

President Michael Drake
University of California
Office of the President
1111 Franklin St., 12th floor
Oakland, CA 94607

November 12, 2022

Dear President Drake:

We, faculty members of the Department of East Asian Languages and Cultures at UC Berkeley, urge you to respond to our graduate students' concerns regarding earning a living wage. Graduate students are an essential part of our campus community, whose contributions—above and beyond their own educational pursuits—are essential to the very possibility of the university's most fundamental missions in both research and undergraduate education. It is therefore essential that graduate students be able to earn a wage that allows them to thrive as teachers and scholars. Annual cost of living increases for our graduate students are a necessary precondition to relieving them of precarity and allowing them to concentrate on their work as teachers and scholars.

We understand that the long-term causes for this strike lie ultimately in the history of declining state funding for the University of California, exacerbated by the California housing crisis. Recent survey data shows the severity of the crisis, with data from Fall 2021 showing shockingly high, and rising, levels of housing insecurity among both undergraduate and graduate students, reaching 26.5% of undergraduates and 21.2% of graduates by the end of the semester. In the face of such adversity, we simply must find ways to remediate. The diversity of our campuses and the core values of public education that have made the UC system the great public institution that it is are at stake.

We also strongly endorse the call by the represented graduate student workers for NRST and visa fee remission for international graduate students. Our department in particular is intrinsically reliant on the contributions and experience of international students, and the burden placed on departments for covering NRST costs in particular exerts a strongly negative impact on our ability to recruit, admit, and train the best international students.

It goes without saying that there should be no retaliation toward students for participating in this strike—we are confident that this is a value held at the highest levels of the university.

Sincerely,

Jinsoo An
Mark Blum
Andrew Jones
Robert Sharf
Paula Varsano

Robert Ashmore
Mark Csikszentmihalyi
Ling Hon Lam
Kevin Smith
Sophie Volpp

Weihong Bao
Mack Horton
Daniel O'Neill
Alan Tansman
Jonathan Zwicker