

Hi Instructors,

This is a quick email on the strike to share with your classes and/or to talk through in class. It has a particular focus on how the administration's response to the strike will affect undergraduates in the spring quarter if negotiations between the administration and the TAs do not occur.

### **What is the strike about?**

You have likely heard that the strike is quite simply about the fact that Santa Cruz is an expensive place to live. In fact, Santa Cruz is the town in California with the very worst ratio of wages to cost of living. Rent increases in Santa Cruz have averaged about 10% each year since 2014. This means that graduate students often live in their cars, in their offices, or in overcrowded and mold-infested apartments. They often struggle to feed themselves and their families. So in some sense, the strike is a simple request to bargain over wages.

### **How may the strike affect undergraduates next quarter?**

While the UC's rationale for firing TAs who are still withholding grades rested on ostensive harm to undergraduate students, many undergraduates are harmed when graduate student TAs are tired, hungry, rent-burdened, and unable to afford necessary medical care. Now undergrads are being harmed by the administration's refusal to bargain and its insistence on firing striking TAs. Undergraduates are already aware of the impact that that has had on their current learning conditions, but what about next quarter?

Unless the administration begins bargaining with TAs, the firing of TAs for spring quarter and the continued refusal to bargain will have devastating effects on the quality and quantity of undergraduate education next quarter. Because TAs are vital to quality undergraduate education, departments will be unable to ensure enough seats in their classes to provide a high quality education. Some departments have been calculating how much to cap enrollments and how many sections they need to cancel if TAs are fired. In total, letters from many department chairs have warned the UC administration that *thousands of students will not be able to enroll in the classes that they need for pacing their major and graduation requirements*. Despite fair warning of these consequences, the UC administration went forward with TA firings and students are now seeing these lower enrollment caps and fewer available classes as they try to register for spring classes.

*Currently, at least 9 departments have had to cap enrollments and offer fewer sections, amounting to over 2700 seats already lost in classes that students need.* Other departments are considering capping enrollments at lower-than-usual levels as well, making it quite possible that the number of removed seats will increase. Moreover, the EVC is currently disallowing the hiring of additional graduate student teachers in departments where more than 15% of the fall grades are missing, thus further reducing the number of classes and seats available for undergraduates in those departments. Departments in the humanities, social sciences, and arts will be most impacted by the EVC-initiated hiring freeze.

In addition to enrollment caps, the quality of undergraduate education will be negatively affected without access to discussion sections and labs that provide students with the small-scale, low student-teacher ratios that are integral to learning. Moreover, undergraduate TAs may not have adequate training to provide the same level of quality teaching that graduate TAs can.

### **What can be done to prevent these negative effects during spring quarter?**

Regardless of how you may feel about the strike itself or the tactics used, it is undeniable that the university's response to the strike and its decision to fire TAs will result in drastic problems for undergraduates. However, those negative effects on undergraduate education can still be prevented! The choice to reduce the number of TA positions is the university administration's alone, and they can change their mind if they feel it is important and if large numbers of people--especially undergraduates--let them know that this looming disaster must be prevented immediately. Undergraduate actions of all sorts can be taken: letters, email, and calls from undergraduate students and their parents; office visits; and other forms of protest<sup>1</sup> directed at the UC administration and specifically UCSC's Chancellor Larive and EVC Lori Kletzer as well as UC's President Janet Napolitano. You might ask the university to 1) negotiate with the graduate student teachers' union and 2) remove hiring freezes that decrease enrollments. Undergraduate participation in the strike could be focused on pressuring the university to enter into serious discussions with the strikers and their union so as to avoid serious losses of course offerings in the spring. Some level of disrupting business-as-usual now may be our best chance of avoiding a catastrophe next quarter.

### **Who to contact?**

- Cynthia Larive, UCSC Chancellor, Chancellor's Office in Kerr Hall, 831-459-4291, [chancellor@ucsc.edu](mailto:chancellor@ucsc.edu)
- Lori Kletzer, UCSC Executive Vice Chancellor, 271 Kerr Hall, 831-459-3885, [cpevc@ucsc.edu](mailto:cpevc@ucsc.edu)
- Janet Napolitano, UC President, 1111 Franklin St. 12th Floor, Oakland, CA 94607, 510-987-9200 [president@ucop.edu](mailto:president@ucop.edu)
- [Governor Newsom](#)
- You can also share your testimonies in support of graduate student strikers through this [Google Form](#)

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<sup>1</sup> Different levels of vulnerability shape what kinds of protests people feel comfortable engaging in. For instance, undocumented students and international students may be unable or unwilling to risk the potential consequences of some forms of protest, such as arrest, revocation of visa status, or deportation.