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We, the undersigned faculty of the Department of Ethnic Studies at UC San Diego, 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 stand in solidarity and kinship with graduate workers at UC San Diego and across all UC campuses who deserve a living wage which is decades overdue. We know that graduate workers' labor is critical to the day-to-day functioning of all ten University of California campuses, and the UC must compensate them accordingly. The cost of graduate workers currently accounts for 0.6% of the total UC budget. The Union's current proposal in bargaining would only increase that spending to less than 3%. This is a minimal increase, given how much teaching and research graduate workers contribute to our campus communities. While it was our hope that UCOP would settle with UAW so that graduate workers were not forced to go on strike, as of this morning the strike has begun. Therefore, as of today, November 14th the Department of Ethnic Studies **states our unequivocal support and respect of the strike including the possible pausing of normal activities as outlined by the UAW.**

As the cost of living has dramatically increased in California, financial support for our graduate workers has not. On some UC campuses, including our own, there are instances where on-campus rent prices have increased up to 50% from one year to the next. The precarity of UC graduate students has only increased since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many students in our own department have experienced housing or food precarity at some point during their graduate career. This is unacceptable and goes against the University of California's mission and core values. We will ensure that the department and its faculty meet their existing legal obligations not to retaliate against graduate workers for exercising their right to strike. We urge UCOP to negotiate in good faith with UAW and take the Union's proposals seriously.

UC San Diego announced in the summer of 2022 that it was the youngest university to reach a multibillion-dollar campaign goal, fundraising \$3 billion. The University can and should use some of this funding to provide all UC San Diego graduate workers with competitive funding and housing packages, so we can continue to be a leading public university; our university works because they do.

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, race, racism, gender, sexuality, 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 and urgent 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 remains a significant and unjust 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 every category of identity from race to national origin. We risk further exacerbation of the decades long inequities facing all graduate students and we recognize the particularly compounding impact on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities among other historically marginalized and underrepresented communities within the UC system.

We strongly believe 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 institutions of higher education, such as the University of California. This is fundamentally a human rights issue, and we demand that our students receive a living wage that is consistent with the cost of living in the state of California (the median household income in 2020 in San Diego was \$83,454 more than three times the salary of many graduate student employees).¹

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

¹ <https://www.cbs8.com/amp/article/news/local/paradise-at-a-price/san-diegans-need-make-salary-over-166k-afford-house-san-diego/509-2cbfb081-bbe8-4ff9-b153-bac33cd88bac>

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,

Department of Ethnic Studies Faculty