Throughout these months of struggle at UCSC, no one has attracted the attention of the student conduct board more than graduate student worker, Debbie Duarte. In four separate collective actions, each attended by dozens (sometimes hundreds) of protestors, Debbie has been identified, singled out, and reported to the student conduct board for punishment. Incredibly, as with the disruption of the Chancellor's holiday party last December, Debbie has at times been the only student identified as a participant in mass action. Other times, like a March dining hall liberation, the Police Report will place “Debbie Duarte” in a series of usual suspects, like “Carlos Cruz,” “Hafsa Mohamed,” and other overwhelmingly non-white names. These charges, for which Debbie may face hefty suspensions, rest upon “incident reports” made not only by UCPD Officer Frank Sanchez, but also by two officials of UCSC’s mysterious Demonstrations Operations Team (DOT), a body of unknown authority and unknown budget tasked with the systematic surveillance of campus protests.

Every single one of Debbie’s litany of conduct charges is attached to participation in a political demonstration. These were aimed, variously, at the plight of undocumented students on campus, at drawing attention to the depths of food insecurity of students on campus, and at the obscene rent burden of graduate workers at UC Santa Cruz. It is no accident that these political demonstrations so quickly caught the eye of UCPD and DOT, since they address issues that disproportionally affect first-generation and undocumented students of color like Debbie.

Perhaps the most telling charge laid repeatedly against Debbie is an apparent breach of Article 102.11, “Other Harassment.” Debbie stands accused of harassing staff at the Academic Resource Center, EVC Lori Kletzer and DOT Officer Amanda Gullings (a former “crime analyst” at the Santa Cruz Police Department) at a campus holiday party, and an unnamed (possibly fictitious) graduate student in a dining hall. What the student conduct officer has failed to observe, however, are strict stipulations on what can and cannot be defined as non-discriminatory “harassment”—that is, harassment not based on protected statuses like race—in an educational context. In order to qualify as punishable, non-discriminatory “harassment,” Debbie’s actions would need to have been “so severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive that it effectively bars the victim’s access to an educational opportunity or benefit.” This conduct officer’s interpretation of Debbie’s political expression as “harassment” is a disturbing attack on a student’s right to free expression and a blatant instance of the UC importing corporate standards inappropriately into an educational setting. We should also pay attention to the fact that EVC Kletzer and Officer Gullings feel empowered to adopt the position of victims in order to punish a student protesting food and housing insecurity.

The substance of Debbie's harassment accusations never suggests anything so “severe, pervasive, and objectively offensive.” Debbie is accused of calling the EVC a liar in a discussion about COLA (which many others have done), and of critiquing the function of white privilege at UC Santa Cruz to an unknown graduate student. The latter was dumbfounding to DOT Officer and Executive Director of Housing Services Dave Keller (“I am not sure why the COLA protesters turned their protest into a racially [sic] matter, but that is what I witnessed”), though it is something our Chancellor claimed to understand in her canting condolences over the murder of George Floyd (“Our university struggles with and works within the same context of white supremacist systems, structures, and conditions that make life more dangerous and precarious for people of color”).

Indeed, the sheer number of harassment accusations against Debbie and their obvious lack of substance suggests a different — and discriminatory — form of harassment repeating itself on our campus. This of course refers to the police racial profiling and surveillance of UCSC students to produce spurious evidence that serves as “credible testimony” in the kangaroo court of student conduct where police testimony is always more credible than the word of the troublesome, politically active student of color under investigation. As many have observed in a recent mass email chain, the Chancellor's gestures towards a critique of white supremacy ring hollow when she occupies the position of “final authority” in the racist student conduct process (Art 104.20), or when she tells
Debbie and other undocumented students that she is “okay with” making more money per year than the total annual budget for undocumented student support on campus (watch here).

One might wonder whether these highly paid administrators and police officers do indeed feel harassed when student-workers like Debbie dare challenge the “white supremacist systems, structures, and conditions” of the UC. Do they deem Debbie’s conduct so “severe,” “pervasive,” and “objectively offensive” to warrant these multiple harassment charges; was it indeed so “aggressive” and “threatening” as the summonses claim? Or is it perhaps intrinsically threatening to the upper echelons of this institution (mired in white supremacy, per the Chancellor) to have hungry, undocumented, first generation students of color express themselves politically? Is it this, UCSC’s “white supremacist systems,” that stops the Chancellor — who also writes, “I struggle with my own sense of heartbreak” over the murder of George Floyd — from taking the concrete steps within her power to stop the racist student conduct process, to meet the demands of the Undocu Collective, and to provide adequate resources to her starving and rent-burdened graduate and undergraduate students?

Debbie’s response to the charges opens with the following:

“In a recent article written for the UCSC news center by Jennifer McNulty, dated September 30th, 2019, a survey showed that “48 percent of undergraduates and 31 percent of graduate students experience food insecurity...” The problem of food insecurity at UCSC is very prevalent and serious, and it affects students from historically disenfranchised and marginalized communities with a different level of intensity.

I can attest to this, being one of the many graduate students of color and Teaching Assistants at UCSC who is facing constant food insecurity, not just now, but throughout my life. I have spent many academic quarters not eating properly or at all. I have had to fulfill my roles as a teaching assistant and a PhD student researcher in this state of constant hunger. This has severely deteriorated the state of my physical, emotional, and mental health. I cannot afford to eat because I cannot afford to pay rent, my paycheck incommensurate with rent in the area. I feel that my position as a student/worker in the university puts me in a state of constant economic insecurity.“

All of the dining hall charges, as well as the credibility of Debbie’s own testimony, seem to hinge upon their eating activities on March 11 — whether or not they ate anything, when they may have eaten something, and at which dining hall they may have eaten. The two DOT officers, as the surrogate cops of this investigation, each provided accounts of the dining hall disruptions. But as Debbie shows in their statement, these accounts were mutually contradictory and failed to supply evidence to place Debbie in two out of the three dining halls that they were accused of disrupting. The conduct board then homed in on a different question, designed to put Debbie’s “credibility” at stake: did Debbie in fact eat without paying at the Crown/Merrill dining hall on March 11, as police photographs may suggest? To be guilty of the crime of harassment and disrupting university operations, it seems a student must first be found guilty of the crime of eating while hungry. There are, of course, no parallel investigations into whether Debbie had enough to eat on March 10 or 12; or how being fired and possibly suspended will exacerbate Debbie’s food and housing insecurity.

The same day as the dining hall liberations, Dean of Students Garrett Naiman purchased lunch at Cafe Iveta for a number of hungry students, an act that indicates, as Debbie notes, at least some awareness of food insecurity and student hunger on this campus. We now demand a more meaningful gesture from Dean Naiman. Rein in your subordinates on the student conduct board. Stop assigning papers on civil justice as discipline for protest and defend the First Amendment rights of your students.

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We call on every member of the UC community to condemn the racist student conduct system.

Per the student conduct code, the Chancellor has the “final authority” on the outcome of all student conduct discipline.

Email Chancellor Larive chancellor@ucsc.edu + Dean of Students Naiman gnaiman@ucsc.edu to demand that all student conduct charges be dropped immediately.

Stay up to date at: www.payusmoreucsc.com + COLA campaigns from all UCs on social media UC Instagram: @payusmoreucsc + @a_place4us twitter: @payusmoreucsc + @a_place4us
WE DEMAND

- Better management across all centers that provide support for undocumented students.

- The Career Center to release a statement forbidding ICE, DHS, and any other anti-immigrant organization to never recruit on campus again and that every career center staff, faculty, and student worker to be fully trained on the rights and limitations of employment authorization for undocumented students.

- The allocation of funds should move towards increasing supplement programs working on removing financial barriers, so that undocumented student can get more funding.

- Increasing supplement to “Undoc Multicultural/Queer Programming & Visibility/Publicity” that should match the 9,000 funds given a year to USS “caucus” meetings (now by another name: Undocuslug meetings).

- EOP make all bathrooms accessible to all people of all genders.

- Every academic counselor be hired through EOP student input. EOP should take all responsibility for ensuring an independent contractor has stable hours, income, and a legitimate contract that can not be overturned by the director of EOP but rather students.

- Having a forum for students to learn more information about how the USS coordinators are being hired, how they’re being employed, how their salary is being paid for.

- A bigger center for undocumented students.

- An interactive forum on AB21 & university accountability for political action.

- For all undocumented, Black, DRC students to have guaranteed housing for all of their undergrad years, reinstated beginning with the class of 2017 & from here on out. Also, taking into account our transferring students & increase their guaranteed housing for 3 years.

- Mandatory student-facilitated training for ALL UCSC staff and faculty.

- A path to loan forgiveness for every undocumented student.

- Full academic support for undocumented graduate students including assurance of funding before coming in to UCSC, housing, and Teaching Opportunities to fulfill program requirements. We also want to see holistic support which includes Support for undocumented graduate students’ to access mental health resources, food, and housing.

- Delegation of tasks and power within the Dean of Students.

- Students energy should not be used as a tool or as a resource without consent, by administration to further their agendas.

- Safe transportation for students that live passing checkpoints when returning/departing during school breaks.

- The chancellor politically advocates for those who do not have the privilege of having DACA or any other form of deferred action/legal status. Endorsement only DACA excludes a large majority of the undocumented community. Due to this political endorsement of DACA by UCSC Chancellor should be held accountable for paying full fees of DACA renewals and transportation to biometrics appointments.

None of these demands are negotiable.