conditions. It is money that must be used for educational and instructional purposes. Tuition dollars, however, come with no such strings attached (look up "They Pledged Your Tuition"). After tuition dollars are pledged as collateral to Wall Street and converted into revenue bond loans, they can flow into the UC's ambitious construction projects, with no concern for actual classroom experience. They can sit in discretionary funding pools under the command of the Chancellor, where they can then be tapped for "emergency" costs. This is where the money for the riot police at the base of campus comes from: at least 4.2 million dollars worth, so far.



This week, when you sign up for classes, don't blame your striking teachers for frustrations with enrollment; we sympathize and are frustrated too! Blame the university who still refuses to negotiate with us openly and honestly to resolve the wildcat strike, who refuses to negotiate over class sizes, and who has shown little interest in improving our collective teaching and learning conditions. Call the administrators listed below and let them know how you feel. Email them and tell them to rehire your teachers. Show them that you won't stand for this. Organize marches and sit-ins in Kerr Hall. **Demand a COLA and the reinstatement of every striker!**

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