

November 9, 2022

STATEMENT OF UCLA SOCIOLOGY FACULTY & STAFF SUPPORT FOR UC GRADUATE STUDENT WORKERS, FALL 2022

We, the undersigned faculty and staff of the Department of Sociology at UCLA, express our full support for the graduate students within our department and across the UC system in their ongoing contract negotiations with the University of California. We collectively call upon the University to increase academic worker salaries in order to address the precarity with which they must carry out their daily lives in one of the most expensive cities in the nation, despite their tireless efforts to advance the educational and scientific goals of our institution. We also back our students' call for transit and climate justice, childcare support, job security guarantees, equity for international and disabled scholars, and protections against abusive conduct.

We study inequality, stratification, social mobility, education, institutions, and collective action, among many other topics. We are most familiar with why people mobilize to collectively challenge deleterious conditions, often as a last resort. We are also committed to the public university as an institution that can and should rectify many of our social problems. We share a deep, exigent concern over the trajectory of funding for our graduate program. Funding packages have not adjusted to the dramatic increase in the cost of living. Our graduate students perform vital functions in both their teaching and research. Yet, the financial instability they face—instantiated most clearly by astounding rates of rent burden—remains a significant obstacle to carrying out responsibilities. These burdens cause undue harm to our graduate students, affecting their quality of life, the quality of their scholarship, and their capacity to instruct our undergraduate students at the highest level.

Moreover, we are quickly losing our leverage to incentivize and attract the most promising of graduate students. The funding our department offers, especially relative to other institutions, furthers inequality in access to higher education along class, ethno-racial, and national lines. We risk further losing diversity and prestige as a premier sociology training institution. This is a question of diversity and equity, which the University has long committed to addressing.

We know that supporting academic workers' proposals for a living wage is an essential step to ensuring the wellbeing of our students and to redressing the systemic exclusions in the sociology discipline and our department. That academic workers cannot afford a dignified life from their invaluable labor indicates how our institution has failed them by withholding rights and compensation that every worker inherently deserves. As a department, we express our commitment to standing alongside academic workers to win fair contracts. We also commit to protecting academic workers in UAW 2865, UAW 5810, and SRU-UAW from any form of retaliation against their legal right to participate in strike actions.

In solidarity,

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Richard Andalon
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