



March 2, 2020

Statement in Solidarity with Striking UCSC Graduate Workers

On February 28, the administration of the University of California, Santa Cruz, announced it was firing fifty-four striking graduate workers and informed others they would not be hired back in the spring. The graduate workers are striking for a cost-of-living increase to cover housing costs that are among the highest in the country. A [faculty organizing group at UC Santa Cruz](#) held a press conference on March 2 and read statements of support from individuals and organizations outside the UC. Below are the remarks from Henry Reichman, second vice president of the AAUP and chair of the AAUP's Committee A on Academic Freedom and Tenure:

Fellow teachers, I regret that I am not able at this time to convey to you in person the support of the American Association of University Professors for the courageous effort initiated by UCSC graduate student instructors to gain more equitable and fair cost-of-living compensation. But let me assure you that I and other leaders and members of the AAUP are here with you in spirit.

Last week the national Council of the AAUP released a statement expressing support for your struggle and for the various efforts now being undertaken by graduate student employees at other UC campuses. Our statement also deplored the use of riot police against peaceful picketers and condemned UC President Napolitano's threat to fire those on strike. Now the university has followed through on her threat. This cannot stand.

Since at least 1998 the AAUP has affirmed the right of graduate student workers to organize and bargain collectively in both public and private institutions. We have long recognized that today's graduate students are tomorrow's professors. We have therefore welcomed graduate students as members and have defended—and will continue to defend—their academic freedom and other professional rights, including their right to reasonable compensation for their instructional and research employment.

Here in California graduate students and professors alike are stuck between, on one side, the long-term decline of state support for higher education and, on the other, the escalating cost of studying, working, and living in this state. Some have worried that the cost of meeting the graduate students' demands will be too high and hence place yet another burden on UC's already inadequate funding, with costs perhaps passed on to already indebted undergraduates. But it is time for those of us in higher education to unite and to demand what previous generations benefited from—genuine public funding of higher education so that, not only will it be available to all who are eligible, but that those instructors who provide it will have both the

academic freedom and the essential economic security appropriate to productive professional life.

I therefore today call upon President Napolitano and the UC administration to cease efforts to fire striking employees and accept the offer of UAW Local 2865 to negotiate over cost of living issues, including efforts to ameliorate the cost of housing. And I call on both parties to seek a settlement that meaningfully addresses the great burden placed on graduate student workers and all low-wage employees by extraordinarily high housing costs. Should additional funding be essential to such a fair settlement, I call on the UC Regents and President Napolitano to join with faculty, students, labor unions, alumni and all interested citizens in demanding that the Legislature take action to dramatically and swiftly reverse the decline in public funding of higher education in California and begin a return to the now-all-but-abandoned promise of California's Master Plan.