

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!

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!

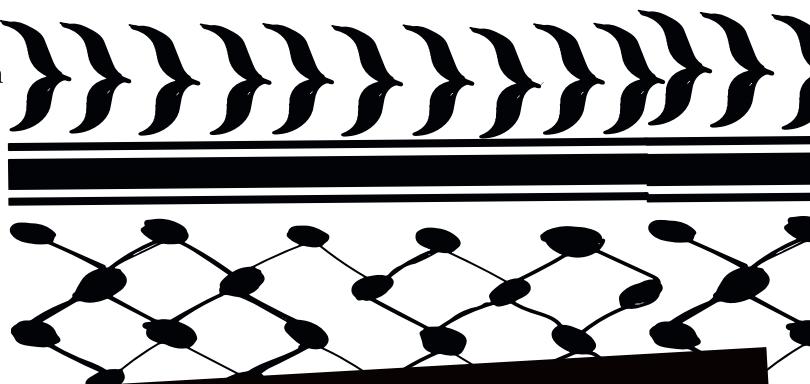
Faculty and lecturers have undermined our strike by submitting grades behind our back — reducing our leverage and prolonging the strike. Our most pressing request to all faculty is that they do not pick up our struck labor, especially the grading of assignments and final exams, or modify their existing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

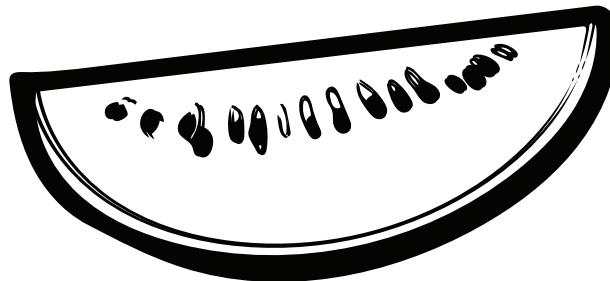
At UCSC, we have so far accounted for more than 10k grades across 21 departments. This success is in no small part thanks to the solidarity to those lecturers and faculty who have committed to not cross the line. By doing so, they not only amplify the effects of the work stoppage, but undercut admin’s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