

Department of English: Statement of Solidarity with Student Workers

The Department of English observes with concern the consequences of growing economic inequality in the State of California for the health of the UC system: structural inequalities are compromising the university's mission. We are particularly alarmed by the economic insecurity experienced by our graduate students due to rising rents and other aspects of the cost of living in California, especially in the current context of inflation. These graduate researchers and teachers are an integral part of the intellectual community of our Department, and their labor and contributions are indispensable for the success of the UCR's mission of excellence. It is necessary to bring UC graduate students' compensation in line with these realities. The responsibility for ending the strike lies with the University administration who can do so by adequately compensating these student workers for their contributions to the university. We regret that UC intransigence has forced our graduate students to have to take the step of striking to make their deteriorating conditions known and to highlight the essential yet inadequately recompensed work they do for the university.

The student employees and researchers in the UC have sought minimum salaries, public transit passes, childcare reimbursements, job security, protection from abuse and retaliation due to abuse reporting, further support for international scholars, and a more equitable approach to addressing disability needs. These are not excessive demands, but are matters of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion. The university's executive leaders must work to uphold these values in issues of labor relations, just as we commit to these values in our research and teaching.

We urge the university to bargain in good faith with the union so that a just and adequate solution may be reached. Declining wages and benefits undermine our ability to recruit a diverse and excellent cohort of graduate students to continue the research and teaching missions of the university. We all benefit when graduate students are paid a living wage. We include our undergraduate students in this assessment, who benefit from the research expertise and pedagogical commitments brought to UCR by our graduate students. A better education for undergraduates and graduates alike begins with just compensation for all members of our scholarly community. We will not penalize any undergraduate student for their support of the strike, and we urge our colleagues similarly to respect without academic penalty the rights of students who choose to support the strike by not crossing picket lines to attend classes.

We will not engage in retaliation against graduate students based on their participation or non-participation in strike activities in all matters under our direct control and will publicly oppose unlawful retaliation measures should these be proposed by the university. We will respond to undergraduate concerns about the disruption of their education with compassion while affirming the right of the graduate students to strike for adequate benefits and compensation.