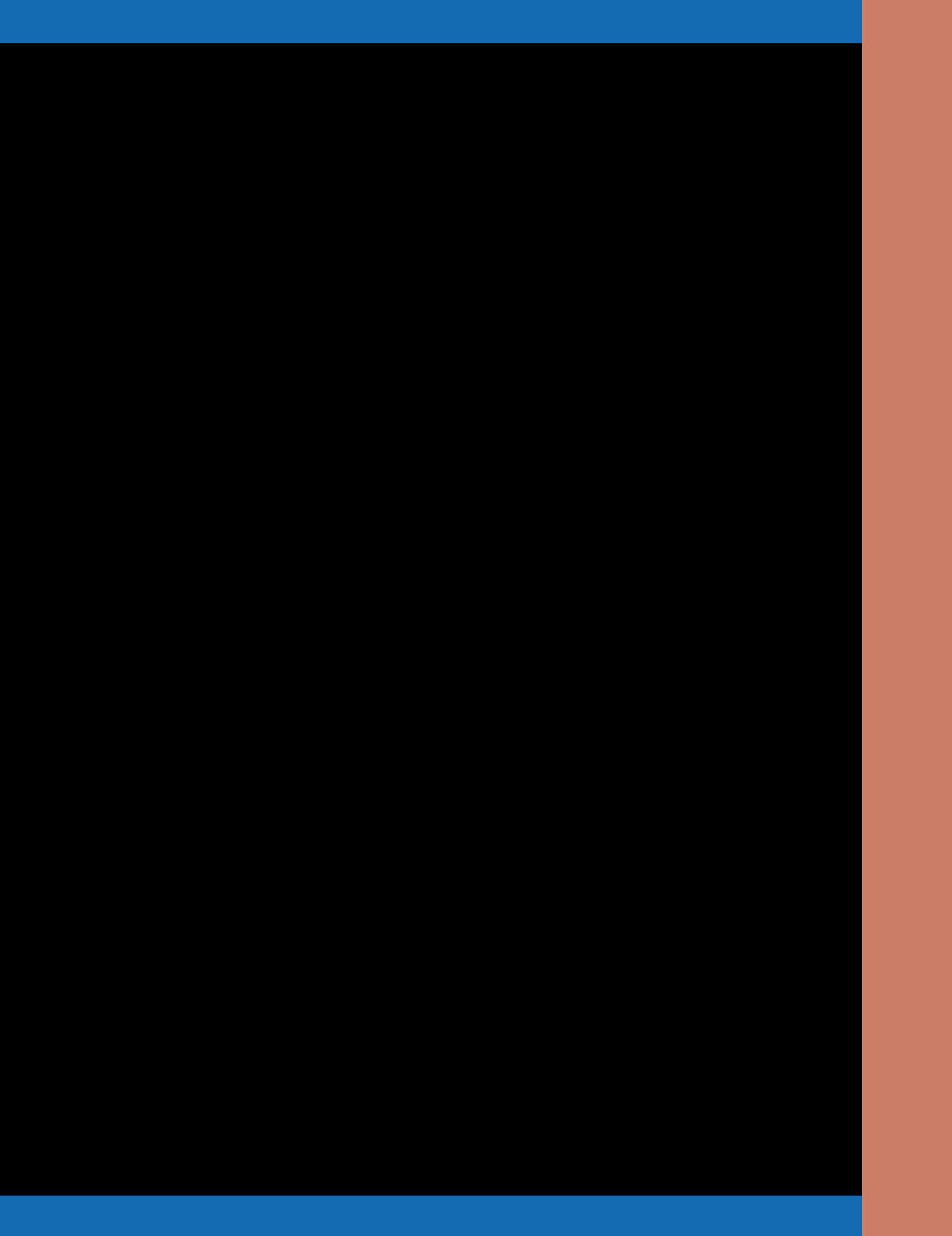
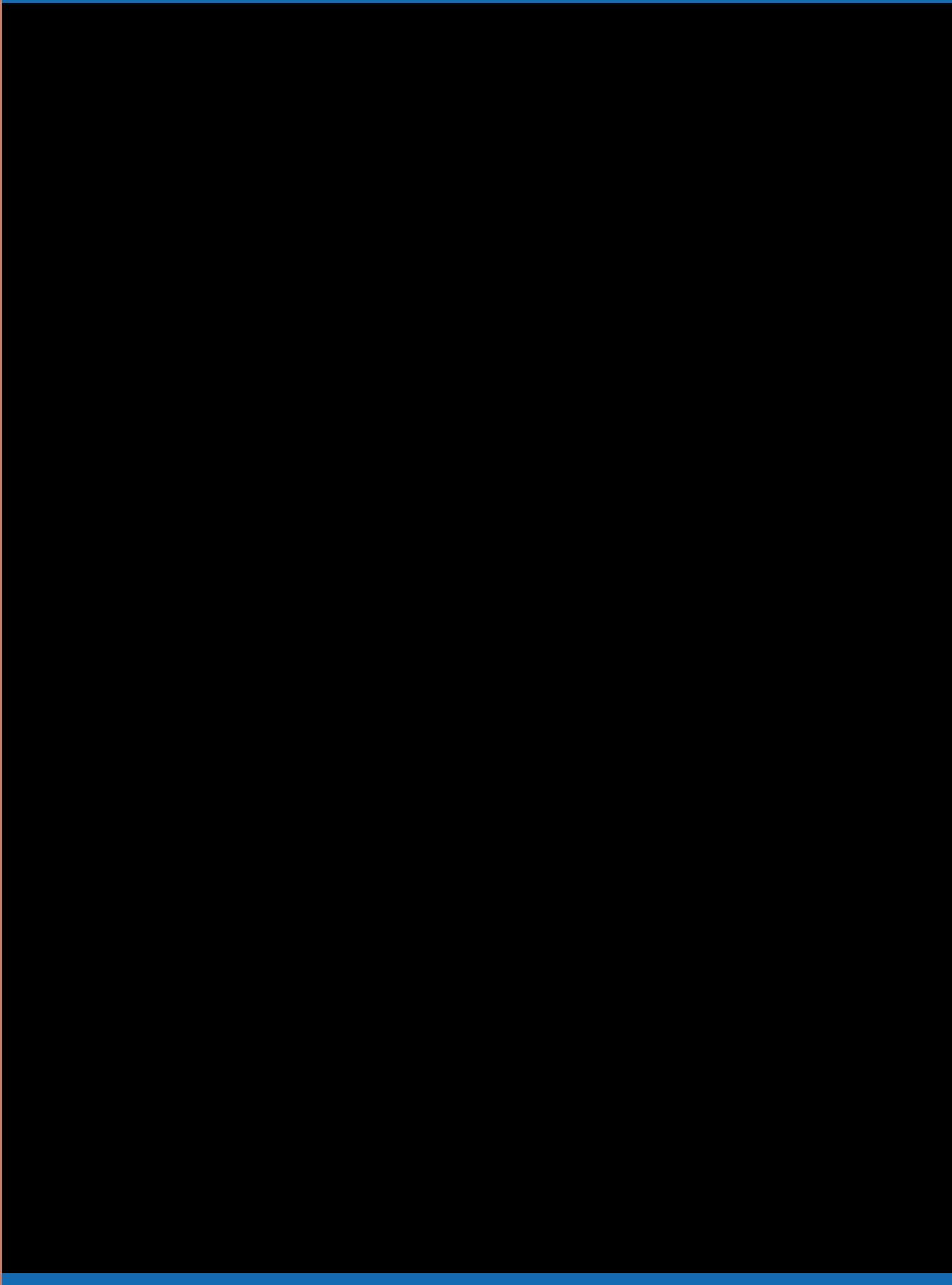


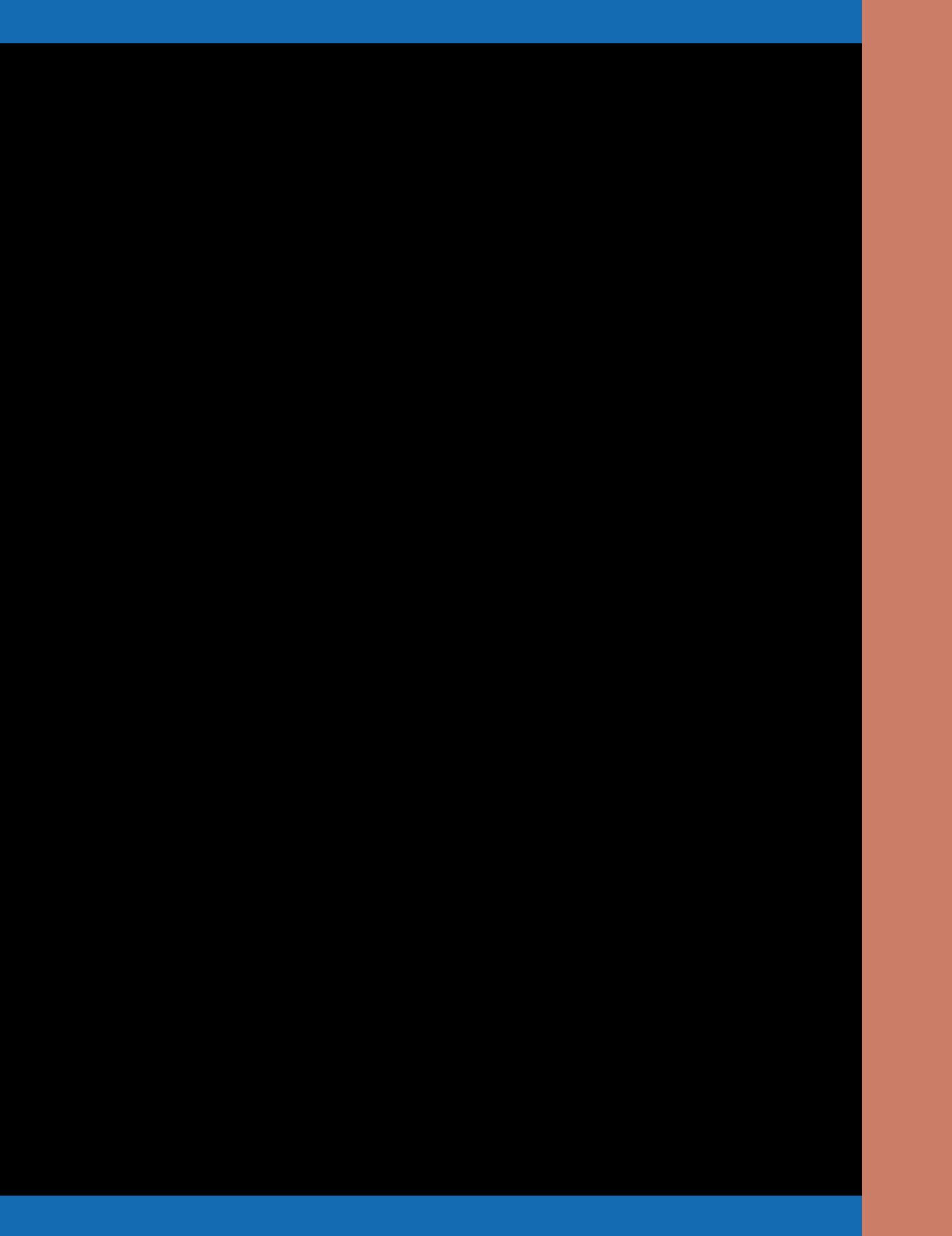
DAILY SHEETS: A COMPENDIUM

LAST UPDATED: 7/18/2024









“THREE STRIKES, YOU’RE OUT!”

As we bid goodbye to our beloved Jack from the UC’s most striking campus to the belly of a different beast, we, as his friends and comrades, have collected some of his writings in this volume.

In the last 6 years, Jack Davies has been responsible for zingers, quips, and cutting analysis on the conditions of life as a UC Santa Cruz graduate student worker. These Daily Sheets represent a collective effort by Jack, Dylan, Sarah, Stefan, Jeremy, Patrick, Rowan, Nate, Phil, Hannah, Jess, Won, Rebecca, Isabel, Carrie, Katherine, and many others and have been a source of insight and motivation. They reflect an attempt to theorise our struggle in real-time.

This collection covers the 2019-2020 Wildcat Strike, organising around rent burden and housing stipends, the Fall 2022 contract strike, and the Spring 2024 strike for Palestine. In these three strikes and their interstitial moments, Jack’s sober analysis of the conditions on the ground has helped guide our organising throughout all the *bullshit* that the UC has thrown our way. Jack, we hope you turn to them time and again in the years to come should you ever need to remind yourself – stay steady!

As always, one day longer, one day stronger, comrade.

Love from all of us to you.
xx

/THREE STRIKES/









I. WILDCAT

Undergrads we still need your support!

Who are we struggling against?

Wednesday, December 11th:

The current UC administration has no business being in education other than that of turning education into a business. These Al Capones of the University are headed by veteran charlatan Janet Napolitano, who apparently thought that her experience as architect of the deportation of hundreds of thousands of undocumented immigrants, as head of Homeland Security from 2009-2013, qualified her to be President of the University of California. Napolitano's office was caught, in a recent state audit (which her office fought at every turn), secretly withholding \$175 million dollars from our own institution (SF Chronicle, 11/18/2017). Whisked away from public scrutiny, such infractions exceed even her latitude of authority. Had a portion of this vast sum gone toward financing the current multimillion dollar construction of Chancellor's Larive's new "mansion" (and they continue to say there is no money for us), Napolitano's actions may have been framed as excusable. In reality, these funds are being diverted (stolen really), from your already astronomically high tuition and from our labor. What was the penalty? Nothing nearly as severe as what this University administration is threatening us with for our "unauthorized" action. The UC system legally defrauds us, but in their view we are illegally exercising our rights.

Our struggle is gaining national news coverage. The coverage of the COLA campaign on NPR and NBC has been largely supportive, even clarifying. The University administration, however, is continually engaged in a politics of mystification. In the past, the administration could justify their actions through any number of budgetary lies and forms of financial opportunism: the fact is that this is no longer the case, and we know it. They know it too. But make no mistake, the University is not in a position to penalize us when we act together; their threats are as empty as their "commitments" to your education, inclusion, and well-being.

We should anticipate more repressive responses on behalf of the administration. They have already

started intimidating faculty, undergraduate student-workers, staff and teaching assistants, in order to break our action by entering our grades for us behind our backs. Soon enough, the administration will be telling us they are doing all of this on behalf of the "underserved," less-privileged, and most vulnerable among us. Incidentally, these are the same students the University will seek to punish most if they succeed in breaking our action. Do not fall for their trap: their rhetoric of "diversity," inclusivity, and commitment to the most vulnerable students on campus is cynical and false, a deplorable scam designed to shipwreck our movement and increase your debt. We are the authors of our own actions and we will not be isolated or intimidated. Rather than being on the defensive, we are broadening our struggle: we are now demanding a COLA 4 All!

Undergrads,

Our success has already been felt. Yesterday, hundreds of graduate student workers and undergraduates alike held a rally outside of Humanities 210, where participants spoke not only of the shared misery of our working and learning conditions in Santa Cruz but of the shared joy and power felt when we collectively act together. This event was conceived as an opportunity for the administration to "meet" and speak with us. As it turns out, they couldn't be bothered to attend, preferring to send further threatening emails instead. Given that they have not been at their usual posts at Kerr Hall for some days now, it was suggested that they were hiding out in Chancellor Larive's mansion. Regardless, their conduct has been characteristically cowardly and evasive. Their crude and confused communications fail to express basic familiarity with our situation. They claim that they cannot meet with us during an "illegal" strike; we claim we have not yet begun to strike.

No COLA, No Grades!



Universal Cost of Living Adjustment

#COLA

Undergrads we still need your support!

What are we Fighting?

1. Privatization

Today, universities are increasingly run like shady businesses. Lacking the charisma of used car salesmen, those who run them opt for alternative measures to procure their deals. Essentially, the universities are closer to hedge funds, without a Wall Street, and with less public sympathy. Janet Napolitano's UC is no different. Its ruthless management style is structured to benefit the growing ranks of top-level UCOP personnel and mysterious campus management officials, some of whom will work for only a few years before receiving generous pensions. Bear in mind: the University sees no contradiction between funding these and denying us a COLA (cost of living adjustment). It is just one more chapter in the University's fraught legacy that we have inherited and are left paying the tab for. One thing is simple: the corruption and duplicity of this administration falls neatly into a historical arc of eroding public education in California, at the expense of students.

Since the Higher Education Compact of 2004, agreed upon behind closed doors by state, UC, and CSU leadership – rife with bureaucratic swindlers of all stripes – the system has fundamentally shifted away from public funding for its core operations and instead towards a tuition model. The UC's founding commitments to tuition-free education had already dissolved in the 1980s; and now, the dependence on students' tuition has intensified even further. Your tuition payments became the single greatest source of UC operating funds in 2013, and this administration has fought tooth and nail to increase that at every turn. The result is massive indebtedness and damaged futures—an increasingly visible feature of the national landscape, where student debt currently totals \$1.41 trillion, at an average of \$35,359 per holder. This administration has repeatedly refused us a COLA with tired excuses about tied hands and shrinking budgets. But the usual BS and hand-wringing over scarce resources merely mask what this systemic shift has brought about: a privatized "public" university whose public character, increasingly obscured, emerges only in the collective resistance of those it fleeces.

2. The Bosses and the Cops

Before the start of her appointment as President of the UC in 2013, Janet Napolitano's tenure as Secretary of Homeland Security was defined by a number of brutal, though perfectly legal, policies befitting that loathsome office. As UC President, made headlines in September 2017 by suing the Trump administration over its immigration policy changes around DACA. Of course, this was a welcome development of UC policy, but certainly a hypocritical gesture on Napolitano's part. If we travel further back in time, a clearer picture of her record on immigration emerges. Under the Obama administration, Napolitano created a deportation system that far eclipsed anything that preceded it, and she did it in only two years. As US Attorney in Arizona

in the 1990s, she also aided and abetted the abuses of migrants by notorious Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio. Napolitano had the chance to prosecute Arpaio over the abusive jail he ran, which he referred to positively as a "concentration camp," she instead let him go. Arpaio would later support her run for governor, even appearing in a campaign TV spot in 2002. In a tight race, Arpaio's endorsement was decisive. Later she would become the first governor in the country to pursue 287g agreements between ICE and local police, allowing for local cops to be deputized as immigration agents. She was supported in her reelection bid by Arpaio in 2006 and in 2008 she refused to support Arpaio's Democratic challenger.

For this reason, when we demand "COPS OFF CAMPUS" we are not only referring to the removal of the campus police departments and the UC police; we are also implicating Napolitano and her cronies who employ a "law and order" approach to campus life. When administrators consider possible reforms or solutions to problems expressed by those who work and live within the University's orbit, it is assumed that these changes should be decided above our heads (and behind our backs). Just what sort of reforms do they have in mind? Turning the University into a privately-run detention center? Instead of providing clear answers, they continuously put the squeeze on the most exploited sectors of the campus: janitors, bus drivers, clerical staff, food service workers, tutors, teaching assistants, adjunct faculty – all the while insisting that they have our best interests at heart.

What we are Building

In the face of our shared precarity, we have begun to build a movement that the university cannot legitimize, divide, and dismantle. We saw this in the action undertaken yesterday in the Cowell-Stevenson dining hall – the establishment of a day-long "People's Free Lunch Program" (indeed, there is such a thing as a free lunch). Food was distributed freely and students and workers ate together, breaking through the isolation and alienation that otherwise defines "dining in public." While the university continues to brand itself as the "original authority on questioning authority" (a slogan that could not possibly have been authored by anyone but a conformist), we continue to learn, through coming together, that demonstrating our power requires first and foremost the affirmation of our shared struggles. When we act in solidarity with other workers on campus, and with workers of the UC system more broadly, we can win.



NoCOLA, NoGrades!

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Friday December 13

Undergrads we still need your support!

Winter is Coming

The University administration is playing a waiting game with our demand for COLA. While they wait, they see us rapidly building momentum. They suspect, however, that by waiting long enough, our momentum will subside, and eventually dissipate. The administration hopes that we spend the next few weeks totally apart from one another as we seek relief from the breakneck pace of the fall quarter. It supposes that we will not be seen, but realizing that this is impossible, represents us as criminals and therefore as enemies.

Indeed, inasmuch as the latter claim is true their strategy has merit (now that they have centralized their administrative messaging, disabling the accounts of those who could offer undergraduates direct support, presumably disciplining those who stepped out of line), but it is based on the faulty premise that they can see below the surface. If they could, they might have predicted that their anti-COLA, campus-wide emails (most likely drafted by an overworked and poorly paid intern), would backfire as spectacularly as they did, and held off from sending them. They now seem to believe that they can easily break us by waiting for us to divide ourselves. However, if there's one thing that's been demonstrated time and time again, it's that the administration's field of vision is rather limited.

Another development they could not have foreseen is the actions simmering in the sciences, and not just on this campus. This is a key attack on the administration's institutional power. The sciences are where major University contracts reside and the largest streams of funding circulate. Baskin School of Engineering, for instance, has recently partnered with numerous Silicon Valley tech firms, launching its "Silicon Valley Extension" initiative in 2016. Boasting a 2.2/ 5 rating among former employees on Glassdoor.com, this initiative really does seem to represent an extension" of UCSC's working conditions, differing only to the extent that they are imposed more directly by behemoth companies like Amazon and Google. Graduate students in STEM are broadly organizing across their departments and fields to combat the harsh working conditions of the lab and the arbitrary authority of many superiors. This is a welcome development and may prove decisive.

What's in a Demand?

New demands emerge in the course of a given struggle, and when that struggle is extended, they garner the potential to resonate more loudly and widely than anyone can expect. In the COLA 4 ALL campaign we can see how certain demands have already begun to proliferate, taking our actions into a new phase.

As scrutiny of the university intensifies and the cohesion of its power fractures, new ways of struggling against it come to light. It is possible that people will start demanding more than the university, at least in its present form, can accommodate. This is not necessarily an impasse, but rather an opening. Smaller class sizes, childcare, backpay for employees routinely wedged between bad contracts and bad management (which is to say all of us), direct-decision making in all campus affairs by students, the removal of campus-police are all increasingly on the table. The demand for COLA has the potential to push all these other demands to the surface, and intensify many other suppressed social conflicts. Our demand for a cost of living increase is not a struggle for higher wages, but one against a system that continually forces wages

below the necessary minimum for survival (and yes, it's true this minimum is much higher in Santa Cruz than elsewhere, which is precisely why this struggle kicked off here). Undergrads, the fact that the university system is predicated upon the allocation of debt toward the blackmail of your future labor merely defers this fact: 4-years here, 4-years there, makes little difference when the creditors call after working a double shift at Starbucks, or Peets, if you prefer to work "local."

Faculty

Today Vice Chancellor Lori Kletzer has implicated faculty directly in the submission of this quarter's grades, writing unequivocally that "faculty members are responsible for assigning and submitting final course grades." This is puzzling. Wasn't this the job of teaching assistants? The very work we are threatening to withhold? Undermining a strike action by ignoring that it is taking place is as foolish as ignoring the demands which led us to strike in the first place: both reveal that the administration is too out of touch and too cowardly to rule.

Can faculty be counted on not to enter grades behind our backs? Not unless they're pushed. Right now it's clear that by and large faculty

will side wherever is most advantageous for them. Is this pure opportunism, or their class position in a decrepit institution that demands intellectual ingenuity at the expense of political obedience? In raising this question, we do not discount the real efforts made at departmental levels to support COLA. In contrast to faculty who continue to denounce COLA 4 ALL, some faculty-members have come (perhaps not only temporarily) to repudiate their narrow institutional privileges in still-emerging forms of solidarity. Though faculty have been pushed in this direction, a real sign of our strength, it cannot be counted on long-term, and must continue to be fortified. It is likely that faculty have a number of

demands of their own - what would it take for faculty to make them?

Shoutouts

Thanks to all of those who care for us, whose work and working conditions we oftentimes fail to stop and consider. Because of you, we can dedicate time and energy toward building our movement. Thanks to the undergraduate students who, though directly affected by this week's disruptive actions, continue to encourage, inspire, and sustain the COLA movement. Thanks to the many UCSC faculty and staff who have expressed their solidarity for COLA 4 ALL even when met with outrage and threats of discipline by the UC administration. Thanks to all of our friends, loved ones, and mentors from outside of the university whose outpouring of support not only continues to energize the fight for COLA at UCSC but also gives life to similar actions in many other workplaces. Your solidarity makes clear the importance of our deep interconnections, especially as COLA 4 ALL increasingly assumes a collective form. We are learning that no amount of online activism can substitute for this, and that our struggles must be sustained in our direct contacts with one another. Only when we meet do we truly touch each other, and ultimately become aware of what we all share and what we all need. Let us continue this work through the Winter.



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Monday January 6 2020

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NEW YEAR - NEW ACTION!

For students, the first day of the quarter promises a mixture of emotions: anticipation over new courses; the renewed potential for comradeship in the classroom; perhaps dread regarding the required class put off too long; or excitement at the prospect of being one step closer to graduation. For workers on campus, however, the thrill of beginning a new quarter is more often experienced as the end of a brief respite, blunted by grim forecasts of overwork, limited opportunities for workplace recognition, and wages low enough to make even Jeff Bezos smile.

Just like the conclusion of last quarter, the beginning of this one is qualitatively different. The feeling that we can break the monotony, accelerated by years of declining political action on this campus, is palpable. As of today, AFSCME workers are on strike over a fair contract (which the university has denied for years) and AFT (UCSC's lecturer union) is out of a contract at the end of the month. Our university ceases to function without this labor. By disciplining workers into increasingly flexible and casualized modes of work, the university continually forces others to pick up the slack whenever there is some semblance of dispute. One sector is pitted against another in an abject cycle that can only be overturned by solidaristic action across the university system, actions that are now starting to take place in earnest.

Common Struggles

One thing should be clear: all of this activity expresses more than just the immediate demands (fair wages and shift-length, workplace safety standards, job protections, etc.), although it is grounded in them. Our local demands strike at the heart of what the university is, how it operates, and for whom. As graduate students, our roles within the institution are variously cast as students, as workers, as researchers, as professional mentees; though in truth we are all these things, the administration only recognizes whichever category serves their interests at any given moment. If we make demands as workers, we are treated as students; if we demand conditions conducive to our education, we are served with excuses wrapped up in narrow definitions of our labor; if we claim we cannot afford to eat now, they tell us that we are here to develop our future professional capacities. Some have asserted that our strike entails the theft of university "property," as if the university administration, rather than students, were the ultimate owners of academic performance. This position, while false, does register real anxiety over the status of education itself, and the role of undergraduate students within it. Though we make no proprietary claim on your education, we are continuing to withhold grades--just one product of our collective labor here on campus--in order to halt the ordinary functioning of this university, calling into question the entire dubious system of accounting that is increasingly its reason for existence. We are on strike.

Rather than deny the validity of our claims, the administration opts for further intimidation tactics, against undergraduates in particular. Their main strategy? Sowing division among students by playing off justified anxieties of academic misfortune and diminished economic positions within ever-tightening labor markets. Incidentally, this is also our plight as precarious graduate students, and the university has attempted to manage us in a comparable fashion, though with far less outward concern. However, the fruits of this latest PR-campaign (and remember, the university has the resources to employ even more managers than already fill its ranks, and 'public opinion' no less than education is a profitable enterprise) may not be as significant as the administration expects. If undergraduates continue to direct their grievances toward the system as such, rather than those exploited by it, we can win real gains together. We can expose the university's statements of

'sympathy' and 'concern' for what they really are: condescending expressions of a managerial class aloof from and unconcerned by the realities of our living and working conditions, on campus and off. Indeed, if there is one thing our strike has proved thus far it is that our burdens can also be a common terrain of struggle. A majority of UCSC's 17,792 undergraduates are right now missing their grades, and you should demand them, but not from us. There is strength in these numbers--how can you, as undergrads, continue to put pressure on the university that professes concern for your plight but declines at every turn to actually deal with it?

Who (or what) Runs the University?

The specter of tuition hikes is constantly raised by the university to discourage student solidarity with any form of monetary demands. While it is true that they have increasingly offset the costs of operation onto you (and increasingly in the form of private debt), it is only from an exceedingly narrow standpoint that the university's funds flow primarily in a circuit from tuition to employee wages. The educational functions that serve you as undergraduates are increasingly subordinated to research, and research to lucrative contracts in the private and national defense sectors--from the construction of the Thirty Meter Telescope on Mauna Kea, to pursuing commercial research for unscrupulous Big Pharma companies like Glaxo-Smith-Kline, to the decades-long UC management of the nuclear weapons program at Los Alamos National Laboratories. Not only does the research of this public institution flow from its faculty and students to other sectors for private gain, it does so also at the expense of the workers in these industries, to whom such gains merely represent greater resources for their exploiters.

In point of fact, the UC system has always been run by war profiteers. Long before the tenure of our resident burglar-in-chief Janet Napolitano, the UC had cemented its status as a revolving door between defense industry and public education, cultivating deep ties with weapons manufacturing firms like Bechtel and Lockheed Martin. Big Science, far from being a neutral application of scientific research to industry, has consistently been driven by military initiatives and the interest of U.S. foreign policy. Some of the earliest UC regents, such as Irving M. Scott, were equally at home developing extraction technologies for California silver mines and producing warships to be deployed in colonial invasions of the Philippines in the 1890s. A more contemporary referent, on a scale inconceivable in the 19th century, is the UC's leading role in managing the Los Alamos laboratories, a central site for the development of the first forms of nuclear weaponry under the auspices of the Manhattan Project (an early device for splitting enriched uranium, invented by UC Berkeley scientists, was in fact dubbed "Calutron").

As we face an international conflict in which nuclear arms are once again at issue, we should soberly recognize that funding is never in question when weapons are at stake--not only under imminent threat of war but in the everyday functioning of our permanent arms economy. It is the one government sector that perpetually weathers austerity, and UC is a perfect example of how public education is subordinated to its interests even as it reels from cuts and more cuts. Make no mistake, the university employs the same logic of scarcity as the US government when it comes to social spending. Its budgetary denials are perfectly in accord with the willingness to wage war. Our budgetary demands, on the contrary, challenge this entire structure of priorities.



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STUDENTS AND WORKERS RUN THE UC!

"The intellectuals (including the university students) are a particularly volatile element ... capable of extreme reactions to objective situations – more extreme than any group in society. They are by nature irresponsible, in the sense that they have no continuing commitment to any single institution or philosophical outlook and they are not fully answerable for consequences. They are, as a result, never fully trusted by anybody, including themselves." - Clark Kerr

Today, we gather at Kerr Hall, a fitting seat for UCSC's middling administration, whose namesake, aside from being former President of the UC (his preferred title was "captain of bureaucracy"), elaborated an influential theory of the university in the 1960s. Kerr was instrumental in opening up the university (he called it the "multiversity") to private investment. This "multiversity," in his imagination, would include neither organized labor nor student dissent, but compliant consumers. When he wasn't writing reactionary screeds, Kerr found his true calling outlawing protest at UC Berkeley, sending in hundreds of police officers to arrest demonstrating students during the Free Speech Movement. In addition to his characteristic contempt for students and workers, Kerr bequeathed to our institution the structure and resolve to effectively serve the most monied interests, the most brazen state and military organizations. In Kerr's day this was the CIA and the Atomic Energy Commission. Now it is Google, Palantir, GlaxoSmithKline and DARPA. The current administration aspires to confident elan of Kerrian captainship. But no amount of false conviction can conceal the lack of certainty over what they are steering. For the administrators are merely first-class passengers on a sinking ship.

The effects of this business regime on our "volatile" and "irresponsible" student body is catalogued in the daily lives of students across this campus. Undergraduates continually describe the furious tempo of ever-increasing expectations at UCSC. Rather than supporting students with their accelerating academic demands, campus services have begun to compete for their time. These "services" intensify student stress. It is as if anxiety has been pegged to tuition—both soar to untenable heights. The wreckage that falls from them litter the university landscape. Dorms are to be divided and subdivided, common space converted into cramped occupancies. Class sizes are multiplied, transportation services slashed, while the already prohibitively priced access to parking is, like public transit, overloaded. Critical programs, like Counseling and Psychological Services, are paraded on glossy literature but remain woefully starved for funds. It is against this backdrop that the stopgap measures, with which the administration proposes to solve a windstorm of deteriorating conditions, are met with the disdain that they deserve.

Under these conditions, who wouldn't be excited to graduate, if only to escape?

Acceleration and squeeze.

These are dramatic substitutions for some of UCSC's founding commitments and characteristics (still claimed as its most marketable attributes)—sardine-tin living conditions for spacious redwoods, assembly-line educations for small "liberal-arts" colleges within a research university, and indeed grades in place of substantive narrative evaluations. This institution's best and most special features were originally products of student demand and design. While they have been steadily overturned by the administration's austerity policies, we should not look back nostalgically but ask how we might make a university that works for us now, in the present. We are an integral community of diverse students and workers, and we have the capacity to change our relationship to this campus through the collective refusal of our current conditions, just as striking K7 workers are refusing right now.

The outpouring of undergraduate support throughout the COLA grading strike has been incredible. Graduate students are ready to support you in your struggle to get the education you came here for. The administration has largely been content to paint the undergraduate body as passive victims of our strike. This glosses over the many ways that you already are actively resisting their terms. The administration, as usual, is wrong in more ways than one (is this what a "multiversity" means?). With the very same irresponsibility that Clark Kerr misattributed to students, the current administration offers threats and mealy-mouthed promises. Their messaging does not pass even a minimal threshold of academic standards, and yet they demand we continue to recognize their authority.

Our demand for a COLA is a struggle for more control over this university, a struggle which continues to implicate the university's many deficiencies. In this light, the fight for student and worker power on campus assumes a renewed sense of urgency. Our presence is only just beginning to be felt.



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Friday January 10 2020

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STUDENTS + WORKERS RUN THE UC!

For both newcomers and veterans of this university, yesterday felt like a historic step in undoing the stranglehold that the University of California's administration has held for so long over its vast community. Employing the state's largest workforce and operating as its largest landlord, the University seeks to maintain business-as-usual under all circumstances. Yesterday's disruptive rally however has put UCOP on edge—the office senses its peril as students, workers, faculty, and members of the Santa Cruz community engage with the issues that bind them together and contemplate further actions.



have foreseen. With only a week of organizing, we managed to withhold over 12,000 grades across the campus before the winter break. Now in January, we are standing alongside our AFSCME comrades with K7, whose indefinite strike is a further reconfiguration of a political climate in which strike actions are assumed to blow over by the next working day. We feel agitational rumblings from our lecturer comrades in AFT, who will be out of a contract, and unbound from its no-strike clause, by February. Undergraduates showed up in support by the hundreds, and their potential demands can be a crucial factor in driving ours forward. We've seen outpourings of support from the many unrepresented sectors of the university's labor force, emboldened by this new opening. And the energy displayed here is already beginning to be observed across other UC campuses. The administration should be aware (though we've learned not to underestimate their ignorance) that if our demands are not met, they will cascade into larger ones, enveloping more workers and students every week. In fact, this is exactly what has happened already.

Propelled by this momentum, hundreds of students and workers marched together from Kerr Hall to Porter/Kresge and Rachel Carson dining halls, in yet another free lunch occupation that tipped its hat to the Black Panthers' breakfast program. Even as the administration considers targeting "leaders" with retaliatory measures, the mass nature of our action resists the administration's

characterizations. In continuing to demonstrate solidarity with food service workers on campus, we also raise the spectre of a mass movement on campus, a prospect the administration is likely terrified by. Yet the possibility of retaliation, especially against those undertaking the courageous dining hall actions, is something we should all actively preempt precisely by broadening our struggle—these are tactics anyone can employ.

Meanwhile the UC police department is reporting acts of vandalism on campus, acts that supposedly put your "safety" in jeopardy while shoring up their authority to enforce it. And while the university always shells out for phalanxes of police (which make no students feel safe), they continue to refuse reasonable working conditions for the K7 skilled workers who precisely look after your everyday safety on this campus. Until their strike, they have been the ones working to actually upkeep this otherwise decrepit institution, even as their own working conditions have deteriorated year after year. (One wonders if a cop could adequately repair a light fixture or a broken heating system. They can certainly be counted on to clear a path for scabbing workers.)

UCSC is a unique place. True to its word, it always bucks the tide. Just consider: What kind of university claims it cannot improve its own conditions and that its 'hands are tied' in all areas that directly impact its students and workers? What kind of institution, which ostensibly would like to preserve its authority (or what remains of it), masquerades under such pretenses of impotence and weakness? Clearly, one that refuses to countenance any change that threatens the current structure of power. As the administration continues to instrumentalize its own dubious frailty, we, despite and against our vulnerability, act in such a way that demonstrates our collective strength. In coming together, we reaffirm our commitment to struggle against the university's perverse power, thereby affirming our own, which is qualitatively different. When we met in a General Assembly last night, we put our issues before each other and imagined what else a university could be—if we all act together. Hundreds of graduate students collectively decided to radicalize our next steps.



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Tuesday 14 January

SPREAD THE STRIKE!!!

By all appearances, UC's employment practices are more informed by the politics of the local landlord class than by any public mandate or educational principle. We see this in the UC's refusal to invest in, repair, and maintain its crumbling infrastructure, coupled with an expectation that rents will continue to rise, while the price of labor will continue to fall. It is no coincidence that, residing in Santa Cruz, the administration would seek to model its rule on the private power of slumlords. This strategy, which the university administration unilaterally adopts, characterizes their approach to collective bargaining in general—except, paradoxically, in our labor dispute around a COLA, where it defers accountability upwards to UCOP. In this light, we can readily see why the administration “refuses to negotiate” or renegotiate contracts with campus workers. Their waiting and stalling marks a deliberate abrogation of labor recognition and a reversion to an open-shop standard, in sync with longstanding business initiatives in California and elsewhere.

Infrastructure, they say, is anything you don't notice until it breaks. We might debate whether or not the university is in ruins, but we can surely agree that it is in disrepair. UC quenches its thirst for tuition dollars by ratcheting up enrollment numbers. An ever greater mass of students on our campus now crowds into a mixture of antiquated buildings and aging new ones whose shelf-life is diminished by underbid construction. A short campus stroll takes you from a decades-old bathroom facility to its fresh-looking but poorly constructed new counterpart. Constantly at risk of breaking down, both require regular upkeep well beyond the merely responsive and ad hoc repairs that one K7 worker described as “putting out fires.”

“I’m on strike because I care for the safety of our students and workers, unlike UCSC. The student population has grown by 27% yet our department is shrinking and we’re the first to respond to student safety concerns like gas and water leaks.”

—Wyman Lee, HVAC mechanic.

Safety, not “Security”

The campus administration and police have been messaging about safety concerns on campus, vaguely implying that the strikes are a threat to campus “safety.” It is difficult to take this seriously when the student population has grown exponentially while the ranks of campus mechanics and carpenters have thinned, and when K7 workers are so overworked that they can only respond to breakdowns. Meanwhile preventative maintenance is deferred until a fully-staffed tomorrow that never arrives. The administration’s vacuous concern for “safety” is more consistently understood as an insistence on “security.” Witness the exorbitant spending on campus police (half a million dollars spent on out-of-county police for every day that AFSCME strikes). These concerns seamlessly slide into a duplicitous effort to reassure the campus community that the university is indeed “safe” to enter during strikes (that the absence of K7 has no effect). In a further and even more insidious effort to undercut labor demands, it suggests that those striking might actively impair students’ safety.

These “security” concerns posed by the strike also, and even more crucially, threaten the health of the Wall Street securities tied up in UC undergraduate debt: in YOUR debt. The K7 strike and the COLA grading strike do indeed threaten these securities, which are “safe” investments precisely because the UC Regents can raise the cost of your

tuition at any time. The University remains financially “secure” by holding undergraduates hostage to surging tuition and chronic, interest-bearing indebtedness. These strikes undermine that security; but they are actions that contribute to your safety in both the short and long term.

For a generation, the cost of attending UCSC has steadily increased at three to four times the rate of inflation, even while the quality of education has declined, along with the returns it is expected to bring (that is, your job prospects). This bizarre relation—a rising price on a devaluating outcome—finds a very material expression in the housing and infrastructure on campus. Just as we experience in town, the UC slumlord is charging more and more for housing and learning spaces that are becoming worse and worse.

Spread the Strike

This stopgap approach to administration reflects the same systemic disinvestment that is fueling resistance across the university. While a K7 skilled worker regularly hears statements of concern for “safety,” they know the reality of understaffed shops and crumbling infrastructure. Low-paid and unrepresented academic staff hear boilerplate expressions of dedication to student success and advancement, but their daily routines consist of mounting demands on their labor and fewer resources to adequately perform it. Lecturers read the same formal commitments to education that everyone else does, but they feel the weight of increasing class sizes and unpaid work alongside the stress of lacking basic job security. When we say “one struggle, one fight” we are not taking refuge in abstractions, but expressing the shared experience of our deteriorating conditions and our commitment to struggle against them in all their guises.

However much these conditions might affect us all, the struggle is not always evenly distributed. Right now, the indefinite strike of K7 workers protests the status quo while assuming enormous risks for themselves. The desperation that would make anyone assume such a risk only compounds this risk. Talking to workers on the picket line recalls testimonials from the graduate student COLA strike and so many more with which we are all familiar. Many K7 staff work multiple jobs while supporting families and live in low-income housing, struggling to survive one day to the next. These are precarious conditions under which to take employment risks. They are at the forefront of the struggle against UC austerity, and deserve continuous support from the entire community that depends on them.

Noon Rally, Friday Jan 17th Quarry Plaza

49 UCSC skilled craft workers (electricians, plumbers, carpenters, painters, HVAC specialists, locksmiths and power plant operators) have gone out on an open-ended strike.

They will be on strike until they win fair wages, an end to outsources and safer staffing levels.

Come out to support this Friday at Noon at Quarry Plaza. (you can also find them at the base of campus @ their picket line, every day until they win!)



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Tuesday 14 January 2020

Students stand in solidarity with striking workers

"I need a COLA because I pay 57% of my income in rent living 20 minutes outside of town. In my previous home I was subject to 5 years of stachybotrys poisoning due to a criminally negligent landlord and having no affordable alternatives. I go into debt every month while skipping meals and going to the OPERS food pantry three times a week despite being in the 2nd highest tier of pay among graduate students." (anonymous graduate student testimony, 12/31/19)

"Your message shares you will be exercising your constitutionally protected rights of free speech and assembly. Peaceful dissent, protest and assembly is your right and we want to ensure and protect your ability to safely exercise that right. It is equally important to know these rights are subject to restrictions based on time, place, and manner [sic] rules." (EVC Lori Kletzer, "Grad Students' Demand Increased Pay Due Driven by SC Housing Costs" email, 12/5/19)

In this current struggle against an increasingly stalwart UC administration, AFSCME workers in the K7 bargaining unit have taken an important leap in calling for an "open-ended" strike. This indefinite action—courageous and risky in equal measure—is a significant departure from the routinized day-long strikes that are called, often weeks in advance, by unions under siege all over this country. Up against the intransigence and stringency of management, whether in the private sector or in relation to a nominally public institution like ours, workers face a series of tough choices. Whether to act defensively, often under the leadership of union bureaucracies who, while sympathetic to the plight of their memberships, have distinct interests bound up with business running more or less as usual; or whether to take matters into their own hands by engaging in wildcat actions, strikes, and various other workplace stoppages and escalations. When caught between unresponsive union representation and an employer interested in managing the acceleration rather than the resolution of already deep grievances (all the while assuring us they are safeguarding our "rights"), how should workers be expected to respond?

We are facing a very similar predicament as unionized graduate student-workers at UCSC (as "criminally negligent" a landlord as the one mentioned above). Our statewide union, the leadership of the UAW, ratified a dubious 2018 contract under even more dubious circumstances, removing our ability to formally withhold labor with a no-strike clause. This was a blunt repudiation of the very notion of rank and file activity in the union. Our membership at UCSC voted against this contract (83% of us wanted it scrapped, and the union bargaining team was itself profoundly divided over its passing). It was approved anyway, causing a minor scandal, but only a small blip in a history of bad deals foisted on workers by their apparent leaders. Now that a large portion of our membership is not only demanding

that new terms be introduced to our contract, and our wage package in particular (a COLA), we are moving in general to organize the union from below, because we do not accept its organization from above. What do we want? An alternative to a union that concedes much more to the administration than it grants to its workers. We are struggling for a militant union where rank and file workers determine the character and content of their contracts, have a direct say over the quality of their working conditions, and are organized enough to act upon any actual or potential incursions to their hard-won victories. Your struggle in K7, barely 50 workers against a juggernaut university system (largest employer in the 6th largest economy in the world), has been exemplary in this respect, and has inspired many among us to forge deeper networks of organization and mutual support. Striking is a major way to accomplish building these links and organizing ourselves for the next round of admin-led counterattacks. Strikes withhold labor as an instrument of class power, and this is especially the case in integral positions like yours. We as workers know the value of our work and the need for it—the innumerable staffing cuts the university regularly impose only reinforce this, and have the effect of making you work longer, harder, and faster. Many of you in K7 have worked at UCSC for years, far exceeding the regular turnover cycles of the student body, and you have firsthand experience with the consequences of the administration's relentless efforts at cost-cutting and speed-ups. Many of you, as Santa Cruz county locals, or commuters coming from even greater distances, are also more than familiar with the appalling housing market and general diminishing standards of living for most working people in this town. This inescapable reality comprises the backdrop to our entire struggle here, in a place where "survival" has come to be nearly indistinguishable from working oneself to death, either through overtime or second or third jobs.

Under such conditions, militant rank and file action increasingly looks less like desperate radicalism and more like common sense. Your demand for a "secure future for all" powerfully calls into question the future the administration offers us, framing your situation as presently insecure, unacceptable, and ultimately indefensible. The political lines have been drawn. Workers cannot win a future worth having by remaining on the defensive, waiting for solutions to trickle down from the top. **For this reason, we continue to support your open-ended strike for an open-ended future.**



Noon Rally Friday jan 17th Quarry Plaza

49 UCSC skilled craft workers (electricians, plumbers, carpenters, painters, HVAC specialists, locksmiths and power plant operators) have gone out on an open ended strike. They will be on strike until they win fair wages, an end to outsources and safer staffing levels.

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STRIKING WORKS! DIRECT ACTION WORKS!!!!

It is commonly held that UCSC was designed in order to discourage protest and demobilize potential crowds. From its circuitous and arboreal infrastructure and lack of central locations conducive to large mobilization (such as Sproul Plaza at UC Berkeley, or Royce Quad at UCLA), to its idiosyncratic system of individual ‘colleges’, UCSC is said to provide a kind of decentralized bulwark against campus unrest. Though this is a mixture of truth and fiction--there have always been protests here--it misconstrues the nature of mass resistance, which, despite certain physical limitations, often exists beneath the surface and will always find a proper outlet sooner or later.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, UCSC students protested the war in Vietnam and Cambodia. Along with burning draft cards in Quarry Plaza--where we gather today--a majority of students on campus (there were only around 3,000 at the time, and classes with small groups of students were quite common) stood up against the war, and by extension to a UC administration invested in the design and production of weapons. In today's wildfire conditions of endless drought and climate catastrophe, one might envision setting ablaze student loan promissory notes in this same plaza, not simply in protest against an institution wedded to a global landscape dominated by U.S. military belligerence, but as an action in defiance of an entire system of resource extraction, one that stakes out education as a “privilege” worthy of a lifetime of debt. This extractive resource is the public-private partnership of your future. Undergraduate students at this campus ought to know that after graduating from our public university they will receive a phone call from a private debt collector, formally introducing a decades-long process of paying back their interest-bearing student loans. These loans can pass up or down generations, where even bankruptcy is not a get-out option. The only get-out option is effective protest now.



Student loan debt, now a key driver of U.S. military enlistment, is directly tied to the university’s contemporary form of extractive administration. Students, prior to graduation and entry into the (largely mythical) job market of one’s field of study, often do not yet perceive the university’s vast holdings as an alien power wielded against them. What is more visible are the major construction projects and land grabs the university administration initiates (and uses increased enrollments to justify), engaging in a self-serving cycle where all students lose. The administration seems largely content to let this vicious cycle continue (they would, of course, describe it as a “virtuous” cycle), not merely because it deepens the pockets of Cynthia “I’m OK with my salary” Larive, but because it is, in essence, emblematic of what the university has become.

Keep this in mind when the UC regents vote to increase undergraduate tuition again next week: The biggest threat to campus safety is not striking workers and the students who stand in solidarity with them, but the unspectacular brutality of administrative neglect. Neglect is most detectable in its effects, in decrepit campus housing underpinned by crumbling campus infrastructure. But neglect is just one tool in the administration’s repertoire. The aggressive effort to bypass or thwart the presence of organized labor on campus is another, though directly related to such neglect. K7 Skilled Trade workers, who are also currently on strike, are too overworked, understaffed, and underpaid to perform the vital labor of preventative maintenance and repair on campus. Meanwhile, “safe” Wall Street investments command administrative attention. We denounce the safety of financial speculation, while affirming the safety that only comes through solidarity and mutual aid, the very practices that are taking shape in our collective struggles against injustice.

STUDENTS + WORKERS TEACH THE UC

Among the scant communications from our largely aloof chancellor, you may remember a recent announcement that proclaimed UCSC's election to the Association of American Universities (admin's PR machine ironically celebrated this as "radical" excellence), a consortium whose most enduring legacy in the American academy may have been its leading role in the ideological purges of faculty in the 1950s and the long wave of intellectual conformism that followed. Along with a litany of prestigious honors and association memberships, this is trotted out as self-evidence of the high distinction that students will somehow benefit from by attending this institution. As to how students actually figure in this operation, a more accurate picture is buried in data like that presented in the Economic Impact Report, which touts the university's capacity to draw hundreds of millions of dollars into the community through student spending on *rent, food, and transportation* (the costs of which are strangling us all). This money that pours into the coffers of local extortionist landlords is then put to further work, justifying increased enrollment and thereby further exacerbating the crisis, even as rising tuition dollars are pledged as collateral on bonds for new construction and capital investment elsewhere.

That there is a massive gap between proclamations of excellence and the lived reality of the student body will surprise no one, even among the less cynical. But the thoroughgoing degree to which students have been transformed into quantifiable elements of an economy of excellence is perhaps not immediately perceptible. Throughout the COLA grading strike, graduate student workers have been vilified from various quarters of the university for negatively impacting the academic experience and progress of undergraduates. And yet, as strikers have repeatedly insisted, no qualitative aspects of their educational roles were abandoned—in this respect the only "thing" withheld (our labor notwithstanding) was an abstract sign under which undergraduate academic work enters into circulation within funding structures, honors programs, admissions quotas, etc. As such data, student performance becomes a metric of excellence completely divorced from the learning, mentorship, and inquiry that this strike ultimately seeks to defend. Claims to the effect that the quality of undergraduate education is a primary focus of this institution—only interrupted by graduate students' demands—are misleading and false. The existence of this "education" is

increasingly only an excuse for other operations, which, under the guise of academic distinction, grant a patina of integrity to otherwise questionable investments.

No one is more responsible for this outcome than the UC regents. Looking at their meeting agendas, one might plausibly wonder what they actually have to do with education. The composition of this body—investment bankers, developers, high-powered attorneys and politicians grace its lofty ranks—tells a quite different story, one that only incidentally involves "education" (except, of course, as defined solely through reference to its market value). But make no mistake, even if they do not understand what it is, they have big plans for it. Their proposal for 5 consecutive years of undergraduate tuition hikes was abruptly removed from today's agenda, when they realized it couldn't be slipped under the radar unopposed. We do not simply oppose the increase of tuition, however, but the very existence of this body of hucksters otherwise known as the regents. Wherever possible, their meetings should be opposed, crashed, and disrupted—exposed for the farce they are—while a new vision of education is asserted in their place.



Strikes, organization, and more strikes.

This is what political education looks like, and is precisely what the university keeps at the margins, even if it cannot be kept off the table entirely (there are still some professors here who teach history). Is the strike with which K7 skilled workers just achieved a fair contract a sign of stirring good health beneath UC's regime of labor repression? We would argue, rather, that the workers themselves, through their ongoing strike activity (which includes the threat of shutting down access to transit this week) forced this very outcome. It is not that the administration is incapable of acting in good faith, but rather that their "good faith" is incapable of ever truly transforming this sick institution. Now another malaise is spreading across Academic Student Employees, one that has ultimately issued from university governance coupled with the daily reality of living in the paradisiacal squalor of rent-burdened Santa Cruz. As hundreds withdraw from university operations and obligations today to recover (call it a "sick-out"), many among us are taking our demands directly to the regents meeting. This is not because we think they will listen—though they might hear—but to renew our contacts with other campuses, embolden each other, and spread the strike.

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Wednesday 22 January 2020

Spread the strike: Meet the Regents

The University of California Board of Regents are an unelected body of suits: business-types, CEOs, CFOs, investors, real estate speculators, managers, and advisors, as well as political establishment insiders, only a handful of whom have any direct experience in educational settings, and all of whom embody a barely disguised contempt for public education. Regents are appointed by the governor under circumstances that scandalize even the SF Chronicle: “Most of the 26 regents who run the University of California are chosen in a process involving a ghostly, unnamed committee of 12 people who never meet, produce no public record of their actions, and publish no list of members. Some don’t even know who the other members are” (“Are Governors Ignoring Law When Appointing UC Regents?,” SF Chronicle). Despite their best efforts, however, the board of regents has not been entirely impervious to student input. In addition to the lone “student advisor,” a position that was introduced in 2016 and only survived until last year, when they collectively decided to discontinue the position, the regents had one student regent on their board. Given that this student advisor had no voting powers (their call to extend the student position went unheeded), they witnessed the termination of their own position from the sidelines, in an almost perfect synecdoche for democratic governance in the state of California.

This spectacle notwithstanding, the regents have a decisive job to do (even if they do no work in any meaningful sense of the term). According to Article IX, Section 9 of the California Constitution, the “corporation known as the Regents of the University of California” has “full powers of organization and governance,” and operates with near complete autonomy from state control. In 2017, when Janet Napolitano was found not only to have withheld \$175 million from public disclosure, but also to have obstructed the subsequent state audit conducted across the UC, the regents could have dismissed her (the fact that she was ever hired in the first place is a controversy of another order of magnitude). Instead, they merely reprimanded her for “poor judgment,” while committing to “fully support her continuing leadership.” On the other hand, hoarding vast sums of money while imposing an austerity model of education is part and parcel of the regents’ economic vision for the UC (routine tuition increases are just one instance of this), and Napolitano’s office has, in this

respect, performed splendidly. Indeed, there will be difficult shoes to fill when Napolitano retires at the end of this year. Then again, even if another top immigration cop can’t be found, California is full of craven speculators, financiers, and businessmen working at the intersection of public administration and profit to choose from—one need only take a look at the ranks of the regents for confirmation of this.

The COLA movement that has kicked off at UCSC is contesting this entire mode of administration, its extractive agenda, and the banal depravity of its highly-paid personnel. We have focused our actions first and foremost by attacking the working conditions at UCSC and the living conditions in Santa Cruz (and Northern California more generally), both of which are becoming more decrepit with each passing day.

In demanding a cost of living adjustment (COLA), we have called attention to the full scope of exploitation on our campus, not simply as graduate students, but in solidarity with other workers at the university who are overburdened, underpaid, and constantly wedged between an administration bent on chipping away at every past gain and tepid union leaders, who seem content to let them do so. At UCSC, the K7 bargaining unit of skilled trade workers overturned a years-long pattern of routinized symbolic

strikes by withholding their labor indefinitely, and they won a contract after two weeks on strike, an outcome that AFSCME 3299 at large has been unable to achieve in 3 years of bargaining. In doing so, K7 hit upon the one thing that UCOP is more afraid of than a fair contract—bold, solidaristic action.



The sheer pace of this movement’s growth is a clear sign of its timely resonance, but also of its capacity to channel a heterogeneity of demands into a unified form of militancy. Our ambitions eclipse timid programs for more equitable allocations of austerity-level resources. The UC system seized upon the shocks of the 2008 crisis to double down on its faceless hostility to fair dealing: this has been, but can no longer be, the status quo for students and workers under California’s largest employer, whose fight for a minimally decent life is necessarily also a struggle for a different university. In the new phase of this struggle, the demands are multiplying across the UC campuses and are coalescing on the hitherto undisturbed doorsteps of UCOP and the UC regents. Knock knock.

A new phase in the COLA struggle



The strike is spreading. A frenzy of activity is afoot: meetings upon organizational meetings, inside and outside departments, between and across divisions, at this campus and on a cross-UC basis; among graduate student workers and undergraduates, layers of staff, lecturers, and faculty, junior and senior, campus workers and those rendered unemployed or unemployable by the university's incessant bait-and-switch approach to hiring. While as graduate students we are familiar with the severity of this experience, the same dynamic holds for so many seeking work within this institution's orbit. The extent of this broad-based organizational effort, buoyed by the actions we've taken on and off campus, has accomplished more in the last ten weeks than in the last ten years of political activity. The administration, witnessing this with characteristic chagrin, cannot but fall back on a hollow strategy of threats of reprisals couched within emails commending us for our continued suffering. One might ask who their dubious "offer" is designed to motivate. What happens when the administration runs out of carrots and all they have left are sticks?

What if, in approaching this matter more sensibly, we decide to refuse their terms altogether? A COLA will not be a payment handed down in recognition of our suffering, but an objective that is reached for, and won, by our struggle. The familiar insistence that there is "no money" available is merely the obverse of hoarding vast sums of cash. (Napolitano surely saw no contradiction in this when she tucked away \$175 million from public scrutiny.) What trickles down, if anything, is the prevailing mentality of austerity—and it gathers force as it moves toward the bottom, contributing to the sense of anxiety and fear that graduate students feel whenever they demand more than mere crumbs. Though these pressures are real, we insist that our vulnerability vanishes only when we act collectively against the structures that confine our roles and circumscribe our possibilities.

Administrators love to claim that we don't understand how it all works (a worn-out technocratic line), forgetting that we are experts in how it doesn't. The wreckage of this system is vast and diverse: this strike mounts a challenge to the entire structure of administration.

One strike, many points of departure. The very fact of heterogeneous political tendencies within the movement, not to mention the structural segmentation of the graduate student labor force (into TAs, GSIs, tutors, readers, GSRs), necessitates an openness to multiple forms of action—united by their antagonism to a university, the same university that produces their fragmentation. Where the Fall grading strike prioritized consolidated decisiveness, the actions slated to begin next week foreground tactical agility. At the level of individual decisions, in department-level organizing and across the movement as a whole, the practical and the radical are poles of mutually transformative tension rather than of mutual exclusion.

All this contributes to the impression that we are entering a new phase in the movement, rather than undertaking a qualitatively different set of actions. We must strategize together, with a view towards targeting the weakest points in the institution--this was the tactical strength of withholding grades--and focusing our actions there. What could these look like? The planning meeting on Monday signalled a remarkable openness to confronting the ambiguity of our situation head-on, rather than retreating from it, and to formulating new collective measures that, without the presumption of uniformity, can allow for many different forms of escalation, all under the banner of our strike. The picket beginning on Monday marks a decisive opening determined by our circumstances. What exactly it opens onto will take shape through all of our actions.

See you on the picket.

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FRIDAY 7 FEBRUARY 2020

SEE YOU ON THE PICKET!

‘Fuck the UC’ is not so much a slogan of any one group or the position of a political current on campus. It is instead the reflexive response by thousands of people, who, upon receiving each and every communication sent by the university administration, heave a collective sigh—and not the kind that follows the sensation of relief, but of annoyance. Few would deny that the administration’s limited correspondence with the movement has been annoying. But the peculiar annoyance elicited by admin is felt more acutely precisely because it is useless. For all its institutional standing and its alleged clout, the administration is an essentially useless body, a body comprised of managers for whom utility is an entirely foreign function. It would be one thing if the administration at least strived for usefulness. But in having no useful tasks at their disposal, the members of the administration seek instead to inflict upon others the profoundly annoying fact of their existence. Listen carefully when the administrators disgorge one ineffectual email threat after another, or when they summon graduate students into “meetings” consisting chiefly of blustery yelling, or when they loiter helplessly along the fringes of mass student rallies. If you strain your ears hard enough, between the chants of undergrads, lecturers, workers, and graduates, you can hear the same feeble whimper: “we exist too...” If you read closely enough, between the lines of their threats, you can find the dismal sadness of administrative life.

‘Fuck the UC’ is a collective response to the ongoing conundrum of finding ourselves under the managerial thumb of an institution which is set up to thwart and derail the expression of even the most minor grievance. When grievances are translated collectively into broadly resonant demands, however, the administration becomes increasingly ill at ease with its own uselessness, and attempts to remedy it by assuming the role of disciplinarian. What the administration lacks in terms of argumentation and commitment to principles, however, they make up for in lurid fantasies of despotic rule. This is the context in which their threats of discipline, doled out to hundreds of graduate students this week, should be read. One does not need to be an academic to detect a certainty quantity of embarrassment embedded in such fantastic messages, messages that fail to intimidate though cannot but succeed to annoy, and are thus embarrassing for having succeeded only in failing.

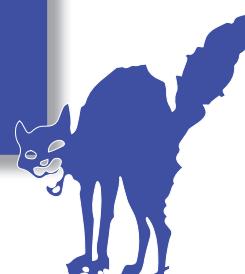
‘Fuck the UC’ was also the subject of yesterday’s rally, where it was chanted by undergraduates with rage, joy, and other accompaniments, at classmates who might one day become comrades (“Out of the dorms, into the streets!”), playfully at high school students on vanilla campus tours (“Don’t come here!”), and at every administrator within earshot (“No Justice, No Peace!”). The rally was led by undergraduates, who are augmenting their dynamic solidarity with other campus groups by crafting an array of demands of their own. For a few hours, even the lawn of the Chancellor’s \$10 million mansion became something it was never intended to be—a useful space

for vibrant organizing and mutual aid, pointing in the direction of what a world without chancellors might look like.

Meanwhile, the statewide graduate student worker union (UAW 2865) has given its blessing to the flurry of intercampus solidarity and organization work already underway outside the official union channels, even as it urges individual wildcats to forsake the strike and return to work. We, who are well acquainted with the UC’s retaliatory repertoire, understand that our union president finds herself compelled to do this, on pain of legal sanction. However, their Wednesday communication to UAW members, which framed UCSC wildcats as excluding other campuses or neglectful of conditions elsewhere, made little sense to us, and elicited all too familiar shudders of annoyance. The awkward attempt to simultaneously distance themselves from us and ignorantly co-opt COLA4All reeked of the kind of factionalism that Santa Cruz set out to ignore when we launched the COLA campaign. We have neither time nor interest to play these games, and look forward to a moment when statewide marshals its considerable resources to advance the struggle. Our struggle, our time and our interest, looks ahead to Monday, February 10, when our grading strike becomes a teaching strike. The base of campus will become a site to protest the UC administration and contest the deadening top-down and debt-fuelled affair formerly known as the UC model of education. At the base, graduate students will be withholding and transforming their labor, picketing against their living conditions and hosting alternative sections, offering mutual aid and educating one another in precisely the ways we have never been able to in the classrooms up on the hill. Come for breakfast, screen printing and button making, talks and workshops, training on de-escalation and self-defense, a sewing bee and a birthday celebration, guest speakers and dancing classes. At the close of the day, as campus administrators plead for guidance from their UCOP suzerains, we will meet to decide how we’ll struggle again on Tuesday: one day longer, one day stronger.

**SEE YOU ON
THE PICKET!**

**(MONDAY:
7:30AM,
base of
campus)**



MONDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2020

news on the picketline

BECOMING UNGOVERNABLE

By emailing the entire student body pleading that they search for the cop inside themselves and snitch on TAs and instructors in solidarity with the strike, the administration has once again overplayed its hand. By treating students in this way, admin take on the posture of a prison warden who, lacking reliable intel, attempts to appeal to their less-unruly inmates (though in our case, the administration doesn't even offer its informants anything in return--some bargain!). This posture is even clearer in the email sent on Friday to international graduate students, whose immigration and visa status they not-so-subtly implied would be at risk for striking. It is not hard to imagine this directive being issued by head jailer, Janet Napolitano, whose anti-immigrant playbook is never lacking in repressive "solutions." The fact that the administration of UCSC—the people who closely guard the "authority" necessary to "question authority"—call themselves progressives, however, is no contradiction. Behind every Larive, Kletzer, or Blumenthal stands a Napolitano waiting to tell you about the successes of tighter border policies, soaring property values in California, and the massive UC development projects that seek to push them even higher; these successes will be boon to all—provided you have the right immigration papers, lots of money, and do not engage in "criminal" (read: strike) activity.

For reasons beyond their ability to grasp, the admin's repressive gamble has been laughed at and roundly rejected. After this most recent spectacular failure, the admin is clearly scrambling to assert its supposed "authority." Witnessing that "authority" crumbling, in a university that it manages but cannot lead, the administration is now painting itself as the victim, whose "rights" are being infringed by striking graduate students. "One of the central benefits bargained for by the University is the right to be free of any strikes during the term of the agreement," says EVC Kletzer in an email euphemistically titled "Opportunities for Dialogue" (lol). Besides threatening workers with dismissal from employment, the email asserts that virtually everyone on campus, but especially the administration, is being victimized by the strike. Flipping the script, they say that graduate student workers are so intransigent (some of them have called us "terroristic," others "Trumpian," still others "Nazi") that we have supposedly turned down every occasion for dialogue with the administration. These lies come from the same benevolent administration that continues to "offer" us such luxuries as a one week "pause" in the punishment they intend to mete out to us, the same administration that refused to meet at all up until this point.

What is more significant in this email, though, is the emphasis on sticking to "the contract" whose no-strike clause

is held so dearly by the university and the UAW statewide "leadership" alike (—more than 80% of grads at UCSC rejected this contract). So treasured is the no-strike clause that they invoke it like some inalienable "right," presumably alongside the rights to speech and association (some rights are convenient for them and some rights aren't). The truth is, the no-strike clause in our contract is the cost of doing business with the UC, as a worker, and it is imposed in every contract, more or less in step with the interests of bureaucratic union officials who would prefer for us to simply go back to work. The reality is that the power of our labor is not based in the contract, but in the will of the rank and file workers. In the case of our wildcat strike, the rank and file is clearly not interested in this garbage contract, much less the UC's interpretation of it.

Ignoring the administration's gracious request that we call off the strike in exchange for nothing at all, graduate student workers mobilize today for our first concerted picket action. What we accomplish today is up to us, and we will have to make a number of important decisions as to how we will act from here. We will be faced with opposition from administrative cops and the actual cops they ship in from all over the state (one might wonder how many COLAs could be funded if all these overtime-police were to simply stay home, or even better, retire). Strikes, as we've already seen, have the potential to organize our actions and efforts in ways we have not expected, and our capacity to hold off disciplinary threats is embedded in our collective activity here. Undergraduates, faculty, lecturers, campus workers are already standing behind us, acting and organizing themselves in ways we have not seen before on this campus. In undertaking this mass action, with its militant, open-ended character, it is now our turn to make an "offer": give us a COLA or this campus becomes ungovernable.

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MONDAY 10 FEB

SANTA CRUZ: COLA PICKET, 7:30am, base of campus	
SANTA BARBARA: March to Demand COLA, noon, Cheadle Hall	
SAN DIEGO: March for COLA, 1pm, Silent Tree at Geisel Library	
LOS ANGELES: UCLA 4 COLA Rally, noon, outside Young Research Library	
DAVIS: COLA 4 ALL Solidarity Rally, noon, MU Flagpole	
BERKELEY: COLA Organizing Assembly, 4pm, Graduate Assembly (444 Eshleman)	

Tuesday 11 FEBRUARY 2020
day #2 – news on the picketline

SHUT IT DOWN!!!

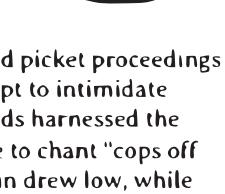
Our show of strength yesterday confirms that we have the capacity to bring this university to a grinding halt. Classes, seminars, lectures, sections, labs, and office hours were cancelled, disrupted, and otherwise obstructed by a multitude of graduate students, undergrads, faculty, staff, and campus workers who continue to refuse the terms of the university administration, their intimidation tactics, their ceaseless lies and misinformation campaigns, and their seemingly limitless zeal for making this campus absolutely inhospitable to anyone who is not exactly like them. Yesterday, our collective power sent shockwaves throughout this campus and to other UCs, which held major coordinated actions of their own.

This power was felt by the busloads upon busloads of cops that were pulled in from as far as San Francisco. These cops arrived with a strikebusting verve that only a hyper-attachment to private property (or fifty bucks an hour overtime pay) can muster. Some of them, sporting "Blue Lives Matter" patches, were clearly not going to be satisfied with sitting at the sidelines. Outnumbered and uncoordinated, they opted to pick out a single undergraduate for a jaywalking citation and to arrest someone for delivering water to the picket. When the crowd rushed to defend this person (who could have been any one of us), the cops pulled their batons on students, even clubbing one STEM grad in the head and sending her to the medical center with a concussion; one of our own was successfully de-arrested at the same time. Remember, the price of "public safety" is high at UCSC (mercenary forces don't come cheap), but the administration can afford it because it is cheaper, ultimately, than paying workers enough to live here. We are likely to see more of such crude gestures today. But we ought not to forget that police issued a two-minute dispersal order that they could not hope to follow through on, given the massed numbers in the intersection and the hundreds of people marching down from the west entrance. Yesterday we closed this campus for the first time in five years; an ever greater presence may be required to do the same today. There is a pattern at work here, though: when we take the offensive, the capacity of the administration (actually, its police) to enforce its own decrees diminishes, and they are forced to backtrack.

Yesterday's show of strength was also a crucial flex of undergraduate organizing power, a decisive factor, historically, at the UC campus with the lowest ratio of graduate to undergraduate students. From dawn, hundreds of wildcat-clad undergrads stood shoulder to shoulder with graduate students, coordinating chants around the Bay and High Street intersection. Before long, the campus' west entrance became a militant picket in its own right (and with sharper confrontations

with police), in part due to its character as a narrower chokepoint for campus access. Many commuting drivers, realizing the intensity of the situation, simply turned around and drove home, prompting joyous cheers from the strikers. A recent formation of radical undergrad organizers, the People's Coalition (those behind last Thursday's 'Fuck the UC' rally), orchestrated picket proceedings after the police failed in their clumsy attempt to intimidate protesters out of the street. These undergrads harnessed the palpable anger and animosity into a resolve to chant "cops off campus" until the cops retreated and the sun drew low, while the masses danced the Payaso De Rodeo together in the street. As undergraduates begin to formulate their own demands for a mass movement—a noon meeting this Friday in the Quarry Amphitheater is, for them, the next step—yesterday's strike served as one model of solidarity: collective struggle, rather than merely showing up in peripheral or "support" roles, as if the role of undergraduates was, as the paternalistic line of the administration would have it, exclusively subordinate in nature. Last night we witnessed many undergraduates participating in the General Assembly alongside us, helping to guide decisions that impact the larger student body in urgently direct ways: this irreducibly collective movement belongs to no single individual or group.

And yet there is no doubt that the street was first taken with the arrival of marching UCSC faculty. Donning academic regalia and led by a "Faculty for COLA" banner, our professorial comrades and lecturers formed an essential buffer between UC police repression (at the bidding of their administrative bosses) and UC students. Yesterday could have gone very differently had these professors, galvanized by the Faculty Organizing Group, not intervened in the way that they did. There is no doubt that their continued presence on the picket this week requires solidarity, and more of our mentors and teachers will not fail to take note of this. A wildcat strike, in its very nature, has the potential to radically realign institutional relations, which otherwise sit rigid and hierarchical in the mundane, business-as-usual grind of our bureaucratic unions and sordid Public Affairs emailers. If yesterday serves as any indication of what we should expect today and for tomorrow, UCSC's undergraduates, graduates, lecturers, and professors will align on one side of the picket, cops and administrators on the other. Meanwhile, the strike only continues to spread.



Friday 14 FEBRUARY 2020
day #5 – news on the picketline

COPS OFF CAMPUS / COLA IN MY BANK ACCOUNT

This week, “business as usual” has been rendered impossible at this university. What has been most significant over the course of the last few days is the potent combination of collective size and spirit that we have been able to sustain. By sticking together—the real meaning of solidarity—we have fused the moral claim that a COLA4ALL is necessary with the political claim that real power resides in our collective capacity to strike. What’s clear is that this power is most evident when we disrupt the regular course of things. There is the strike, of course, with graduate students withholding their labor, but we’ve also witnessed so many undergraduates mobilizing the physical barricade—surely any sense of normalcy at UC Santa Cruz has taken to its heels, along with, apparently, the inhabitants of Kerr Hall. As a result, demands previously framed by the administration as simply “impossible” are now suddenly within reach, a clear outcome of unrelenting picketing, blockade, and mass assembly. Surely what admin really thought was impossible was our willingness to fight them this far. We have called their bluff.

For the last two days our strike effectively shut down campus for the entirety of each afternoon. Blocking the main entrance for hours, hundreds of undergraduate and graduate strikers, faculty as well as staff, withstood police repression and ultimately forced outnumbered phalanxes of riot cops to stand down. Seventeen of our comrades were arrested (and suspended from school) on Wednesday, while even more were subjected to police violence. The administration has worked hard to routinize the presence of its militarized police this week (going so far as to grant armed officers use of the “Community Room” in Family Student Housing for a break room and bathroom). Instead, it has multiplied animosity and expanded our movement, obviously much further than admin was banking on. One cop—probably out of frustration with his inability to manage the situation—simply told one of us that their orders “came from Larive.” It’s hard to imagine such a moment of candor coming from the Chancellor herself.

Yet, there have been difficult moments where we’ve brushed up against tactical impasses. Following the legacy of civil disobedience, many of us sat down on Wednesday, unwilling to voluntarily move according to police orders. Though courageous, these moments quickly opened onto significant peril. We suddenly found ourselves pleading with the cops, leaning on moral claims—“SHAME!”—against a social force that has absolutely no moral basis. But as we all know, there is no pleading with the police. Their historic and institutional function militates against any moral imperative. Thus what began as non-compliance quickly became involuntary compliance, as our comrades were attacked, arrested, and hauled away. We are not here to get arrested (which, aside from being dangerous, holds no inherent strategic value) but to make arrest impossible by virtue of our strength and tactical agility. We are here to win.

The administration’s mistake has always been to misidentify where real power resides—not in their petty but well-compensated titles (“executive vice whatever”), nor in the institutions of the legal system

that cops pretend to uphold. Class power—the daring struggle of the exploited, overworked, and dominated; be they workers, students, or the down and out—intervenes in the present, and shapes our relationship to the future no less than the past. Power does not lie exclusively in our claim to moral righteousness. It lies in our capacity to integrate our demands into offensively, securing real material gains through coordinated, collective action. This process is not rooted in symbolic appeals to journalists (we are familiar with the rapping of social media activism), politicians, or union bureaucrats—all of which, incidentally, can be features of the movement—but struggle.

How many years have our peers asked previous administrative leaders to make the changes we need? To fund our libraries and our student services? To defund UC police and fund adjuncts? To reduce housing costs for students and workers alike? There is no more asking. We will win our demands through collective force, or we will get nothing at all. Undergraduates, in a significant example, have acted this week in powerful ways, in large numbers and autonomous groups, and have begun to articulate demands radical enough to turn this institution on its head. They have channeled the demand for “COPS OFF CAMPUS” into a real antagonism with police on campus, while drawing on recent movements that have employed militant anti-police tactics elsewhere (take, for example, the mass unrest in Ferguson MO, which propelled forward a national movement against racist police violence).

We should not silo our tactical decisions to the historical record of our own strike when there are so many historical references, and contemporary parallels, to pull from. It is clear that it is not only other academic workers and students who are watching our struggle right now—all around the country we are gathering support from people who are putting up a fight for liveable wages, more autonomy and dignity, and healthy working and living conditions. Wherever there is exploitation, there is struggle against it. People, everywhere, are running up against the limits of what it means to exist in this society, and are actively pushing these forward towards a transformative vision of social life. This week the university itself has been changed into a site of struggle, but also the glimpse of something else: there has been celebration in the street, and in place of the daily miseries wrought by the institution, there has been joy. Let us carry this forward.

URGENT:
**if you have photos or videos
 of police violence,
 send directly to our lawyer at
 mas1218@gmail.com**

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twitter @spreadthestrike

send images to share on social media
 and with the press payusmoreucsc@gmail.com





Tuesday 18 FEBRUARY 2020
day #6 – news on the picketline



YOURS VERY TRULY

As our first full week of picketing drew to a close on Friday, many of us expected to take the weekend to rest and begin to analyze our situation after the violent experiences we had shared. Happily, UC's head hall monitor Janet Napolitano stepped in to make the stakes of our situation clear. In a shameless Valentine's Day note that ordered us back to the classroom, Napolitano declared that strikers would face harsh penalties if they did not submit grades and end the picket line. At the moment, the administration, seeking always to uphold its own prerogatives, provides no guarantees even for those who do submit grades. It has fixed a deadline for striking students "to submit all missing grades, to end the strike and to fulfill their contractual obligations . . . Those who do not submit full grade information by February 21 will not receive spring quarter appointments or will be dismissed from their spring quarter appointments," EVC Lori Kletzer has said.

"President" Napolitano, echoing this threat, admonished us for our "unsanctioned" actions and demanded we return to work; in exchange for this concession—apparently, the privilege of not being fired—we simply continue to live and work in the same poverty and debt we've endured all along. The despot has spoken her final word and stepped out from behind the curtain of bureaucratic unfeasibility, finally admitting what has long been merely implicit: there is no obscure, legal technicality preventing fair dealing, no insurmountable budgetary impediment, no blame that can be shifted about how "complex" the situation is. While we do not doubt the seriousness of the threat of mass dismissal (UCOP is, after all, nothing if not a repressive office), we believe the best course of action available to us is to spread the strike: to other UC campuses, to other layers of faculty, staff, and undergraduates. In addition to deepening the impact of the strike at UCSC, this would put immense pressure on the broader UC system, and UCOP in particular.



URGENT:
 if you have photos or videos
 of police violence,
 send directly to our lawyer at
mas1218@gmail.com

twitter @spreadthestrike
 send images to share on social media
 and with the press payusmoreucsc@gmail.com

Once Napolitano stripped away all the administrative excuses we've been given these last months (years, really), what remained is only the arbitrary "authority" of the upper echelons of UC administration, and their desire to crush this movement at any price. In Napolitano's UC, "public institution" does not mean that the people decide, but that the state does, and that it will exercise its power through its monopoly on violence. All these constantly escalating displays of police force, all the administrative threats, the sham student conduct hearings, and the serving of campus bans have culminated in some remarkable clarity from Napolitano: we will threaten, punish, and beat you into submission, but we will not reopen negotiations. Thank you, Janet, for presenting such a precise synthesis of our first week of experiences on the picket.

The legitimacy of their "authority" to rule has evaporated, and the fact that we have exposed this so quickly is a rejection of the power that we have built. In the meantime, our momentum, our numbers, and our solidarity with others has spurred us to act in bolder ways. We take this strike as seriously as anyone, and it is ours to win. Renewed support, however, has been pouring in from elsewhere. Academic petitions to boycott the UC; commitments from other campuses to strike if any single one of us are fired next quarter, or to strike regardless, have been brewing over the weekend; the ruthless austerity regime of the University of California has once again been thrust into the public eye (if the UC's official model is "Let there be Light," they officially deny this in practice - shine a light on administrative dealings, and all the rats begin to scurry).

For all we know, "Fuck the UC" is more Napolitano's motto than our own. Fighting austerity on this level means saving the University of California as a public institution, as well as the very notion of an education from the bottom up more broadly. Let's dethrone these crooks and return the university to the public that it pretends to serve. If "the wildcat strike must come to an end" so must this administration; both will be tested this week. Sticking together now means we are able to act together next week.
One day longer, one day stronger.

STRIKE TO WIN.

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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

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!

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.

Dean of Graduate Studies
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Interim Executive Vice Chancellor
Lori Kletzer
831-459-3885
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Tuesday 10 March 2020

news on the picketline



HANDS OFF CARLOS!

ABOLISH THE STUDENT CONDUCT BOARD

In Janet Napolitano's UC, even the least bit of resistance can set the wheels of a vast punitive machinery in motion. Pushing harder, as we have done in this strike, only triggers increasingly severe modes of punishment, many of which are entirely discretionary and simply give arbitrary discipline the veneer of a rule.

Carlos Cruz, one of the most visible members of the COLA campaign and active in the undergraduate-led People's Coalition, was hit last Friday with a particularly outrageous student conduct summons, nearly four weeks after the incident that it alleges. In a quasi-expressionistic piece of procedural prose, the accusation reads: "It was also reported you grabbed at the police officer's uniform and baton, using your body and weight, and bending at the knees and jerking back and forth repeatedly in an attempt to disarm the officer of his baton. The police officer attempted to arrest you but you repeatedly jerked your arms and body away from the officer in order to avoid being arrested. The crowd managed to pull you away from the officer and you fled the area." But Carlos never fled the area, and he was never arrested for these outrageous "crimes." He is now being targeted for discipline (using police testimony, which is by nature false) in a process that has scant due process, no public accountability, and a single purpose—the repression of dissent.

At Napolitano's UC, first generation students (particularly those who are non-white), are valued in terms of marketing the "diversity" of the campus ("diversity," as Chancellor Larive stated at a recent event, "makes good economic sense"), but when they reject these prescribed roles, making demands of their own, they are as a rule the first to be punished. Carlos, the son of an immigrant single-mother, is no doubt being targeted for his role in the movement. The first from his community to pursue an advanced degree, he has often spoken of how he hoped his aspirations could serve as a model for others back home—his actions have been truly exemplary, but not in the ways UCSC administrators might have wished. We refuse to let others be selectively targeted for actions that we are all collectively responsible for.

On the first day of the full picket, a volunteer with Food Not Bombs was delivering water for thirsty picketers when they were yanked out of their car by police officers and hauled off to jail for allegedly crossing a police barrier and resisting arrest. In targeting a lone undergrad tasked with delivering basic goods to the picket line, the police implemented an age-old strikebreaking tactic: cut off supplies to the workers and attack the most isolated and vulnerable. Eventually released with a traffic violation and a felony charge, the "water carrier" found themselves slapped with a suspension and banned from their dorm, classes, and campus premises for two weeks. The entity invested with the power to bar a student from their home and belongings—subject to no burden of proof—was none other than the Center for Student Conduct and Community Standards. Together with their counterparts in the UCPD, student conduct officers implement the repressive apparatus of this university, all while masquerading under the cheerily color-coded "Principles of Community." Two days later, another 17 students were beaten, manhandled, and chained up in an Alameda County paddywagon before being carted off to the Ocean Sciences campus for citation and release. The punitive paperwork that followed—quite possibly more crushing than the arrest itself—was issued by delegated authorities across the administrative echelons of the university, including Labor Relations, the Dean of Students, and, ridiculously, the Offices for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Evidently not obliged to remain consistent in the conduct process, the arrestees have had to individually negotiate obscure and deliberately confusing processes designed to preempt coordinated opposition. In subsequent appeals of the campus ban, student conduct officers coaxed arrestees into admissions of guilt and then based their decisions (in each case unfavorable) on police testimony, while students were barred from offering alternative witnesses.

The UC is like a state within a state, only with a wider scope of authority. Carlos has not been charged with violating any law; he was never arrested. However, according to article 104.10 of the conduct code, the Chancellor may discipline students for anything it considers a violation of campus policy, "whether or not such violations are also violations of law." But isn't the description charged above (resisting arrest) clearly a legal matter? One might think this distinction would matter—above all in a public institution. But instead the UC is mobilizing charges, based on police testimony, to exact their own extra-legal punishment. In other words, with unchecked powers over student status, the UC has carte blanche to enforce anything it chooses to define as "community misconduct," and an authoritarian control over its subjects that the actual state can only dream of.

Faculty were eventually notified in one of EVC Kletzer's notoriously unilluminating "clarifications" that "the conduct process is focussed on educating students about the impact of their actions, upholding our community standards, and returning to good standing in our community." Confusing as her facile usage of "community" may be, it is clear that the student conduct board is, more than anything, an internal punitive system wielded to political ends by a corrupt administration with next to no oversight or accountability, entirely lacking due process. This is a system that criminalizes student protest activities and enforces an ambiguous campus "disruption" policy, arrogating a unilateral right to punish those of us who engage in political protest, student activism, labor disputes, or anything else that can be construed as disrupting the administration's goals.

The riot cops of the first week have been replaced by their craven bureaucrat cronies in the fifth. This fits perfectly with the shift from beating peaceful students to enacting the "broken windows" policing of the Snail Movement, who volunteered as strike taxis during the last campus shutdown. There is a reason that "Cops off Campus" has been a consistent demand from the beginning of this movement. We demand an end to the surveillance, repression, violence, and the entire punitive apparatus that the university employs to check any threat to their arbitrary power. Napolitano was not enlisted as head of this institution by chance—she was brought in to preside over the UC as she presided over US borders, by mobilizing vast public resources, in a highly unequal fashion, to ensure the racialized character of labor markets backed by a monopoly of violence. This is precisely what groups like COLA4ALL and Undocu Collective have been fighting against, and what they are now being penalized for. We stand with them in their fight!

Call/Email Dean of Students Garrett Naiman:
(831) 459-4446 deanofstudents@ucsc.edu, tell him "hands off Carlos"—stop student conduct proceedings against strikers, COLA4ALL members and the Undocu Collective



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.

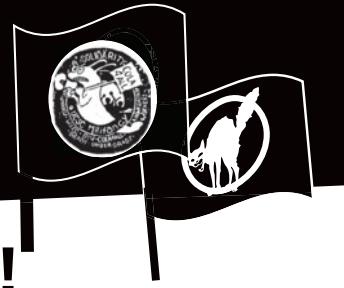
This is a time of crisis, and close observers of the UC these past two decades know that the institution is unrivaled at using crises to double down on its austerity regime, tightening its budget where it hurts workers the most. We must have no illusions. Our exploitative employer will take every latitude 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
- **Join the UAW if you have not already:**
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



Wednesday 27 May 2020
news on the digital picketline



DROP THE CHARGES! ABOLISH THE BOARD!

In the topsy-turvy world of the contemporary university, top-level administrators are paid vast sums to enforce order on campuses and maintain the university's S&P rating. From the perspective of our administrators and their budgets and investment portfolios, it is entirely reasonable that perceived threats to this order would be treated as immoral, indecent and ultimately illicit. Those of us who see in the University something beyond its ratings and real estate holdings have naturally a different relation to mechanisms of maintaining order like the student code of conduct, and certainly less respect for them. This fact should not obscure an understanding of the function of those internal processes and protocols that universities utilize to uphold their authority and secure assent from broad layers of faculty and staff.

In the prevailing paradigm of "criminality" in the United States, it is no secret that our legal system routinely targets students of color--that it singles them out, makes them culpable, and punishes accordingly. This is well known, even to our administrators, who strive to avoid reproducing such undignified practices not only in their marketing strategies but by distancing themselves as far as possible from the reaches of the law. This has striking implications at the level of its student conduct enforcement procedures, which should not under any circumstances be confused with legal proceedings.

For the contemporary university to adequately proceed with prosecuting those accused of breaking the ranks of its guidelines and decorum, it must resort to concepts that emphasize community "healing" the renewal of trust, and, above all, accountability processes which take "restorative justice" as their benchmark. Not to be confused with an institution of law enforcement, the contemporary university seeks to couch its rule in conceptual frames originally developed by victims of legal and extra-legal abuse, by progressive reformers, and by moral guardians of an age conscious of its own violence. Indeed, our own UCSC employs its conduct investigations, its summonses, its hearings, and its trials, in accordance with rigorous ethical principles, aspiring not merely to equity, but to "diversity," "inclusion," and "community justice." The university succeeds where the law fails, as it were, and retains a team of high profile lawyers who cannot help but agree.

Yet the "victim" of abuse in this case are apparently the employers and administrators. They were not particularly affronted by the fact of a labor dispute, they claim, but by the profusion of antagonistic micro-interactions which characterize any genuine revolt. The insults, name-calling, and petty derogations predictably leveled at the bosses and public figures, who fail so spectacularly to lead, especially sting our remarkably thin-skinned administrators. They are people too, they're quick to assure us, simultaneously reminding us of our rights to speech and assembly. Indeed, speech in particular, and the peculiar effects forms of combative speech have when uttered by students of color, is at stake here. "Speech" is the lingua franca of the contemporary university which is always committed to modifying its appearance (but never its structure) in accordance with principles of justice. Even Janet Napolitano is a vocal proponent of DACA. University leaders prize the UC's status as a bulwark against racism and state-led violence, proof of which [they cite](#) in the directives issued by its assemblage of diversity offices, committees, and partnerships with an array of social justice nonprofits (and business partners).

It is curious, therefore, that graduate workers of color, first generation students, and undocumented students are being targeted and hit with the harshest penalties for participation in the wildcat strike. Given their carefully constructed community guidelines and ethical stances, it seems odd that university administrators would work directly with state and local police to indict these students for

conduct infractions, rather than breaches of law, even where those charges clearly presume a breach of law ("resisting arrest", etc). What does it mean that, as part of the structure of this restorative justice process, the accused students are now being asked to research and report on their relationship to the First Amendment and engage in "healing" sessions with police officers? On the face of it this university-initiated mélange of legal and quasi-legal institutional arrangements would seem to suggest a deeper affinity with the most overtly carceral aspects of the justice system.

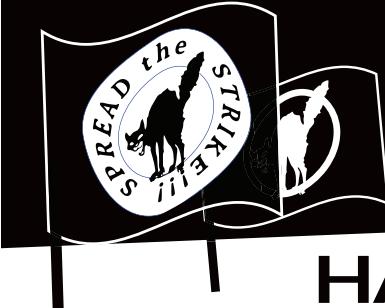
What needs to be clarified, however, is their peculiar mobilization of anti-discrimination frameworks to further entrench processes of discriminatory treatment, punishment, and retribution. The distribution of culpability through restorative justice frameworks asserts that those accused have ultimately victimized themselves through their misguided conduct. In a common racist trope, the perpetrators are not authors of their own actions but duped by others or by impulse; their raucous behavior and character is deemed unbecoming of an institution of higher learning. This punitive script finds a more immediate corollary in the 2014-15 sequence of student actions around proposed fee and tuition hikes at UCSC. In that wave of building occupations and blockades, the administration asserted that these mobilizations against a policy of austerity with effects institution-wide were led exclusively by white students – [a claim clearly rebuked by the integral participation of militant students of color](#). Enlisting the familiar narrative of its commitment to providing "safe-spaces" to marginalized students, the university effectively undercut the opposition when it sent in police to restore racial harmony on campus. In both instances, the real grievances of students are elided in favor of an administrative discourse that acknowledges historical injustice only to assimilate it into its mode of class rule, which, in the United States has always operated in close proximity to white supremacy.

It would seem, then, that the legacies of struggles against discrimination in all of its forms are evacuated of their content and rendered as a kind of window dressing in the contemporary university. But this would neglect the fact that the student conduct protocols operate through these very terms of "anti-racist" discourse, that the university redeployes anti-discrimination tactics to implement the kind of "diversity" it advertises, and that the violation of the university's norms is tantamount to upholding an anachronistic and exclusionary (not to mention ungrateful) form of unsanctioned speech and assembly. The university here presents itself not only as the innocent and aggrieved victim of these actions, but also as the neutral arbiter of their resolution. In respect to this neutrality, the "victims" of the recent student conduct violations--our Chancellor and EVC--claim complete independence from the entire process. This despite the [code of conduct](#) itself articulating, in article 104.20, that "the final authority for administration of student discipline rests with the Chancellor!" If the Chancellor is indeed "sad" to know students won't be returning because they have been suspended for multiple years, or that others are being dragged through conduct hearings for their "demeanor" and their clothing, she would do well to remember that she is the final authority on those who question her authority.

The conduct summons reveal these processes for what they are: merely the latest cynical technique of the university administration's counterinsurgency. Racism has always been a tool of the bosses, and in the contemporary university it must not go unchallenged under the banner of its opposition.

We oppose the racist student conduct process!

DROP THE CHARGES FOR ALL STUDENTS!



Wednesday 27 May 2020
news on the digital picketline



HANDS OFF CARLOS!

HOW UC SANTA CRUZ USES POLICE RACIAL PROFILING TO SILENCE DISSENT

The most [newsworthy](#) and specular dimension of the graduate worker wildcat strike at UC Santa Cruz and on other campuses was undoubtedly its mass character. Hundreds striking and thousands demonstrating for a [cost of living adjustment \(COLA\)](#); 18 violently arrested; nearly 100 fired. Yet in the relative quiet of the enforced shelter-in-place, the UC has ramped up a more sinister weapon in its repressive arsenal, singling out poor, first generation student-workers of color like [Carlos Cruz](#) with student conduct violations for their participation in mass actions. Relying almost exclusively on police testimony, Carlos was issued with an interim suspension merely for joining his striking workers on the picket line and in dining hall takeovers, dubiously picked out from the massive crowd. He has since received a two-year suspension for a host of trumped up charges that bear all the hallmarks of racial profiling in a process carrying all the punitive power of law, and none of the oversight.

[Listen:](#) police transmission recording reveals targeted surveillance of Carlos Cruz.

The dubious and obscure provisions of the student conduct board are designed to allow administrators to single out perceived troublemakers for retaliation. These proceedings no doubt cost much less than the extravagant [\\$300,000 per day](#) that Chancellor Larive thought fit to spend on riot gear, highway patrol, per diem for out-of-town police, and [military surveillance tech](#) at the picket line. They have certainly attracted much less unwanted attention so far. The student conduct mechanism also has the benefit of avoiding hard-won labor protections by targeting the student status of striking graduate workers, while achieving the same effect as the retaliatory firings in February: effective expulsion and unemployment.

Yet the police are everywhere in these kangaroo court arrangements. They had no plausible grounds to cuff students like Carlos for arrestable actions at the picket, despite their best efforts. Happily, the extrajudicial powers vested in them by the student conduct board offer a second chance, allowing them to supply the substance of the accusations, to stand as the witnesses in the investigations, and even to receive enforced acts of contrition meted out as secondary punishment for “guilty” students. One wonders whether or not the UC police officers in question, whose cozy six-figure salaries are only a little more modest than those of the administrators they assist, receive their standard \$90-120 per hour overtime rate for these valuable services.

For those who know anything about the function of the police in the United States, it will come as little surprise that the graduate workers targeted this way are (almost without exception) poor students of color, first generation students, and undocumented students. University administrators apparently see no duplicity in recruiting these children of immigrant parents as tokens of “diversity” to shore up their progressive credentials, while simultaneously reproducing racialized codes of criminality by piling all the weight of their punitive apparatus upon them.

Carlos Cruz was hit with a two-year suspension from the university, or a one-year suspension conditional on good behavior. Carlos was told that he could earn the generous one-year discount by conducting, among several other penitent gestures, a set of interviews with “UCSC affiliates whose work or learning were impacted by the strike.” The Assistant Dean of Students (judge, prosecutor, and parole officer all in one) does not hesitate to add, earnestly: “If you are interested in interviewing a UCSC Police Officer or staff member, please let me know and I will put you in touch.”

Called upon to explain his actions to the conduct board, Carlos writes:

“I participated in a peaceful labor action as graduate students at UCSC went out on a teaching strike. My relationship to this nonviolent labor picket is one that stems from a working-class immigrant struggle. I understand the importance of civic engagement and see the COLA movement as an extension of a fight against poverty. As a first generation Ph.D. student, I saw the importance of having my voice be heard at the picket line, but I did not imagine that our discontent would have been answered with violence by the police. I come from an immigrant community and was raised in a single parent household, so I experienced the realities of poverty. I spent most of my life hearing that higher education is the solution for one to come out of poverty and become successful. As I came to UCSC to chase a dream of becoming a college professor, I soon realized that my economic condition as a graduate student was substandard as I returned to live in poverty-like conditions where the only way out was through massive student loans.”

Carlos grew up in a community heavily policed by LAPD’s infamous [CRASH](#) unit (Community Resources Against Street Hoodlums) and his experiences on the picket line with the UC Police Department recalled a traumatic history of police harassment. The excessive force of officers equipped for riot control and the revelation that UCPD were actively surveilling him triggered the anxious symptoms of panic attack. As he recounts in a recent [Salon news story](#), Carlos was approached personally at the picket line by a police sergeant “who was able to identify me by first, middle and last name and date of birth.” Carlos has since suffered symptoms like a severely elevated heart rate, difficulty breathing, and excessive sweating. One can now read in the student conduct proceedings report after police report pinning the racist “ringleader” trope on Carlos, as though he were leading a gang of “hoodlums” rather than simply being on strike along with hundreds of his peers for the ability to pay rent. Despite Carlos’s own counter-evidence and his objections at being singled out, the Assistant Dean could not help but side with the weight of police testimony.

UC Santa Cruz would have itself known as a “sanctuary campus.” The Chancellor praises the diversity of our campus (diversity, she says, makes [“good economic sense”](#)). The UC President Janet Napolitano vocally supports DACA (notwithstanding her fingerprints on the ICE program from her former role as director of Homeland Security). Yet the experience of the student conduct proceedings for students like Carlos — and he is not alone among first generation graduate students recently targeted in the fallout from the strike — shows far more continuity with the most racist traditions of the US criminal justice system.

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.

NOTHING PERSONAL, JUST BUSINESS

Why punishing student protesters makes good financial sense



20 JUNE 2020

To judge only from appearances, the [Student Conduct summonses](#) and punishments meted out to people like [Carlos Cruz](#) and the [Undocu Collective](#) — alongside particularly vocal critics of the Larive and Kletzer regime at UCSC — would seem like the petty revenge projects of thin-skinned administrators. How else are we to understand the fact that only students of color were consistently identified and singled out from dozens of participants in dining hall actions? Or that only ace lampooner Ryan Page or the fiery Stephen Engel should have been charged with “impeding ingress and/or egress to campus” on afternoons when hundreds were in the streets? Beyond racist administrators, union-busting tricks, or mere pique, another more impersonal incentive is responsible for setting the punitive gears of the Student Conduct machine in motion.

It's called **ERM**, or **Enterprise Risk Management**, a business protocol adopted by UCOP in 2003 that is concerned, among other things, with enforcing compliance with campus policy and ensuring continuity of operations for the “enterprise,” i.e. the UC. The UC's business model *itself* demands that staff and student “misconduct” be assessed, managed, and eliminated. Put another way, the more probable reason that Student Conduct officers seem to pursue us so doggedly is less the whim of an imperious chancellor than a systemwide mandate to fulfill ERM directives. A work stoppage or a protest — especially if it involves a hard picket — is a threat to so-called “business continuity” (read: revenue flows) and therefore to the UC's oft-touted S&P rating, the strength of which allows the UC to borrow at [favorable interest rates](#) (S&P rated the UC higher for its proactive ERM, which, as the UC boasts, saved millions through lower interest rates). One of the most insidious effects of this shift to ERM has been that “risk” is reimagined

beyond hazard risks like earthquakes, to include new categories such as reputational risk, strategic risk, communication risk, compliance risk, and of course financial risk. Because “risk” is now defined as anything which disrupts (or has the potential to disrupt) “normal operations,” anything from floods, biohazards (including [pandemics](#)), medical malpractice, student behavior, protests, journalism, and even overly productive [olive trees](#) can be calculated, rationalized, and managed under the ERM paradigm. Understanding itself as facing constant scrutiny from [external sponsors](#) — amid every labor action, every sexual misconduct case, every IT breach — the UC is bound by the dictates of ERM to return its “operations” to “normal” as quickly as possible, by any means necessary.

While the UC is not alone among higher education institutions in its implementation of ERM, it was, and continues to be, a vanguard practitioner. As the “[first non-financial institution](#) to receive credit rating agency acknowledgment” of its ERM program, the UC routinely wins awards from various information and intelligence companies (e.g. Treasury & Risk), and has wielded its ERM maturity model and robust data warehouse to launch [five captive insurance companies](#), accumulating assets of over \$1 billion in just eight years. Touted as an “integrated business tool,” ERM is designed to aid campus stakeholders in everything from investment choices to “managing” student and worker demonstrations. The ultimate objective of this program, as described by UCOP's Grace Crikette, is to foster a healthy risk culture and “[Make Everyone a Risk Manager](#).” This is exactly as creepy as it sounds, and it is baked into every level of the UC enterprise. Student Conduct is one among many administrative teams engaged in the enterprise-wide mission to cultivate “[cultures of reporting](#)” and “[ethical decision making](#)” (the [Demonstrations Operations Team](#) at

UCSC is another). The dubious slippage that occurs here is that the ethical behaviors and practices that warrant reporting are not informed by rich traditions of philosophical inquiry or social justice, but by risk calculations embedded in ERM models. The Student Conduct process is not oriented at reducing actual harm to students, faculty or staff. It is one arm of a wider apparatus designed primarily to preserve the University's credit rating along with advantageous reinsurance rates. This is why it seeks to reform those who violate its codes, and swiftly expel more deeply non-compliant workers. At once, student conduct sure up the University's "risk culture" and furnishes proof of its concerted efforts to do so for the benefit of UC's "external sponsors."

Leaving aside the question of the jurisdictional applicability of Student Conduct enforcement to labor actions (i.e. UC's shameless union-busting), the most disturbing aspect of this material relationship between Student Affairs, ERM, and UC's bond rating is that student dissent and academic freedom are being stifled by the steady financialization of *all* university operations. Student and worker protests are, in fact, calculated as a "social and political risk" alongside natural hazards: COLA and COVID were the two great ERM challenges of 2019-20. But even more telling is the fact that the university calculates the likelihood of these particular risks as essentially expected (and thus, to an extent, legitimate) responses to its own policies. When these responses materialize in the form of our strikes and mass demonstrations, the "risk" becomes an "emergency," and the use of force is not merely justified but fiscally mandated.

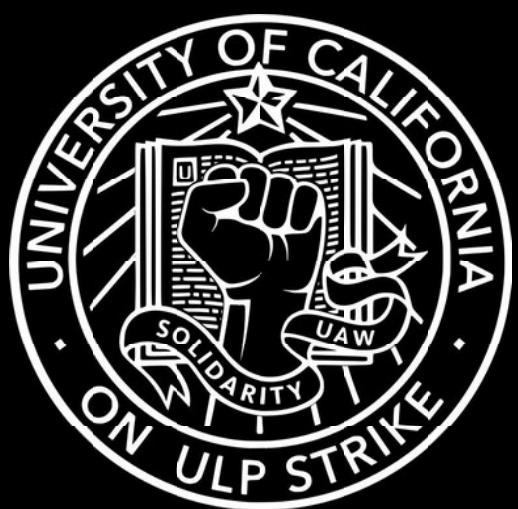
The fact is, the UCSC wildcat strike's demand for a COLA exposed a risk at the heart of the UC's business model, which has long exhausted all capacity to sustain its workforce. It also laid bare the "compliance" priorities of university operations, and the functions of its internal processes and protocols. In the operational dictionary of the ERM university, the graduate worker COLA movement is registered not as a demand for a dignified wage, but as a systemwide risk, against which the university mobilized all its capacities, from violent police

intervention to militarized surveillance and racial profiling.

The ERM program at the University of California ultimately (and openly) intervenes in university "culture," seeking to establish an enterprise culture centered around risk. It must — necessarily — restrict academic freedoms and mediate political expression on all its campuses, lest they become reputational risks that undermine the UC's financial stature. And when ERM fails to stave off such a *cultural emergency* as the wildcat strikes, it must generate evidence of its extensive efforts to restore University "safety" (read: security, ultimately in the financial sense). The transparently shameless \$300,000 daily pricetag for riot police on the picket line functions as evidence of UCSC's commitment to ERM culture, proof to insurers and investors that it takes this risk very seriously. The beatings and arrests then served both as brute repression and a minimization of the fallout of the strike on the UC's insurance rates and S&P ratings.

The COLA movement needs to develop a deeper understanding of the UC's ERM program as the shadowy background to its terrain of struggle. ERM dictates the administrative response to our strikes, direct actions, flyering, and press, but it also reveals sites of effective intervention. We are 20,000 workers employed at 50% of a low salary, who teach half of all undergraduate instructional hours while receiving only 2% of the total operational budget as wages. From the prevailing administrative perspective of ERM, graduate student workers are a living and breathing risk to the UC business model by virtue of our precarious but indispensable position within it. We sustain the status of UC campuses as research institutions and facilitate the normal operation of the UC, which deeply indebts undergraduate students for grades and degrees of questionable value — both roles are crucial to the UC model — but our labor is dismally underpaid.

In short, that 20,000 of us are not paid enough to live where we research and teach is a festering risk to be constantly managed, surveilled, and policed. It is time we became a real emergency.



II. CONTRACT

COLA FOR CHANCELLORS—WHERE'S OURS?

Massive congratulations to our Chancellor Cynthia “Cindy” Larive on her recent raise!

As of January 19, 2022, Chancellor Larive was tied in first place for the largest salary increase among the nine sitting UC chancellors.

Let's listen closely to the UC Regents when they tell us about the reasons behind this pay bump:

“Although UC campuses consistently rank among the best in the U.S. and the world, nine of the ten UC chancellors have base salaries below the 50th percentile of the market for their positions.”

Because of this regrettable state of affairs, the Regents have decreed that annual salaries for Chancellors must be raised “to a level that is more competitive with the average compensation at peer institutions.” For our own Cindy Larive, now earning a measly \$437,750 per year, the proposed “adjustment” will bring her salary up to the much more dignified sum of \$543,036 annually. In the words of UC Regent Jonathan Sures, “this was an issue of pay equity.”

As grads who have been around for a couple of years will know, “adjustment” is the “A” in “COLA.” It is heartening for us grad workers, who pour 60% and more of our income into rent, to hear the Regents affirm the importance of pay adjustments

and equity on the eve of our contract negotiations. As fate would have it, the kind administrators at Princeton University recently saw the need to raise salaries of their graduate workers by some 25%, adjusting to the wages achieved by striking workers at Columbia University a few weeks earlier. Princeton grad workers now earn just shy of \$50k per year.

Since UC campuses consistently rank among the best in the U.S. and the world, we graduate workers, earning \$20-30k per year, eagerly look forward to our own pay adjustment in line with Columbia and Princeton. Once again, the good Regent Sures said it best: it's a simple issue of pay equity.

Luckily, UCSC grads have already shown Chancellor Larive what the first step towards pay equity looks like: the expansion of housing stipends for every grad! Meanwhile, as our union UAW 2865 makes initial contract demands for a more comprehensive pay increase to lift us out of rent burden, we await the fair and equitable treatment that has blessed both the UCSC Chancellor and the grads at Princeton.

Failing this, let's remember that there is always the Columbia model, where pay equity was finally achieved, but only after ten weeks of striking.

STIPENDS NOW. COLA IN OCTOBER.

THE BEST WESTERN IS GETTING OUR COLA

Hours before UCSC grads rallied to demand expanded housing stipends at Kerr Hall on October 26, 2021, our newest and friendliest Grad Dean, Peter Biehl, was busily preparing a reassuring note to campus faculty. This administration, he wrote, had other (and better) solutions for grad worker rent burden: no more rent hikes on campus, some one-time relocation payments, and a new Slug Support officer. Best of all was the brand new deal with the Best Western Inn downtown. Biehl neglected to mention the fine print, so we thought we'd take a look at the conditions there. Perhaps the Dean, so eminently open to dialogue, will appreciate our findings.

Grad workers living at the Best Western pay \$1,247/mo for a single room. That's nearly 70% of their after-tax monthly income, a condition housing experts call "severe rent burden." But it could be worse! As reported by [Lookout](#), our administrators were good enough to subsidize the remainder of the \$2,700/mo rate charged by the Best Western, paying \$1,453/mo directly to the hotel. Those familiar with the COLA campaign will recall that this is just over the \$1,412/mo demanded by grad workers to keep pace with skyrocketing rents in Santa Cruz. The irony of getting a COLA's worth of housing subsidy only to remain severely rent burdened is not lost on the 60 graduate students holed up at the Inn.

A day in the life of a Best Western grad tenant begins with a free continental breakfast, a consolation prize for the complete lack of a kitchen and enforced cost of buying takeout. Then, they connect to the hotel internet (included "free" in the rent!) with download speeds of 2.45 Mb/s, as reported by [City on a Hill](#). That's not fast enough to attend classes or teach sections over Zoom without crashing out, but it's perfect for single-tab browsing. "Every day there are times the internet connection is either unstable or completely dead, sometimes for hours," explains Emre Keser, a first-year PhD staying at the hotel. After a long day's toil amid the noise of Best Western's construction works, grads will at least

sleep soundly — just mind the bed bugs, as Keser found out the hard way. If it's so bad, why don't these workers pack up and leave? Well, they're locked into three-month agreements and the rent is debited directly from their student accounts. Not only do they need to find better housing, they need to find it at precise three-month intervals. You could say these "guests" have even fewer rights than a regular tenant navigating the shark tank of renting in Santa Cruz. The sizable waitlist of graduate student workers for a room at the Best Western points less to its appeal than to our desperation. One shudders to imagine the spring, when even more of us are marched back to campus for in-person instruction.

But we can rest assured: the new Dean is on the case! After our second march to demand quarterly housing stipends, Biehl promised us a Graduate Student Housing Townhall. There, we would listen to "experts and practitioners" so that we might "begin to find short and long-term solutions." But let's hear the assessment of grad student and Best Western resident, Anish Sambamurthy, talking to [City on the Hill](#):

The university sent a lot of talk about 'looking into solutions,' but other than creating task forces and committees, there has been nothing concrete. The pandemic gave them two years to figure out housing solutions, and they seem to have done nothing with it.

The Dean's critics say he's all talk and no action. But let's be fair: there hasn't been much talk either. It's been nearly two months since he last mentioned the housing townhall. Who knows? Maybe he's spent that time tee ing up new hotel partnerships? We say he might have better used it executing the housing stipends for winter and spring.

The short- and long-term solutions:

STIPENDS NOW! COLA IN OCTOBER!

WHAT DO WE WANT? COLA!!! WHEN DO WE WANT IT? NOW!

|||||||

More than half of student-workers at the UC pay over 50% of their wages in rent. That's what the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines as "**severe rent burden**".

If you don't already know this figure, you've surely seen the effects of low wages and high costs of living on UC grad workers: food pantries, food stamps (services used by 30% of graduate students), sleeping in cars or offices (1 in 20 UC grads reported being homeless in 2016), longer and longer commutes from campuses, while parent-workers often have to choose between making rent and paying for childcare. We are living in a constant state of material and psychological *precarity*.

While our rents skyrocketed through the pandemic, campus chancellors granted themselves raises; they now make between 25 times (Munoz, UCM) and 30 times (Block, UCLA) what an average TA makes. Meanwhile, as rent-burdened grads wonder how the money continues to pass us by, the specter of an earlier demand is making its way across the halls, plazas, and labs of the University of California. It's **COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment)**. It's a demand that the UC tie wages to local rent, so that no Academic Student Employee (ASE) suffers more than 30% rent burden.

This is the core demand as our student-workers' union, UAW-2865, bargains our new contract. It looks like this:

- no ASE at 50% employment (standard for TAs and GSIs) shall earn less than 3.33 times the median rent of any UC campus locality
- undergraduate tutor and reader wages shall increase to $\geq \$25$ an hour

Though this would clearly provide new kinds of security, prosperity and flourishing for ASEs across the state, everyone on either side of the bargaining table knows two eternal truths: the boss gives nothing away without a fight, and nothing is won at the bargaining table. Rather, everything substantial to be won -- like a COLA -- is the product of serious organization, agitation and disruption amongst workers. Our most important leverage as workers is a **serious strike**.

With enough power at every campus, there's nothing we can't win. This was a truth understood by Columbia grads, whose Fall strike led to a **30% wage increase**. And in 2019-2020, as UC grads came out by the thousands to demand a COLA, marching, protesting, making demands of department administrations, oftentimes the mere threat of disruption caused departments and local administrations to scramble to offer bribes to grads to quell militancy. Consider, to name but a few cases: Berkeley Physics grads' raise to \$40,000 a year; Santa Cruz's campus-wide \$2500 annual "housing stipend"; Irvine's campus-wide \$5000 summer funding guarantee; and then the \$7,500 summer funding promised to UCLA grads, promptly rescinded with the onset of the pandemic (this, of course, is the benefit of a contract: gains cannot be rolled back). We can only imagine the gains that could have been won if university repression and the pandemic had not quashed the statewide spread of wildcat strikes in March 2020. **But we can win it now.**

THERE'S NO TIME TO WAIT.

Every student-worker has a role to play in this fight for an ambitious, winnable, demand. Here's how you can start:

1. Get connected and get organized! Come to a meeting of rank and file workers across the state organizing around the COLA demand--follow the QR code.
2. Talk to a coworker! Ask them about their rent burden, and if they know about the COLA wages to demand. Call a meeting and brainstorm how to bring this fight to your department.



What's at stake? What can we expect?

We are on the eve of something historic, at least potentially. Four academic-worker bargaining units have declared an open-ended work stoppage, starting November 14 on all ten campuses at the UC, making this prospectively the largest strike of the year in the United States and among the largest in California history.

All official communications from UAW will tread with caution, and adhere to the terms of the “unfair labor practice” (ULP) charges against UC, the legal basis for the strike. But the issue of rent burden will never be far from the surface. How could it be otherwise, in the context of rising rents, inflation rates at levels not seen in decades, and forecasts of economic recession? It’s something of an open secret that tens of thousands of workers across the state of California are preparing to strike to end the miserable condition of rent burden for workers at the state’s biggest employer.

It is worth recognizing that the shape and character of the contract fight so far has been marked indelibly by the wildcat strikes at UC Santa Cruz in 2019-20. Traces of that period are legible in the central demand of our contract fight: to pay us enough to live where we work, an immediate cost of living adjustment (COLA) to bring our base salary to \$54k. This demand is no less resonant in San Diego, LA, or Berkeley, where more than three thousand grad workers rallied last month to the demand for a COLA, to address finally the situation where one in two grad workers dumps more than half of their monthly pay into their rent check, and where 90% of us are rent burdened.

The campaign’s broader reach, this time, takes it to every campus and to additional layers of academic workers. In particular, the stunning build up of the Student Researchers’ union in the intervening years has dramatically swelled the ranks of grad workers with a stake in the demand and a means of achieving it. (In 2019, of course, it was difficult for lab researchers to withhold grades!) This moment, late in the Fall, is also the only period that the academic calendars of quarter and semester-based campuses align, maximizing the possibility for system-wide disruption. And the massive turnout for the strike authorization vote last week points at this very possibility.

All this poses the inevitable question of how UC will respond, at the level of their Labor Relations lawyers, campus administrators, and down to faculty, department chairs, and staff. Like in 2019-2020, attending to the differences within and among these layers of the university is imperative, even as statements of support are issued from various groups of faculty and staff. Support from non-striking sections of the university — particularly staff, lecturers, and faculty — will be tested if the strike

stretches much beyond the first week. Sure, they will say, the housing market in Santa Cruz is pretty bad. But at some point we need to recognize that a raise of this magnitude simply isn’t reasonable. We might make the obvious retort, that it is not “reasonable” to live with severe rent burden. But this is unlikely to change hearts or minds at the coastal city on a hill. Faculty will tolerate the disruption, but only for so long, before they throw their hands up, “forced,” apparently, to head back into the ‘ivory cage’.

UCSC’s administration, like others across the state, will hope to broker a quick deal with UAW in the early stages of the strike. They believe — in the words of one campus Labor Relations officer, in a briefing to department staff — that UAW’s statewide leadership “lives in the real world, unlike the grads on this campus.” They anticipate, this is to say, only a short strike before a deal is cut. This will perhaps include an initial raise of some 10-15% (a “big concession,” in their eyes), after which this whole mess can finally be put behind us, signalling the dawn of several years of “labor peace.”

Of course, the “real world” here is what is at stake, and is a matter of perspective. The “real world” for grad workers is life from check to check, renting from abusive landlords while triaging food, medical, and school expenses. The real world is the constant prospect, and frequent reality, of houselessness. We should not expect our chancellor, Cynthia Larive, fresh off a raise of more than \$100k, to understand this. How could she? She lives in another world. So too, it must be said, do certain layers of UAW’s leadership.

All these worlds overlap on the picket line. Whether this strike, with all its obvious potential, breaks with the status quo of percentage raises (5%, 7%, 10...) to change fundamentally the lives of grad workers (COLA), will be decided at the picket line. The resolve of rank and file grad workers to take this strike as far as is necessary — with or without faculty support, with or without the official union leadership — will determine the outcome.

Any grad worker can tell you that 7% won’t pay the rent, and nor will 10% or 15%. No grad worker can afford the illusion that striking for a week or two will cause UC to concede on COLA. That the strike is open-ended, rather than limited in advance to three or five days, as has become typical in many big unions, signals an opening for workers. The runway is there for us to take this as far as we are able, to go out for as long as it takes. It’s up to us, in combination with every section of university workers, to carry this as far as it takes to win our demands.

The door closes, a window opens

Rank and file members of UAW 2865 were rightly disturbed this week to watch their bargaining team vote, in the face of unprecedented opposition from membership, to continue closed-door off-record negotiations with UC management. Grad workers mobilized immediately upon learning of these meetings, expressing disapproval to their representatives in bargaining caucuses with complete clarity, and signing onto a petition in their hundreds within a day. The bargaining team, nonetheless, chose to dismiss, ignore, or explain away their members' concerns as paranoid, misplaced, and, in one infamous and telling moment, as an instance of members "bullying" the bargaining team.

The speed, level, and intensity of workers' opposition, however, did shift the team, forcing them, in the same vote, to erect "guardrails" against any closed-door discussion about our central demand: the cost of living adjustment to end rent burden among grads in the UC. It's unclear how, in actual fact, such guardrails will work. But we can only understand this as a concession to our mobilization, one small indication of our power within the union. As things stand, there is no small likelihood of other venues and fora being pursued — such as private, pre-impasse mediation — as alternatives to open bargaining, which our leadership appears to view with the same increasing frustration as UC Labor Relations..

As rank and file workers remain attentive to these developments, the need to continue to push for maximum openness and transparency (will any future mediation be open or closed to membership?) appears more and more essential. At this stage, pushing in this direction happens through striking. We must meanwhile achieve new clarity and steadiness of purpose on the ground. It seems clear that firestorms in online group chats, however righteous, are unlikely to sway the team towards our position, and may at times even entrench those who are wavering against our cause. The impact of petitions, also, has certain obvious limits. What to do instead, or in addition, is a deeply urgent question.

Why, some may wonder, has there been such a sudden reversal of the bargaining team's commitment to open bargaining? Why have so many divisions and so much animosity surfaced in the days leading into our strike, following months of basic harmony between our bargaining representatives and the rest of us? The only available answer lies in the glaring contradiction at the bargaining table between our demand to end rent burden and UC's proposal on wages. At the time of writing, there is some \$30k difference between the annual base salary of our proposal and UC's. This enormous gap poses a significant problem for both management and certain corners of UAW's leadership and staff. We have built considerable power and resolve behind the COLA demand, a rank and file demand if ever there was one, through and since the wildcats. At this point, on the eve of an open-ended strike to end rent burden, the space for timely compromise between UAW and UC has vanished, unless one side

volunteers major concessions. (Spoiler: it won't be UC.)

We cannot afford the illusion that a promising strike vote, or a brief strike, will cause major concessions on the UC's side. These may produce some movement, but nothing like the end of rent burden. UAW's leadership, at least in its deeper core, certainly has no such illusions that this is possible. We must be resolute in preparing for a long and painful strike, which offers the only possibility for victory. But they are caught in an awkward spot, preferring to avoid such a long, messy, and expensive strike, despite having committed so often and at all levels to end rent burden for grad workers. We are likely to start hearing that a 10-15% raise is as good as we can get, since we are at "peak power" early in the strike, or even before it. The implication is that we must accept what we are offered while we can, before we are weakened and forced to settle for less. The message will become, if it is not already, that the COLA demand is naive or unreasonable: prepare for major concessions; prepare for years more of life with rent burden.

However, this position is itself a naive theory of worker power at best, and more likely a self-serving one. The UC does not assess our power purely on its potential — by the number of strike votes cast or the number of picketers on the first morning — but on its impact. UC will see whether they can outwait us or break us, and meanwhile count the cost of the strike as it mounts over time, before they consider conceding to us. We will need to face several testing rounds of threatened and actual retaliation before we see genuine movement. But the paid staff at our union, some of whom occupy positions on our bargaining team, may not want to pass through such a punishing trial. These are people, particularly at the higher rungs of the staff ladder, who will never work a day under the contract we eventually sign, and who have not known rent burden for some years.

There are unknown millions of dollars at stake in the outcome of this strike. This fact attracts powerful forces and interests that may muddy and distract us from the deeper and truer antagonism between rent-burdened rank-and-file workers and our boss. But no force is more powerful than the mass of workers right now preparing to strike, if we move with purpose and clarity. Such movement, without question, is aimed directly at our boss. But if our union staff aligns itself with management towards the speedy resolution of the strike, rather than with workers towards the end of rent burden, then they will place themselves in our path. We have already shown that we can shift both, and we are only getting started.

The real task, then, is to build-up and link layers of rank and file workers on multiple campuses who are prepared to go out as long as it takes. This is our only path, as rank and file workers, to push the boss to concede, and to push our bargaining team to stay the difficult course — even as we know that we do not need to accept what the team does, if it does not meet our demands.

Day I at the Picket

Today, more than four years since we signed our last contract and three full years since we went on wildcat strike, we begin our open-ended strike across four academic-worker units on ten campuses. Depending on how things play out, this may end up one of the largest strikes in the history of California.

For grad workers, the universal goal is the end of rent burden — to be paid enough to live where we work, or COLA. As things stand at the bargaining table, there is some \$30k difference between UC's proposal for annual wages and our own. We are asking for \$54k as an annual base. They are proposing a 7% raise on current rates.

Anything within the realm of UC's position right now will lock in rent burden and its attendant miseries for the length of the contract we sign. Our proposal ends this immediately, and adjusts our salaries each year to keep our chins above rent burden. The huge gap between us and UC at the bargaining table is the difference between a life with or without abusive landlords, unsafe housing, cramped quarters, or houselessness. It's the difference between affording car repairs, computer repairs, books, medical expenses, and putting these off — the difference between working side hustles and taking on debt, and not having to.

Some may wonder why, on the eve of the strike, UC did not move another offer to see whether we'd blink at the last second, a one-time last-best-final offer, which, they might have warned, we'd never see again if we go through with the strike. Why aren't they panicking now that we are setting out on such a massive strike? Are they unafraid of us?

If this is so, it is because a short strike in our line of work, unlike those staffed by 'essential workers,' is inconvenient and annoying, but doesn't hit hard on the bottom line. UC feels that they have a window of time to let us blow off some steam, walk the picket, chant some chants, yell at a few cars, before we will accept reality — a slightly improved offer, but still a life deeply rent burdened.

What this obviously means is that we will need a sustained strike to win our demands. UC's apparent calmness tells us that we cannot expect to end rent burden in a week or so. After that point, we may see some signs of panic from our boss, or more likely intermediate strata of supervisors and faculty. This will likely take the form of retaliation — threatened or actual — before we see concessions.

The exhilarating sights and sounds on day one of our picket — that special energy and solidarity of academic workers, students, and staff — may give way to some more difficult trials before we are through. But we should feel proud of this moment, of the strength and scale of this strike, since the impetus and kernel of this potentially historic moment surely originated on this small campus three years ago. Let us soak up this enormous demonstration of our power on day one, in the knowledge that we will need to exercise it for quite some time yet. The open-ended quality of the strike opens a path for us to take this as far as necessary to end rent burden.

UC INSTAGRAM: @PAYUSMOREUCSC
WWW.PAYUSMOREUCSC.COM

Solidarity forever. See you at the picket tomorrow, and the day after.

Day 2: This is not free speech

With thousands of grad workers and postdocs striking a second day at every UC campus, the University has meekly announced that it supports “protected free speech activities.” But this is not a free speech activity. It is not a demonstration or a protest. This is an exercise of collective power.

Those of us at UC Santa Cruz three years ago, walking the familiar intersection of Bay and High, might be forgiven for thinking that something has changed at the top. Gone are the daily emails full of claims about our “illegal activity” from EVC Kletzer or then-grad dean Quentin Williams. There’s also no sign of reporter-in-chief Janet Napolitano, looming in the background, ready to issue another inimitable firing threat, signed “Yours very truly.” Most conspicuous, surely, is the absence of some 30–40 patrol cars and a rotating row of cops clad in riot gear.

Is the Drake administration really more humane than that of the former Director of Homeland Security? On one level, we can attribute the tamer response to the fact that we’re on a sanctioned ULP strike this time, rather than a wildcat. Things are “above board,” even if, as should be obvious to everybody, the UC’s bad-faith bargaining is just a sideshow to the real struggle over wages and working conditions. The pressure is off our local administration too, at least relative to last time, since the COLA demand has now gone statewide.

But if the only bargaining to transpire on day one of the strike is any indication, the Drake administration has inherited Napolitano’s hallmark ruthless attitude toward contract negotiations. While tens of thousands of workers struck ten campuses, the top lawyers at Labor Relations bickered with our SRU bargaining team over the formatting of our transit proposal (how could we possibly forget to underline previous changes at this stage of bargaining!). For all the many “impossible” things we shifted during the wildcat, we never did manage to get the University to any bargaining table.

What’s more, none of the overarching trends of the Napolitano years have wavered. The upward pressure on student tuition (and therefore student debt), interrupted momentarily in the face of the COLA movement, remains constant under Drake. Enrollments and class sizes continue to climb, even in the face of a TA shortage, at least here in Santa Cruz. Rents in campus housing have increased systemwide, and the value of UC’s invested endowment enjoys record growth. It is also clear that our demand to bring every grad worker out of rent burden is no less preposterous to Labor Relations under Drake than it was under Napolitano.

In the most important respects, Drake has done Napolitano’s legacy proud at the head of California’s biggest landlord and biggest boss. With administrators like this at the helm — however the tone of their emails and their display of police power may vary — it is clear that the only intervention that can salvage the decline of public higher education takes the form of major and prolonged strikes. The recent wave of strikes across the country has shown that when workers fight, we win. This strike is an opportunity not only to get paid enough to live where we work, but to shift the balance of power in public education away from the bureaucrats and investment officers and back toward those actually doing the teaching and research that serve the mission that this administration pretends to.

We know that power lies with those who do the work, and the picket line is an opportunity to continue building it. The conversations and community we find here are not just an affirmation of our power, but a way to strengthen it. So what we win in this strike won’t be determined by what administrators, faculty, or colleagues think we deserve, but by how strong our solidarity and resolve is. And that has very little to do with what the bosses deem “protected free speech.”

UC INSTAGRAM: @PAYUSMOREUCSC
WWW.PAYUSMOREUCSC.COM

*Let's keep talking out here, and keep walking the picket.
Another day longer, another day stronger.*

What is reasonable?

Why isn't the UC coming to the bargaining table? Why is news of the strike absent from University communications? Where is the police presence at the picket? We're three days into one of the largest strikes in California history, so why isn't the university trying to stop us—whether through negotiation, ideological pressure, or brute force? The same questions are echoing around picket lines across the state. A whole week has passed since the TAs were invited to the bargaining table and we've seen no urgency to get to the heart of the matter — our rent burden — at the SR table either. What's going on?

The answer is simple. The strike, we must reiterate again and again, is not powerful as a *demonstration* of force, but as a *use* of our collective power. In other words, it is powerful *as a strike*. Those who thought that the first day or two of the strike would bring Labor Relations to the bargaining table with their tails between their legs were mistaken. Our power lies not in the threat of the strike, but in the strike itself, as it unfolds over time. The university's response shows us, loud and clear, that our success will be determined by how many grad workers are withholding their labor, and for how long they do so.

In official communications sent out before the strike, the University cooed about its dedication to undergraduate learning. But their utter lack of urgency about the cessation of countless hours of teaching by striking grad workers says otherwise. The stark truth is that the university system in the U.S. has transformed largely into a factory for manufacturing student debt. In this environment, the imperative of the admin is to get as many undergrads in the door and as indebted as possible. "Diversity" and "equity," in this context, take on perverse meanings, resonant more in the register of finance than social justice. "Inclusion," then, means exposing more students to more debt.

In short, admin needs butts in seats, and for those butts to get stamped with a grade at the end of term. For these university functionaries, what happens in the interim—that is, the totality of teaching and learning—matters little to the functioning of this process. The efficacy of the wildcat grading strike in 2019-20 showed this clearly. The wholesale shift to zoom university in the pandemic, with no thought of restructuring tuition in that impoverished learning environment, speaks no less eloquently.

Admin has not responded meaningfully to our labor action up to this point because they know this is how the University runs—at least it is how they run it. A week or two of lost classes doesn't diminish the swelling coffers, nor stem the indebtedness of its students. But as grad workers, we understand that the work we do matters, and we know that it matters to our undergraduates. The admin, sequestered in their professional offices, are utterly detached from this process. So long as the next batch of student debt receipts is not interrupted, there is no need for panic. And

there's some time yet, admin reckons. They'll soon get tired.

But we won't. And as we continue to withhold our labor, our power and leverage will accumulate. The exams and papers that turn into grades will begin to pile up. The lack of classes will begin to threaten accreditation. Missing research data will halt publications and grants. The pressure will mount with the duration of the strike and the approach of deadlines. This is essential to understand, because however "reasonable," or even "generous," the current offer on the table may seem to these haughty bureaucrats, or to faculty, we know that a few percentage points above the present misery cut it. The status quo is shit. We need to shift the balance between the bosses and the workers, and not only here. We need to radically change what seems reasonable, such that what is unreasonable is a wage that can't pay the rent. This claim takes our struggle beyond our own situation, and makes it a fight over the parameters for what is possible for workers and students everywhere. This is also why our boss is so adamant, in the words of labor relations, that *cost of living is not a big factor in the wages article*.

In this context, it's a positive development for UCOP to now be openly proclaiming that our demands are incompatible with their business model, and explicitly acknowledging that they have a political dimension rather than being narrowly economic. Calls for "neutral" mediation are calls to bring all this back to earth. But the fact that secure housing or adequate childcare are unreasonable under the present paradigm shows that business as usual (or "continuity of education" in the boss's preferred idiom) has already failed. We, of course, already knew that.

We have to stop asking what's reasonable, and to whom, and start asking what we're capable of fighting for. Our fellow grad workers at Columbia were out for 9 ½ weeks and won big wage raises and a huge childcare package. If we are prepared to struggle for our demands, we may be in for a long strike. The University has not been cowed into serious bargaining by a *threat* of force. But they can be *forced* to concede what we're demanding if we use our collective power for as long as necessary.

BIG march and rally to condemn strike breaking and union busting in STEM

Friday, Nov 18

SRs: 10am Science Hill

Students: 11am Quarry Plaza

ASEs: Noon on the picket

ON STRIKE We're striking for COLA, not for wages

Still nothing doing at bargaining. Putting the phlegm in phlegmatic, Nadine Fishel—UC's stonewaller in chief—repackaged UC's piffling offer between bouts of coughing. Nadine is under the weather, apparently, but no less determined to play the waiting game.

Four days on the picket line, and grad workers across the state continue to feel our power growing. Nothing builds resolve and solidarity like spending the day with our fellow workers, walking the picket side-by-side, eating meals together, and talking about ways to deepen our collective struggle. And our bargaining team members agree. We are at the height of our power, they say. The curious thing is that some of them think this is the time to start offering concessions to the boss.

At a meeting yesterday morning, some bargaining team members argued that this moment of collective power is the time to revoke the central demand of the negotiations, a demand that has been building for over three years: to permanently tie grad workers' compensation to the cost of living in California. In other words, they would have us abandon COLA at the moment when our power is still building.

But in the midst of the discussion over this misguided proposal, some 300 rank-and-file workers from campuses across the state suddenly flooded a meeting that had not been advertised to membership beforehand. In no uncertain terms, they expressed a nearly univocal position—this strike is about a COLA, about the end of rent burden. Without the demand to tether compensation to cost of living, the wage increase we're asking for becomes just another number. Lacking the organic connection to soaring rent prices, it becomes something eerily close to the "outrageous" demand that UC labor relations argues it is. With complete clarity, these rank-and-filers let their bargaining team know why they've gone out on the largest strike of academic workers in history, and why we plan to stay out until we win.

Without the COLA demand, our struggle loses its bite. COLA is a political demand, not simply a wage demand, because it links our compensation to market values. It makes it so that we, and all the workers who come after

us, can afford to live where we work. This is why administrative intransigence is the only face we've seen. Waves of sectoral unionization throughout the UC since the '90s have simply been incorporated into the university's business paradigm, in which incremental wage increases are offered, but without any relation to the outrageous cost of living in this state. This is precisely how we ended up rent-burdened in the first place. Conceding the framing of the demand (COLA) in favor of its result (the \$54K salary) has significant consequences for the UC system and for workers in higher education as a whole: it is the first step on the dismal path to capitulation without a real fight. The rank and file appears to appreciate this more keenly than our bargaining team.

Meanwhile, as STEM divisions begin a fresh round of strike-breaking and intimidation tactics, we find ourselves again confronted by the student-worker ambiguity so often exploited by our boss. Student researchers are now being threatened with academic consequences for their labor action because they're earning required credits for the work they produce for the university. The message is clear, if opportunistic: even if your strike as workers is protected, we will punish you as students. But no less clear is the fact that academic progress is contingent on compliance to the labor process, revealing the fiction on which the student/worker distinction is based.

The fact of being a student is the justification for inadequate compensation as a worker ("part-time work," as Labor Relations says), while that labor primarily functions to draw in grant money, carry out research operations, and keep the institution's tuition-rent wheels turning. Here, too, the COLA demand marks a decisive intervention, refusing to accept rent burden as the price of being a student half the time, just as we must refuse to accept intimidation or retaliation as the lot of student-workers.

The cry for "COLA!" rings out on the picket line, but rank-and-file workers know it's more than just a slogan. It means an end to rent burden for all grad workers, and it's the only way to end this strike. Tell that to your bargaining team.

UAW on strike: COLA in context

At this point, UC labor relations and admin must be reflecting on the flatfootedness of their strategy. Entering the second week of a system-wide strike of grad workers, postdocs, and academic researchers, the determination of the rank-and-file to stay on strike until we win is entrenched and expanding. Pickets may be sparser this week due to the impending holiday, with students and workers deserting an already quiet campus a few days earlier than usual to spend time with loved ones. This fact should serve to remind us, however, that the true efficacy of our strike is measured not by the size of rallies or the rowdiness of the picket, but by the number of workers withholding their labor over time. This is something that our bargaining team fails to understand, as it volunteers major concessions on our core demand at a moment of power.

This strategic orientation has developed over several years of organizing behind the COLA demand. We've learned that short-term strikes, even with total shutdowns, do not threaten crises at UC in the way that they might at other worksites. The steady accumulation of missed instruction hours, especially late in the quarter, along with the passage of deadlines for finals, grades, and research grants, ratchets up the pressure on the administration as the cogs of university operations jam and effects begin to accumulate in other sectors of the campus workforce. This strategy was hard won in the first place, and was set in motion by meticulous organizing since the end of the wildcats at the onset of the pandemic. We would be remiss not to have it guide our action and tactics both on the ground and at the table.

This shorter, quieter week also gives us an opportunity to reflect on the deeper meaning of the struggle. Our strike has been the subject of overwhelmingly positive national media coverage—even if these stories often, predictably, miss the point. Last week we wrote in these pages that we're not striking for higher wages, but for COLA—the demand that our compensation be determined by the cost of living in California, so that no worker spends more than 30% of their salary on rent. This, we reiterate, is much more than just a pay increase.

To grasp the significance of this demand, we can look to the history of our own union, the UAW. The tension that we can see between anxious bargaining representatives now pushing very hard to replace the COLA demand with simple

raises is continuous with the larger dynamics of the labor movement since World War II. The end of that war saw a massive strike wave across the US, widely considered the most concentrated period of labor-management strife in U.S. history. Following the wildcats in auto during the war years, a strike of 225,000 GM workers exploded in November 1945 demanding a 30% pay increase without an increase in company prices. Workers that is, demanded that their victory not be immediately eaten up by inflation. In making such a demand, they anticipated the principle of COLA—the guarantee that compensation be determined in relation to the cost of living. In our own moment, where rent can rise by more than two-thirds over the life of a contract, our COLA demand strikes at the heart of a decades-long arrangement of price and wage stability amid soaring property values, where wage increases evaporate into the rent check, even when price inflation is steady (which, today, it is not). With this demand, we are saying that working people and tenants will no longer consign increasing portions of their wage to the benefit of real estate portfolios. And no one in California has a real estate portfolio as large as the UC. In both cases, the upward drift in the cost of living is an attack on the entire working class.

In short, COLA intervenes anew in a historical process, and takes up the demand of workers before us that our salary guarantees us the ability to afford to live where we work, and to etch that principle into our contract so that this will always be the case. This is why COLA is about so much more than a raise, and so much more than our own strike. When we win, we ensure that the ability to reproduce our livelihoods will no longer be subject to the vicissitudes of the market. We set the stage for unions across the country to do the same, starting here in the UC. In the midst of a historic wave of unionization drives throughout different industries in the U.S., the potential of our movement to build this kind of worker power has potentially massive consequences.

So when we're out there on the picket line this week, be encouraged not only by the determination of your comrades, the beauty of our collectivity, and the soundness of our strategy, but in knowing also that we take up the struggle of rank-and-file workers of the past. In winning our COLA, we have the potential to help shape the trajectory of the union movement in this country for years to come.

At 6pm last night, the UAW 2865 bargaining team held a pre-bargaining caucus to discuss their decision of the previous night to drop COLA as an integral demand across subsequent years of the contract. For now, this means retaining the \$54k initial adjustment, but then reverting to static percentage-based increases for each year thereafter. Those who have lived through the duration of the last contract in a town like Santa Cruz, where rents soared 67% since 2018, can sniff the peril. As a point of fact, the bargaining team's proposal was "packaged" with another article about rents in campus housing, which preserved their legal right to reintroduce COLA -- should the team suddenly develop the political will to respond to the persistent call of rank and file.

If recent encounters with the team are any indication, however, we might expect them to brush off this "minority" of workers pushing a "fringe" position in the name of a silent majority of tens of thousands of workers, whom our esteemed representatives supposedly consult (or intuit) between caucuses. Our reps are so secure in their deeper knowledge of what is reasonable, realistic, and right that the caucus was set up to preclude membership's reconsideration of their decision, summarily ending the bargaining call later that evening. Yet, the team's confidence was surely shaken when the pre-bargaining caucus—a Zoom room capped at 500—filled within minutes, and hundreds more members packed into an overflow. What they all witnessed was a dismally choreographed plan to flood the stack with a dozen sycophants off the top, in many cases reading scripted defences of the decision to strike COLA from the contract language. The fiery response from the packed meeting inaugurated a slogan that is gaining ground: No COLA? No Contract! It's safe to say that our union local has never seen such intense and vocal backlash. In a setting like this, renewed appeals to a "silent majority" can only gesture to silence.

Beyond doubt, the swirl of frustration and anger demonstrates a definite base for the COLA demand and an enormous capacity for mobilization. The urgent question is how this might be channeled into strategic resolve. We are seeing calls for a no-vote campaign,

or even a wildcat strike. It is not hard to see why attention turns to these alternatives, even as we remain on strike without a contract to vote down. At this moment, both these calls are premature and concede too much to our bargaining team, crediting them with more control over the direction of the current strike than they in fact possess. The bargaining team and the thin staff layer at UAW—who make several times the base TA wage—are not the union. It is not up to them whether the COLA demand is dropped. It will be dropped only if and when the rank and file relinquishes it. The organizing challenges, then, are to deepen and widen the commitment to the demand, and to develop a strategic orientation of patience and resolve that is sorely lacking in our bargaining team. In the case of our strike, power is wielded against the boss cumulatively, and that power builds as the strike unfolds and disrupts over time.

It is critical to recognize the dynamics of our strike during this abbreviated holiday week. This is a vulnerable period in which concessions might be made rapidly, if the team thinks it can sneak them by membership. It is a time when pickets might dwindle, and rallies might lack the energy of the first week. This is precisely the time to take action at the level of our departments, to find collective expressions of commitment to the COLA demand and the long-haul strike needed to win it, and to link these tactics across departments and campuses. We must return from the long weekend still on strike, and with widespread resolve to take this through finals and, if necessary, beyond.



“Peak Power”

As we enter the third week of our strike, and the final week of instruction on all campuses, we should expect to encounter assessments on the strength and power of the strike. We'll likely hear these from colleagues, union reps, faculty, and perhaps even the UC administration. In the absence of more grounded ways of assessing the power of our strike, one notion is circulating widely: the idea that we have hit already, or, in any case, will hit very soon, our “peak power,” after which we only stand to lose by continuing to strike. This is the logic underpinning our bargaining team's concessions. We want to refute this logic in the strongest terms possible.

To spell it out, “peak power” imagines a brief window in the duration of a strike when we are most powerful. At “peak power,” we automatically receive the best contract offer that we can hope to see at any stage. The critical task, so this logic goes, is to identify the moment of “peak power” and accept whatever's on the table, before it vanishes. “Peak power” practitioners usually gauge this by the sheer number of people supposedly “active” at any one moment — looking at things like the size of a crowd or the number of digital check-ins. A dip in these numbers is reason enough to volunteer significant concessions, to wrap things up before we descend too far from the summit, striking more against ourselves than our employer.

This is a cookie-cutter approach to assessing major labor stoppages, and one that is particularly ill-adapted to our own sector (higher ed and research). What should be clear, firstly, is that it is not the threat of a strike that is powerful, nor the demonstration of our numbers, but the strike itself and the prospect of its continuation—the tangible exercise of our power as workers to withdraw labor that is integral to the function of our workplace. Strike authorization votes, picket sign-ins, email engagement, etc. are only dim indications about the number of people who may be striking at a given time. On such numbers alone, no-one could assess the balance of power between striking workers and the employer as it unfolds dynamically over time. To see ourselves as powerful only in the moment we pose a threat in

demonstrably large numbers is to concede that the work we do, the work we can strike, is insignificant—it is to say we don't actually have any power.

In our line of work, moreover, short-term strikes, however enormous, do not threaten major disruptions the way they might at a port or an auto factory, where the possibilities of temporary workarounds are far more constrained than in the university. (On the other hand, it is much more difficult to replace our labor than in certain sectors.) The effect of our strike is felt through the steady accumulation of missed instruction hours, especially late in the quarter, along with the passage of deadlines for finals, grades, and research grants. The more of us who are striking, of course, the better. But the effect of our strike cannot be measured in any one moment.

That we are entering the third week of our strike, and that these kinds of deadlines are yet to pass, means we should not be surprised that the UC has not presented a new economic proposal to either grad unit. (UC has only repackaged the pre-strike ASE one for SRs.) Contrary to those who are pessimistic about our power right now, we think we are approaching a major point of leverage. We should expect that as we wield this leverage, we will encounter more concerted pushback, even retaliation, from our employer—a much surer sign that our strike is working. At the same time, there will be an uptick in bargaining activity, and incrementally more urgent concessions. Solidarity, rather than the resignation behind the concept of “peak power,” is critical here.

Whether we are able to withstand retaliation, and avoid overhasty concessions from our own bargaining team, will come down solely to the level and depth of rank and file organizing. Now is the time to get your department together to talk about the upcoming deadlines and how best to wield our power and protect one another. Learn the facts about grade withholding. Link your department to its sibling departments at other campuses. Tell your local leaders that we're not done yet — that we're preparing for a real fight.

How to break the deadlock

Below is a statement on our understanding of how to break the current deadlock at the bargaining table. For a fuller discussion of this, and next steps, register for a mass meeting with UC Santa Cruz leadership here:

Zoom registration: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAudeCqqDosHdy1B8g0O3bKVyLtIGCO9dvR>

Rank and file workers paying attention to developments at the bargaining table are undoubtedly sensing a crisis in union leadership. After initially appearing to rush towards accepting UC's current package, the BT10 and SRU majority have retreated, correctly sensing the impending blowback from membership. Apparently unsure of where to turn, they are now advocating "escalation," by which they mean "direct actions" (building occupations, civil disobedience in Sacramento, shutting down intersections, etc.).

These kinds of tactics, of course, are always available and should be assessed by how they serve a broader strategy. In our moment, however, such tactics appear doomed to fail. As winter break approaches, we must expect to see decreasing numbers of workers on the picket line. Such actions will appear desperate in this context, and without the safety of numbers, they will expose participants to student conduct discipline, arrest, or both. The likely outcomes of such frenzied actions are fatigue, demoralization, and tying organizers up in anti-repression work. (This direction is a very common mistake in large social movements: as numbers on the ground decrease over time, activists take bigger risks.) Certainly, none of these outcomes help to advance a strategy to win our demands.

What will it take to break the deadlock at the bargaining table and win?

At UC Santa Cruz, our organizing has been guided by a consistent strategy: in our workplace (higher ed and research), workers must undertake a sustained strike to exercise their power. Short strikes — even full closures — do not impact the boss the way they might in other industries. When we face the question of how to break the current deadlock, the answer must refer back to this strategy. We must deepen and widen our commitment to the long-haul strike, and consider what the current moment requires. At other points, this may involve an escalation of direct actions (picketing deliveries and construction, for example). But it is difficult to see how the present moment calls for prioritizing such tactics.

As of this week, ASEs are no longer striking instruction, but exam proctoring and grading, ahead of deadlines for grade submission.

This shift in the strike raises many questions and organizing challenges, and meanwhile presents a new source of leverage for striking workers — the administrative chaos it will cause. On a mass scale, workers must prepare themselves, their students, and instructors of record for this disruption. This requires us to map our departments to identify who is on strike, share resources and inform one another about the reality of grade withholding (there is sure to be much misinformation and confusion), as well as to coordinate and build solidarity with students, faculty, and lecturers, wherever possible. If this is achieved, we will enter the winter break in a far stronger position than we currently occupy.

SRs, meanwhile, are highly specialized workers who, on any scale, cannot be replaced in the short or medium term, and whose work often contributes directly to the generation of funds for the university, and even for industry. There are many important grant and research deadlines upcoming for SRs, although they are not synchronized in the manner of the grade deadline. The leverage exercised by striking SRs, and therefore the level of pressure on them, falls unevenly across the mass of striking workers. It is critical, at this juncture, to map out exactly who, in a given department or lab, is liable to come under the most pressure in the coming weeks, and to strategize ways to galvanize support behind them and celebrate the critical contribution they are making to the collective struggle. Such organizing will undoubtedly strengthen the strike and deepen our solidarity.

More critical than turning out our coworkers for direct actions this week, we call for building and reinforcing the long-haul strike through the grading deadline and beyond.

Statewide UAW 2865/SRU Strategy Meeting hosted by UC Santa Cruz

Tuesday, Dec 6 @ 6pm

Zoom registration: <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZAudeCqqDosHdy1B8g0O3bKVyLtIGCO9dvR>



How does a no vote fit into the “long-haul strike” strategy?

Striking workers across the state are observing an obvious, if uneven, tendency in the official union leadership — a lurching trajectory towards a tentative agreement on our contract. The halting momentum reflects a deep uncertainty among their ranks, a gnawing concern that one or both grad units won't ratify the deal. Make no mistake, it is the depth and quality of our organizing over these last five days that is behind their hesitancy. We should take this to mean that there has been a definite shift in the balance of power towards the rank and file of our union.

Workers committed to a different strategic orientation to their official leadership — workers who recognize that our demands and our workplace call for a long-haul strike — are justifiably concerned. Far from sharing the pessimism of their representatives, they see new points of leverage on the horizon. They are beginning to feel secure in the understanding that this strike will likely be a long one, and that the offer in front of them now indexes only the disruption and power they have wielded so far — that more is needed. And yet there are clear signs that sections of our union want to do the deal and get us back to work. It makes sense, then, that we are hearing questions circulating in rank and file spaces about organizing a no vote campaign.

When is the time to start organizing the no vote? Is that time already upon us?

What must be stressed is that organizing a no vote campaign is broadly harmonious with organizing towards the long-haul strike. **A vote against contract ratification is a vote to take the strike further. Why would we vote no if we did not have a plan to win more?** As we trace the long arc of the strike, we can detect distinct phases and moments (e.g. the shift from striking instruction to striking grading labor). Should a tentative agreement be foisted upon membership, which may indeed occur at any moment, we would delineate the no vote as just one necessary phase in the long-haul, and mobilize for it accordingly.

Considered from the other side, there may be no discernible difference between organizing towards the long-haul strike and preparing pre-emptively for a no vote campaign. Masses of workers do not vote no on a contract based purely on the size of the raise — that the raise is in fact acceptable, or that it is not quite good enough. It is well known that the workers often ratify contracts that we might consider concessionary, and this cannot be attributed simply to biased communications or unclear information. We have, after all, become deeply accustomed to accepting less than we need and deserve.

Workers will vote yes or no on a disappointing contract — regardless of how the official leadership tries to sell it — depending on whether or not they feel that they are in a position to win more; whether they feel that their strike has motion and potential. Framed in these terms, we must recognize that the mass of workers in the UC will make the correct call, one way or another. The crucial question, to reiterate, is not about the UC's proposal or UAW's framing of the proposal, but about the state of the strike.

The organizing task, then, is to set ourselves in motion ahead of the grading deadline, ahead of research deadlines, and ahead of the winter break. We must, with enormous urgency, create the conditions for wider layers of workers to recommit to the long-haul strike and to participate actively in preparing its next phase. Masses of workers are sure to resent having the rug pulled out from under them as they prepare to strike again at the boss. Such workers will feel that they are not yet done. These will be workers ready to mobilize against the business-as-usual deal currently on the table.

When we stop focusing on the machinations of the bargaining team, the necessary organizing tasks for the long-haul strike are very clear. We must not let the confused specter of our bargaining team shift us from the necessary tasks. At such a critical juncture, this is a distraction we can ill afford. It is abundantly clear to all, or at least it should be, that we have a base large enough to execute the long-haul strike strategy. It is go time.

[**Guide to the current proposal from UC**](#)

[**Resources and plan for organizing ASEs ahead of the grade deadline**](#)

[**Resources and plan on powermapping SR depts and labs ahead of the break**](#)

[**FAQs on contract settlement, ratification, and impasse**](#)

Our bargaining team this week voted — 12-7, as has become customary — to enter into voluntary, pre-impasse mediation. This means that our bargaining with UC will proceed in the presence of an independent arbiter. It is worth considering what this development means, and particularly what it does not. Broadly speaking, there are two fundamental points to take away. Firstly, we must interpret what it means that this happened; secondly, we must consider its implications.

UC and UAW have agreed to submit to mediation for reasons that are simple to grasp when they are considered in the context of the long-haul strike. While our strike, so far, has managed to draw some small movement from UC, this has fallen well short of our demands. Our official union leadership might well be prepared to take this movement to a tentative agreement, declare victory, and move on. Yet it is becoming clear to our official leadership, precisely as it dawns on the UC, that rank and file workers are girding themselves behind the strategy of the long-haul strike as the only path to a real victory. Mediation, then, presents us only with a distraction, potentially favorable to both UC and UAW's staff layer — a way to reorient focus from department power mapping and consolidation to a venue where we do not exercise power. Rank and file should only see in this development a sign that they have shifted power away from all who would prefer a business-as-usual contract. Our mobilization has single-handedly opened the way to a transformative contract.

What is essential, then, is that we take confidence from the turn to mediation, as an indication of our growing power, without therefore swallowing the illusion that mediation offers us anything different to the basically shambolic bargaining process over the duration of the strike. Mediation itself changes nothing, and meanwhile presents the possibility of undermining the clarity currently developing behind the strategy of the long-haul strike. The arbiter, as you can read in this letter from grad workers who experienced this at Columbia, is faithful only to the deal. It is the arbiter's single-minded function to

accelerate us towards a settlement, and this is the only meaning of their "independence." Yet, when we remember that UC will only reluctantly move towards our demands as the strike accumulates its toll over the long haul, we realize that the sooner the arbiter achieves their goal, the worse the outcome for us. In the Columbia case, the arbiter frequently told workers that their demands were "unreasonable" and impossible, only for workers to later win these precise demands through the power of their sustained strike. We must not waver from our resolve. The only unreasonable outcome is the continuation of rent burden.

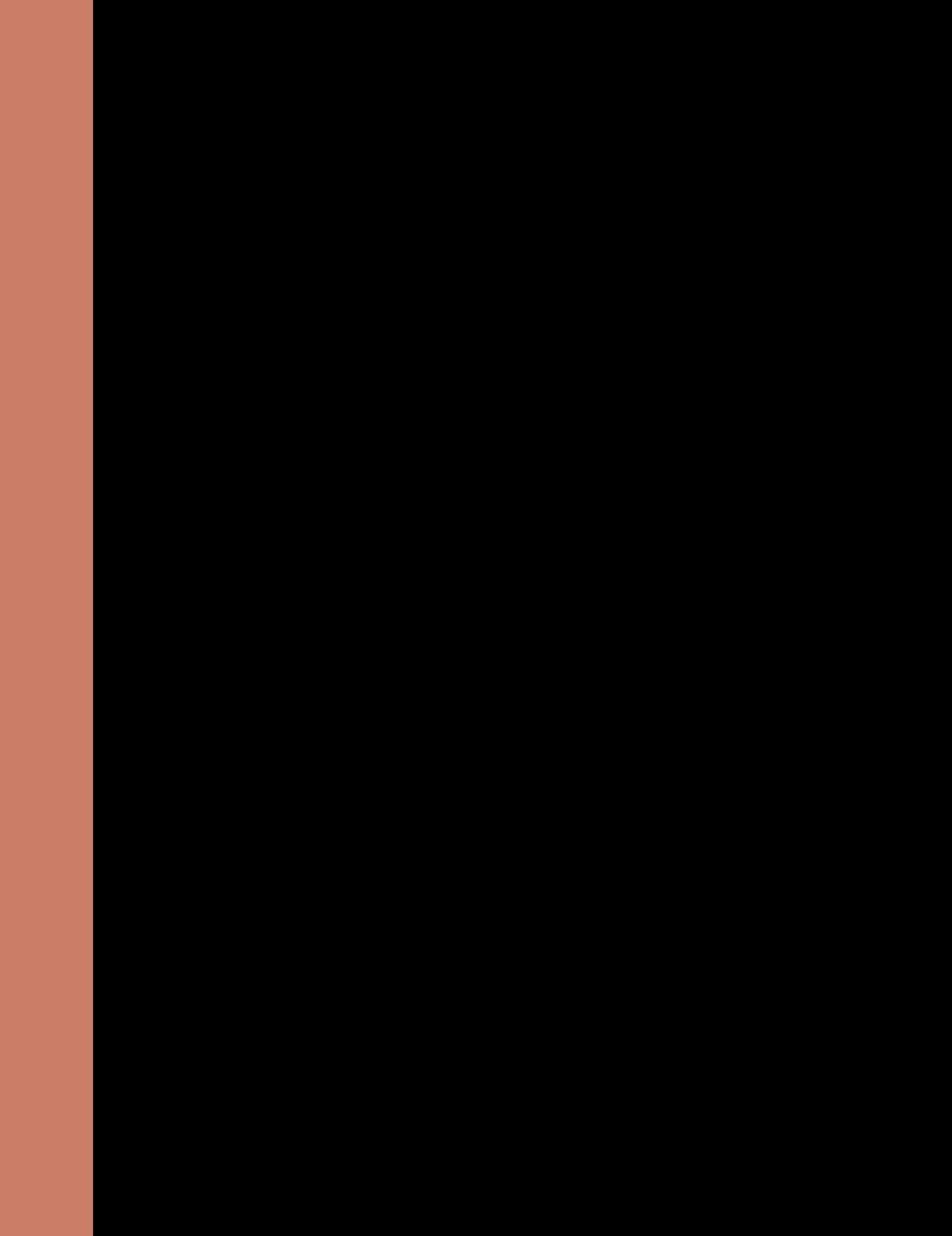
Workers on strike must, nonetheless, pay attention to mediation, and insist that all mediation sessions are open and accessible to membership. It would, of course, be an entirely retrograde development if members were suddenly disallowed from observing the process that would settle the strike that they alone are waging — and there is no possible justification for closing the door. Yet there is a world of difference between remaining attentive to the mediation process and mistaking it for a path to victory. If an acceptable offer from UC lands at the arbiter's table rather than the bargaining table, or in voluntary mediation rather than impasse mediation, only one thing will have achieved it. It can only be the power of workers committed to the long-haul strike.

Sign up to a virtual rally for the long-haul strike with:

- Ross Grooters, co-chair of Rail Workers United
- Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor
- Robin D. G. Kelley
- Tracey Rosenthal, co-founder of LA Tenants Union

Sunday, December 11 @ 4pm

Register: <https://bit.ly/StrikeToWin>





III. PALESTINE

TWO WEAPONS, ONE FIGHT: the ENCAMPMENT and the STRIKE

In the UC, encampment organizers, where they have not been overwhelmed by police forces and vigilantes, are negotiating with campus administrators. One strategic consideration they face is whether a strike by academic workers will put them in a stronger position to win more than what is currently on offer.

Amid many rapid developments in the Palestine solidarity movement, including the real prospect of a systemwide strike in the UC, it is imperative to clarify the relationship between the encampments and any possible strike, as well as the differences between them.

It should go without saying that these tactics are aimed in the same direction: towards the liberation of Palestine. It is equally clear that the persistence, bravery, and clarity of the encampments led us to the point where workers will decide whether to bring the strike weapon to the fight for divestment. Due to this sequence, the strike—whose priority is, of course, Palestine—would also be in solidarity with the encampments and the broader movement. This takes its most concrete form in the strike's demand for full amnesty for all protesters.

Yet the encampment protests and the strike are two different actions, which draw upon different sources of leverage and moreover have different conditions of success. To recognize this is a strategic matter, and does not imply that one action is more valuable than the other. For instance, an encampment that brings 5% of the student body into its platform of demands and into the action will be extremely robust (roughly 1k students on our campus). A strike that galvanized 5% of workers around demands and a work stoppage would be immediately crushed. This necessitates an entirely different preparation, for obvious reasons, and requires commitment from a broader and potentially less ideologically tight base. Workers in other university systems watching and thinking about the fall semester would do well to consider these differences now.

Beyond this, negotiations over the fate of each type of action, at least within the multi-campus UC, occur on different levels. Campus administrations have apparently responded to encampments with a degree of independence, ranging from violent sweeps to conclusive negotiations. Where negotiations are ongoing, there is immense pressure upon encampment organizers. As they speak to campus administrators they know the ready possibility that admin, can unleash an enormous repressive force at any moment, as they did at UCLA and UCSD.

In this way, the strike sequence promises a parallel path, necessarily requiring negotiation at the systemwide level. This, on the one hand, makes strike negotiations distinct from the encampment negotiations, which are conducted only at the campus level. It also opens the possibility for negotiation over a different class of divestment demands, since our humble

chancellors will always claim to have no sway over UC's investment portfolio. There is no such wiggle room for UCOP's negotiators, faced with a strike and a demand to bargain.

Our new bargaining team could easily demand divestment from UC's direct holdings in four players in the occupation industrial complex: Exxon Mobil, Honeywell, General Electric, and Coca-Cola. These direct investments, revealed publicly in the Who Profits database, total a mere \$6m, less even than certain grievance settlements. The obstacles are political as much as they are financial, and the precedent that workers would set by striking for divestment demands is one UC will seek to avoid at some cost. After all, perhaps the very last thing the administrators and regents of this venerable public institution would want is for its students and workers to tell them what to do with their money.

A further target must be UC's indirect investments in indices that translate to \$3.6 billion in such odious military contractors as Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Northrop Grumman. We could demand UC restructure these investments into a custom index fund that avoids arms manufacturers and other beneficiaries of the occupation. This is to say nothing of our strike demand for transitional funding for grad workers seeking an alternative to research projects for the benefit of entities like the DoD. This demand speaks directly to deeply felt issues of workplace dignity and control, but has been absent from many encampment demand platforms.

While many are thinking through the historical parallels of the student anti-apartheid movement for possible directions, where iterative smaller victories amassed over waves of struggle, a definite contrast today is the breadth and depth of organized labor in higher education. This pushes us to consider the possibilities of this moment without prefabricated limitations, but instead through an assessment of what is possible right now, as administrators reel around the country and with the novel prospect of a statewide strike by workers with recent strike experience. Such considerations must be urgently addressed by encampment participants, rank and file workers, and those in leadership positions in the union. As the university surely hopes to "de-escalate" by breaking the movement campus by campus, we must consider our power and how to wield it.

As Israel assaults Rafah, where it has concentrated 1.4m people, Cabral's words ring immortal: "Claim no easy victories." The moment is open and all who would fight for Palestinian liberation must strategize about how far we can push present possibilities. One thing is certain: no encampment has yet negotiated with the administration in the context of a genuine strike by academic workers on the campus. If this outcome does come to pass in UC, and we prove that it can be done, others will take up the call on an even wider basis.

FREE PALESTINE!

**FREE
PALESTINE!**

DIVEST! DIVEST! DIVEST!

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO STRIKE FOR DIVESTMENT?

The Joint Council of our union passed a platform of demands. Most of them are plain as day: drop all charges; disclose all funding sources and investments; make transitional funding available for workers who want to pivot out of labs and projects funded by the DoD.

The headline demand, however, the one that speaks to the national movement, is less transparent:

DIVESTMENT FROM UC'S KNOWN INVESTMENTS in weapons manufacturers, military contractors, and companies profiting from Israel's war on Palestine.

Workers are nothing if not realistic. When we walk off the job, we must have a clear sense of what we are striking to win. How big is the demand? How much force is required to push the boss?

HERE IS WHAT OUR NEW BARGAINING TEAM CAN DEMAND OF UCOP:

Divest the \$5.9 million of its endowment directly invested in Exxon Mobil, Honeywell, General Electric, and Coca-Cola. These are either arms manufacturers (Honeywell designs cluster bombs and missile systems) or featured in the Who Profits database as beneficiaries of the occupation. This is pennies to UCOP—they've paid out more in grievance settlements.

Restructure the roughly \$3.5 billion of indirect investments (money invested in index funds) in military contractors, including Lockheed Martin, Raytheon Group, and Northrop Grumman. This would require UC to seek a custom fund specifying criteria that avoids weapons manufacturers and beneficiaries of Palestinian oppression—just as they did with fossil fuels.

These demands are concrete, meaningful, and winnable. They align with living histories of labor and student movements for divestment, within and beyond the university. They resemble UC's past commitments to divest from South Africa in 1986 and Sudan in 2006.

Urge your new bargaining team representatives—the new Unit Chair and Recording Secretary—to push these divestment demands when they sit down with UCOP's negotiators.

Until that time, organize a meeting in your department to discuss the strike vote (open May 13-15). Figure out who is working in what class and lab. Assess your numbers and prepare for the reality of a work stoppage. Vote Yes in the SAV. Join the picket. Strike to win.

WE ARE PART OF A NATIONAL MOVEMENT. IT'S TIME TO BRING THE STRIKE WEAPON TO THE DIVESTMENT FIGHT.

DAY 1: UC Santa Cruz Stands Up

Today, UC Santa Cruz, “UC’s most striking campus,” is the first to “stand up” in UAW 4811’s ULP strike. We walk out knowing the heat is concentrated on us, expecting admin to be more aggressive than in 2022 while also knowing there is a tidal wave of support behind us. Friday’s announcement, that UCSC would walk out first and alone, has caused much debate around the state and among those following at a distance. These necessary debates will give rise to growing strategic clarity among UC workers.

Crucial questions concerning rank and file leadership, direction, and organization exist here, too, and need to be confronted head-on. There are clear echoes of the early stages of the stand up strategy in auto. But in other ways, the higher ed stand up strike is vastly different. We ought to learn from auto and parse out the differences that set it apart from our struggle. Firstly, why Santa Cruz?

We can’t speak for the situation elsewhere, but here there was intensive department- and campus-level deliberation about taking labor action already underway on our campus in the week before the SAV announcement. This undoubtedly gave us a headstart in building up dept-level strike commitments. Even before the reprehensible events at UCLA, dozens of departments had met to discuss how we, as organized academic workers, might respond to the encampment movement and the call from the PGFTU. We walked off the job on May 1 in solidarity with that call and had plans to determine the next steps. This followed months of self-organization in several STEM departments, where workers have been tracing DoD funding and organizing refusals. It is clear, for one, that this influenced the Joint Council’s demand for transitional funding for researchers who wish to opt out of war.

Our campus weathered the six weeks of the 2022 strike with tremendous resolve and was ready for more: 80% of ASEs and SRs here voted to continue the fight rather than ratify. We’ve since resisted UC’s attempted clawbacks, misclassifications, and the imposition of timesheets. Timesheets are set to be a major flashpoint in the current struggle, as UC seeks to identify and punish strikers more effectively than last time. All academic unions at SC have opposed the timesheets, and sent a unified letter to campus admin about the current attempt to use them and other “attendance tracking” measures for strikebreaking.

Apprehension also defined the lead up to the strike in auto last year, and the momentum built early on in the strike was hard won. Ordinary workers, ever cognizant of the conditions of possibility in their plants, acted collectively to strengthen the strike, even before being called to “stand up.” Our union siblings in auto show us what is possible, and academic workers will take advantage of openings that exist on their campuses. This may range from picketing construction and delivery sites to slowing down or altering their own work obligations. Direct action elsewhere can only bolster the force of the UCSC strike during these first days, when full-blown intimidation and repression from the UC is more than likely.

As our campus prepares to lock in for the long haul, we are open to UC’s entire repressive force. It should be stated clearly: the great merit of the stand up strategy is the ability to immediately fire back. If the UC takes a swing at us, other campuses need to be called to stand up at once. The strike beginning today at UCSC, the first of its kind in the current wave of struggle for Palestine, is the first large-scale backlash UC will face for the violence it unleashed on the UCLA encampment. They weren’t dissuaded from repeating the dose at UCSD or Irvine. One may assume that the administrative class at other major university systems, and perhaps higher offices than that, are consulting on how to break this strike, fearful of the precedent it sets. No one should underestimate how jealously they will defend their prerogative to discipline protests as they see fit, and moreover invest the endowment wherever they want. Our strike is a direct assault on both.

Much is unprecedented about what begins today. A strike in solidarity with Palestinian liberation, and with those fighting for it here in the US, was scarcely imaginable a month ago. The stand up strategy is new in our sector, and will require adjustments. We stand up at UC Santa Cruz, eagerly awaiting our comrades around the state. We know that workers across the state take their own initiative. When we fight, we win. Amnesty for all protestors. Divestment and disclosure now. Transitional funding for researchers.

FREE PALESTINE!

DAY 9: The Strike Spreads, Negotiations Begin

The Stand Up strike enters its second week, with two new campuses set to join their UCSC coworkers on the picket. This poses crucial matters of strike strategy, negotiations, and our demands—all of which will require further deliberation and elaboration this week. Here is an overview of major issues.

The contribution of workers at UCSC cannot be gainsaid. For five full days, we have shouldered the burden of this strike, its rigors, and the early uncertainties of a novel strategy, which includes the fact that we were first and will, therefore, go the longest. The strike at UCSC accelerated and deepened the appetite and organization for strike action on other campuses, much as the Stand Up strike in auto saw wider layers of workers at non-striking plants spring to action. If LA was always a likely next campus, there's every reason to think that the call up of Davis was forced by the organization and militancy of rank and file workers there. It is, of course, elemental to labor solidarity that workers demand to join their comrades in active struggles.

Our timeline from now until June 30 contains multiple points of devastating leverage. These are measured not only by the sheer number of strikers, and less still by picket line attendance, but by the importance of our labor to some of the most important dates in the UC's calendar. The universal rallying cry of the UCSC wildcat strike of 2019-20 was: "Do Not Submit!" On the ground, rank and file workers have their work cut out for them between now and the June 18 grading deadline. Mapping grades and making arrangements with instructors of record is already underway. These are not trivial organizing tasks, and may be decisive in the current struggle. Our last strike was settled as the grade deadline passed.

At UMich, faculty acceded to administrative pressure and submitted partial and fabricated grades. That strike, therefore, ran through the summer. That many thousands of grades could remain unsubmitted will intensify the UC's panic, especially as our appointments lapse and UC is left picking up the pieces. This struck labor is what will compel the UC to concede what it feels to be politically impossible.

Meanwhile, UC's failure to enjoin our strike at PERB has delivered UCOP to mediation. It appears that a subset of the EBoard will interface with PERB's mediator behind closed doors. The difference from open contract bargaining in 2022 is obvious and perhaps unavoidable. But we've been through PERB mediation before on our campus, negotiating the reinstatement of the fired wildcats. Back then, the mediator's insistence on "total confidentiality" never stopped us from discussing the progress and content of proposals with members. It is unimaginable that thousands of rank and file workers could carry the strike without the clear sense that our representatives will continue pushing the demands passed at the JC on May 5: amnesty, disclosure, divestment, and transitional funding. Whenever the need for clarity among strikers comes into contradiction with the legal strictures of

PERB or the good graces of the mediator, the former must be prioritized. The strike, and not artful negotiation, delivered the gains of 2022. It can do the same now.

Our reps must also strive to avoid the dizzying disorientation of closed-door sessions, where reality is warped by galaxy-brained prognostications of moves and countermoves, and the world turns on the facial expression of the almighty mediator. They would do well to let in the light. For instance, the idea that an "exploding offer" should compel a quick decision, in order not to "lose it," was itself exploded by our comrades at UMich. They took the time, deliberated collectively, and won even more. Nothing ultimately happens at the table, however it is composed. No one can know what we might yet win or not win. We should listen to no one who presumes to tell us what is or is not possible right now. The strike itself was scarcely "possible" a month ago. What is definite, however, is that workers waging this struggle, and those yet to join it, must feel that they have been able to take things as far as possible this spring. These workers have soberly accepted a hard fight, and no one knows better or more than the collective.

To be sure, divestment will be no easy win. UC does not tolerate a world where workers have a say in how the university runs—not just rote laborers churning out grades, degrees, and research prestige; but participants in the machinery of the institution. And yet divestment from the occupation and the slaughter is the drumbeat of the wider struggle, and we are marching to that tune. Our other demands—amnesty and transitional funding—are deeply resonant. But at this early stage, they are more the harmony than the driving tempo. Any agreement at PERB that omits divestment, especially one settled early in the fight and without prior collective deliberation, is unlikely to be celebrated as a victory by the workers currently holding down the picket, whatever the outcome of a statewide vote.

The divestment demand itself should be clear. We target UC's holdings in weapons manufacturers, military contractors, and companies that profit from the occupation and genocide of Palestine. UC invests some \$3.6B in such blood-soaked companies. Divestment at UC targets \$5.9M in direct investments (Honeywell, Exxon Mobil, General Electric, and Coca Cola) and \$3.6B of indirect investments in an array of companies including Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, and Boeing.

Any divestment win at a time like this would, in UC's sage words, "set a dangerous and far-reaching precedent." Hundreds of researchers could opt out of the war machine, for instance, were UC to sell off its direct holdings and contribute the proceeds to a transitional fund. How far would this clear a path to further divestment wins, in our own labs and workplaces and beyond? At a time when the US labor movement and the Palestine solidarity movement alike are searching for such dangerous and far-reaching precedents, we must, at the very least, avoid the pitfalls of closed negotiations and unfurl the full potential of the Stand Up strike.

FREE PALESTINE!

STRIKING for DIVESTMENT: our DEMANDS

The Joint Council of our union passed a platform of demands, including full amnesty for all protestors and disclosure of all UC ties to Palestinian oppression. The headline demand, the one that speaks to the broader moment, reads as follows:

Divestment from UC's known investments in weapons manufacturers, military contractors, and companies profiting from Israel's war on Palestine.

What does this mean concretely? Here is what the Executive Board can demand of UCOP in negotiations:

Divest the \$5.9 million of its endowment directly invested in Exxon Mobil, Honeywell, General Electric, and Coca-Cola. These are either arms manufacturers (Honeywell designs cluster bombs and missile systems) or companies featured in the Who Profits database as beneficiaries of the occupation. This is pennies to UCOP—they've paid out more in grievance settlements.

Contribute the proceeds to a transitional fund for researchers who wish to opt out of labs funded by the Department of Defense. The \$5.9m in direct holdings alone could fund hundreds of postdocs, ARs, and SRs as they find alternative arrangements for their research work.

Restructure the roughly \$3.5 billion of indirect investments (holdings in index funds) in military contractors, including Lockheed Martin, Raytheon Group, and Northrop Grumman. This would require UC to seek a custom fund specifying criteria that avoids weapons manufacturers and beneficiaries of Palestinian oppression—just as they did with fossil fuels. It costs them nothing at all.

These demands are concrete, meaningful, and winnable. They align with living histories of labor and student movements for divestment within and beyond the university. They resemble UC's past commitments to divest from South Africa in 1986 and Sudan in 2006.

WE ARE BRINGING THE STRIKE WEAPON TO THE DIVESTMENT STRUGGLE, AND WE HAVE THE REST OF SPRING TO WIN. URGE THE EBOARD TO PUSH THESE DEMANDS IN ALL NEGOTIATIONS WITH UC.

: how we WIN

Divestment is the drumbeat of the movement that delivered us to this picket line. It was the call from the Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions on October 16, and the demand that rose out of the encampment at Columbia University.

The UC will not want to yield any movement on divestment. Our demands carry negligible cost for UC—our divestment targets are pennies compared to the whole endowment. But UC is terrified of a world where workers have a say in how the university runs: not just rote laborers churning out grades, degrees, and research prestige, but participants in the machinery of the institution. In their own words, workers winning this fight would “set a dangerous and far-reaching precedent”

As more campuses Stand Up and grow the strike, our challenge moves to strengthening and deepening the strike itself, and maximizing the leverage we wield against the university.

HOW DO WE WIN?

Our timeline from now until June 30 contains multiple points of devastating leverage. These are measured not by sheer number of strikers, but by the importance of our labor to some of the most important dates in the UC's calendar—including grading and research deadlines.

TEACHERS: map grade withholding

Grades are the most acute point of leverage to force movement from the university as grading deadlines come and go. This disrupts the turnover of financial aid, interferes in the hulking shift from one term to the next, and questions the legitimacy of the university. Rally your department and campus: withholding tens of thousands of grades can compel the UC to concede what now may seem politically impossible.

Figure out the workers who are teaching each class in your department

Confirm with these workers: how many grades will you withhold?

Ask workers: what can we do to support you?

Here is a guide to mapping grade withholding in your department

Write to students about the strike and finals: FAQ here

RESEARCHERS:

make a collective research strike plan

While grades are the pointiest end of the strike, research is the bedrock of the UC's prestige.

Make a collective strike plan with your lab or department: what is the maximal amount of labor you can withhold that hits hardest at the university?

Identify which workers do different kinds of labor within your lab or department. Who is doing the most critical labor? Who is most vulnerable to retaliation?

Identify chokepoints (research/funding/conference deadlines) and ask workers what support they need to withhold their labor through these deadlines

Here is a guide to building a strong researcher strike in your department

HOLD THE LINE: faculty & lecturers don't scab!

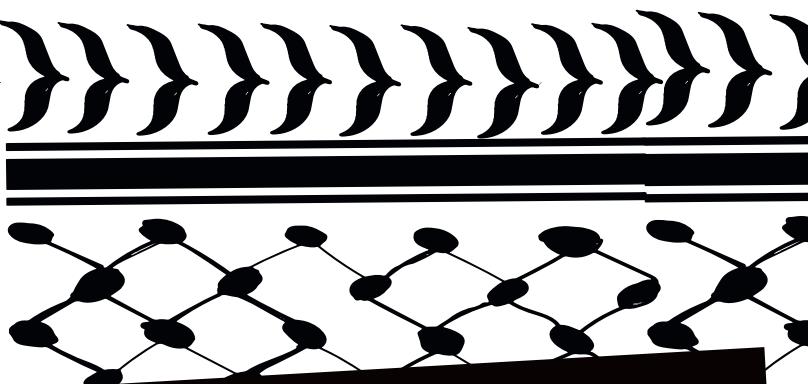
Faculty and lecturers have undermined our strike by submitting grades behind our back — reducing our leverage and prolonging the strike. Our most pressing request to all faculty is that they do not pick up our struck labor, especially the grading of assignments and final exams, or modify their existing course syllabi to submit fabricated grades. This position is supported by the unions that represent senate faculty and lecturers.

Faculty have the right to refuse to cross picket lines, including the right to strike their own labor in sympathy with our struggle, as recently reaffirmed by the Council of UC Faculty Associations.

Reach out to faculty and lecturers in your department and tell them: do not cross the picket line; do not submit!

PARTNER with sibling departments

Once you lock down your department grade map and communicate with instructors and students, consider reaching out to a contact you might have in a sibling department on another striking campus. They might benefit from your experience and be inspired to replicate your model.



DAY 15: Do Not Submit until UC Divests and Drops all Charges

For fourteen hours last Thursday night and Friday morning, in scenes resembling recent violent sweeps at UCLA and UCSD, a battalion of local and imported cops raided the encampment and arrested several dozen students and workers at UCSC. The final number of arrestees remains uncertain. Administration has said it was 80; jail support teams expect that the number is quite a bit higher. In any case, no incident in recent memory at UCSC has led to so many arrests and charges. EVC Lori Kletzer, for one, would not be denied the opportunity to take in this dubious historical marker, deciding to route her morning dog walk directly through the raid. One wonders how long she had anxiously dreamed of finally having it her way and unleashing the cops on her tenacious and principled students.

It so happens that organized academic workers at UCSC were already on strike to demand full amnesty for all workers and students around the state facing charges for participating in pro-Palestine demonstrations. At the very moment that the meaning of this demand hits closer to home at UCSC, two more campuses—UC San Diego and UC Santa Barbara—join the fight to have all charges dropped and advance the cause for which these brave people were brutally arrested in the first place. UC Irvine will also Stand Up on Wednesday, unless UC finally pivots from its repeated attempts to enjoin the strike, the headline of its array of strikebreaking tactics, and instead comes to the table for amnesty, divestment, and transitional funding.

As we provide necessary support to arrestees and demonstrate our anger, let this moment also bring strategic focus. For academic workers in UC, the strike by far is our strongest weapon to win amnesty. Whatever other tactics the moment may call for, especially with our surging outrage at police violence on campus or the incomparably greater horrors streamed from Gaza, we must not lose sight of the leverage of our strike: the strategic withdrawal of our labor when the boss needs it most. The major leverage ahead of the strike is the grade deadline on June 18, and the ensuing myriad of bureaucratic and financial disruptions caused by those missing grades.

The shift from striking instruction and research to striking finals requires extensive preparation on a short timeline. Workers can expect new questions and new pressures from faculty, chairs, lecturers, and from students. In most cases, grads alone cannot guarantee the non-submission of grades. In previous strikes, some instructors, while stopping short of directly picking up struck grading work, have sought informal workarounds to missing grades, “grading on submission” (submission = A) or otherwise fabricating or approximating grades.

This is to say nothing of the naked strikebreaking policy of the Committee on Educational Policy (CEP), active on our campus alone, which will automatically convert missing grades to “Ps” 30 days after the deadline. A scandal around the mass submission of such “bullshit grades” will certainly be an issue for UC, as it was at the University of Michigan one year ago. But this is mere consolation next to the material pain of tens of thousands of totally unsubmitted grades.

To bring our strike leverage fully to bear on the university, we need grads, lecturers, and faculty aligned against the admin and their cops. Striking workers at UC have one more week of instruction to map their grades and communicate with instructors and students. Whether the latter redirect the pressure they feel as a result of our strike onto striking workers or up towards admin is, in many cases, an open question. We are confident that workers on our campus, from grads to faculty to lecturers, have built increasing clarity across several strikes on what it means to remain on the correct side of the picket line. It is painstaking, but imperative, that we continue to make these clarifications, and meanwhile tally the grades we are confident will be missing on June 18.

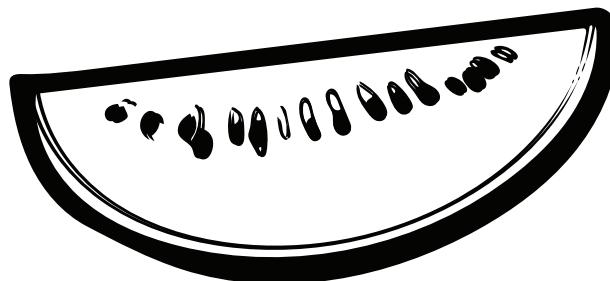
At UCSC, we have so far accounted for more than 10k grades across 21 departments. This success is in no small part thanks to the solidarity to those lecturers and faculty who have committed to not cross the line. By doing so, they not only amplify the effects of the work stoppage, but undercut admin’s principal method of strikebreaking. These are workers who recognize that our fight is their fight.

As things stand, there are several thousand more grades remaining in the balance at UCSC, awaiting the decision of instructors of record. We are coming for those grades. We will maximize the pain our strike inflicts on admin to win our demands:

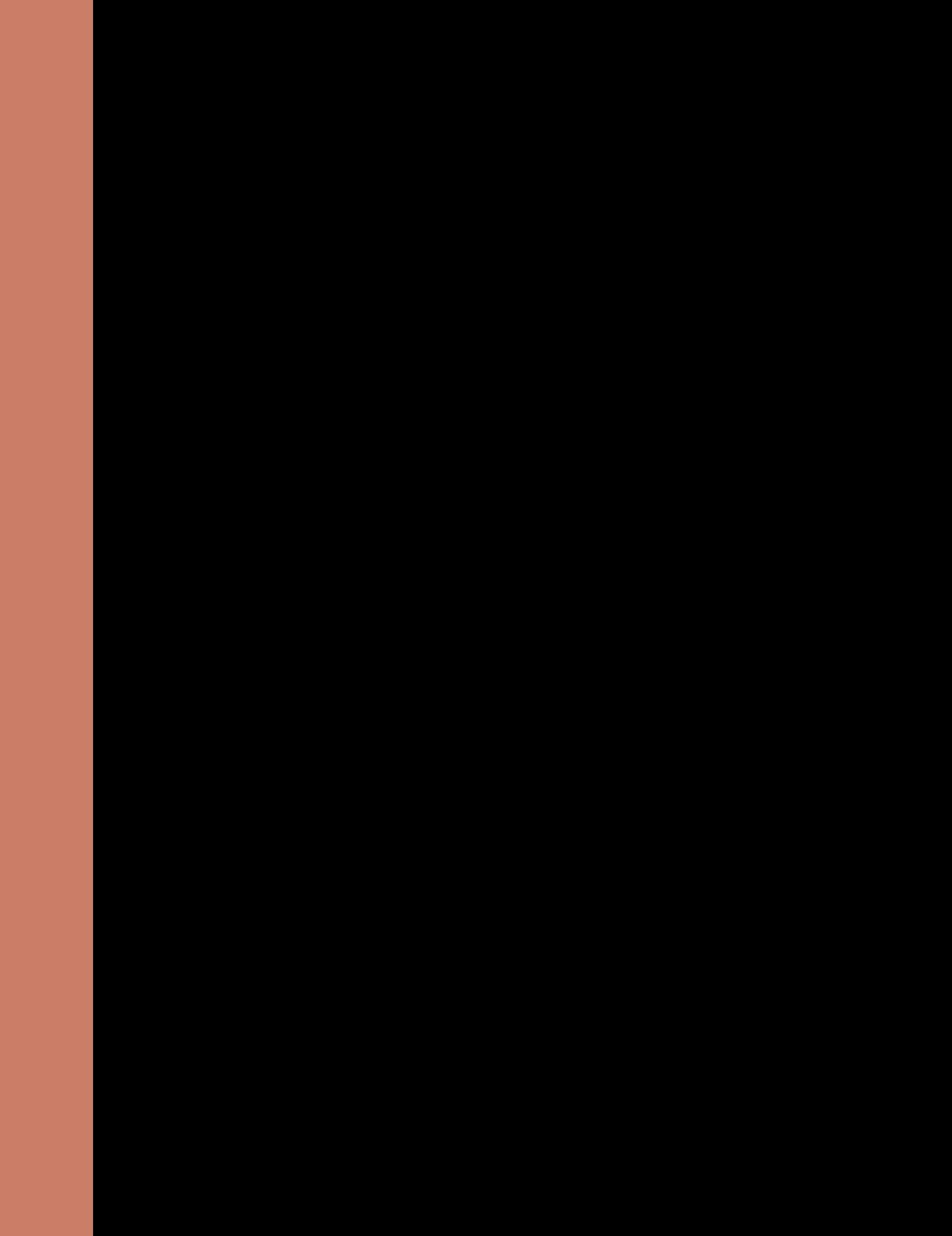
Drop all charges

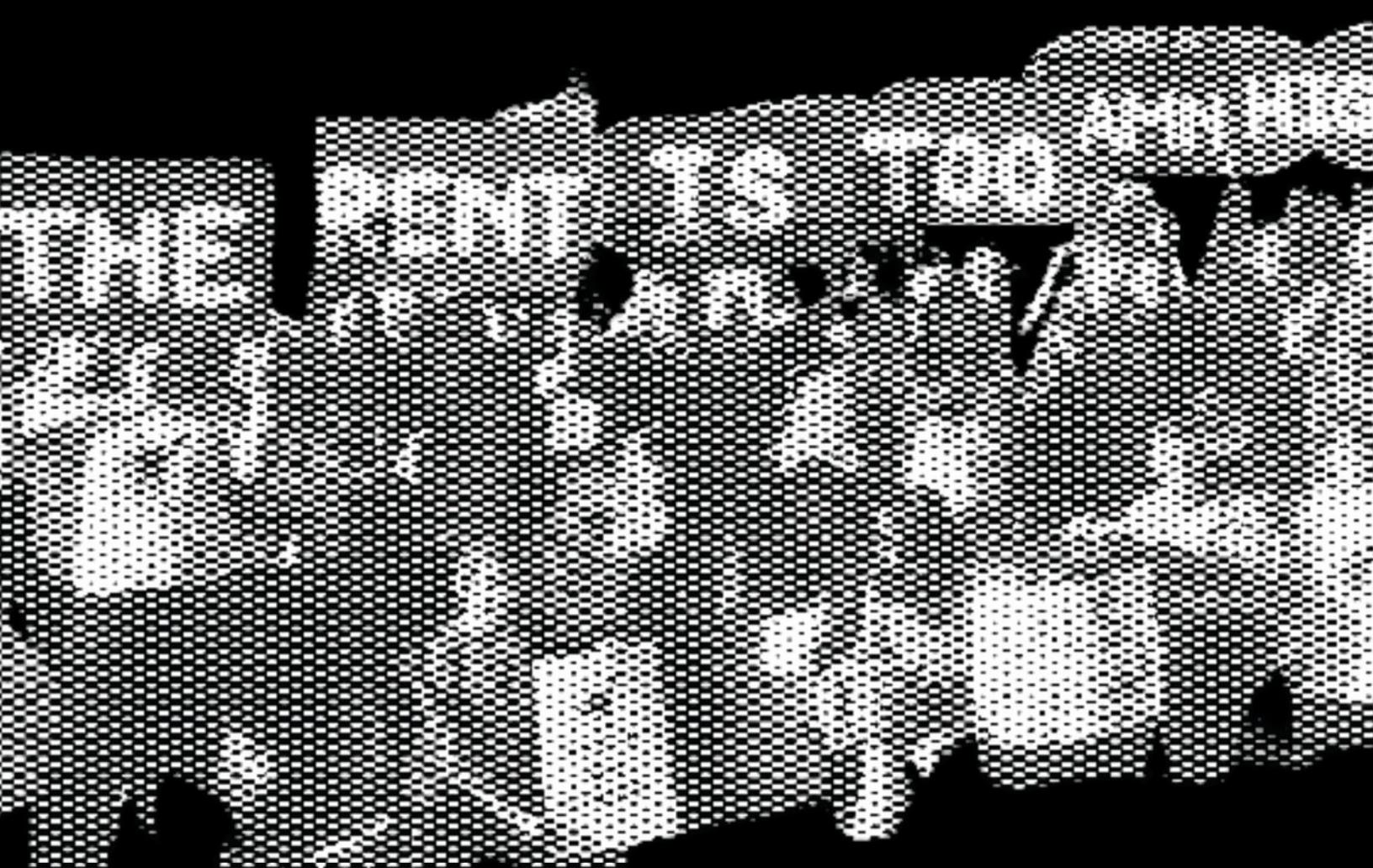
Divest from war and the occupation in Palestine

Provide transitional funding for researchers who want out of the war machine



FREE PALESTINE!





THE
GOLD

WHITE
CROWN

PI



/YOU'RE OUT/

