

Resolution #69-15

**The Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA)  
The Pennsylvania State University**



**of the 69th Assembly**

February 26, 2020

*Be it decided by the Assembly of Elected Delegates,*

**Support for Striking Graduate Student Workers**

**A letter of support to striking graduate student workers at the University of California at  
Santa Cruz**

(Decided: [ Y / N / A ])

1 **Nature of the Situation:**

2  
3 Graduate students at the University of California at Santa Cruz (UCSC) pay over 50% of their  
4 paychecks toward rent, which means they are significantly rent burdened. In order to alleviate this  
5 burden, students at UCSC requested a cost of living adjustment (COLA), which would amount to  
6 \$1,412 per month<sup>1</sup>. The current base stipend at UCSC amounts to approximately \$21,906/year,  
7 over \$10,000 less than the \$32,000 living wage in the Santa Cruz area<sup>2</sup>. The UCSC administration  
8 failed to address student demands concerning COLA, instead offering a meager 3% cost of living  
9 adjustment over a period where the cost of living has increased by 15%<sup>3</sup>. In response to the  
10 administration's unwillingness to negotiate with graduate students, those students organized a  
11 series of escalating collective actions to urge the university administration to meet with them.

12  
13 On Sunday, December 8, 2019, hundreds of graduate student workers voted to break with UAW  
14 2865 union leadership and host a wildcat strike. A wildcat strike is "a work stoppage that occurs  
15 during the term of a collective bargaining agreement without approval of union leadership and in  
16 violation of a no-strike clause. Through withholding final grades for the fall semester, graduate

<sup>1</sup><https://payusmoreucsc.com/faq-for-grads/>

<sup>2</sup>[https://www.ucop.edu/student-affairs/\\_files/GCOAS%20Report%202017.pdf](https://www.ucop.edu/student-affairs/_files/GCOAS%20Report%202017.pdf)

<sup>3</sup><https://payusmoreucsc.com/from-admin-an-open-letter-to-faculty-staff-and-students-at-uc-santa-cruz>

1 students hoped to encourage university administration to meet their demands or at least open  
2 negotiations. When the university refused once again to meet with graduate students, students  
3 voted on January 30, 2020 to begin a full graduate student strike on Monday, February 10, and  
4 graduate students and allies have now been on strike for 17 days as of Wednesday, February 26<sup>4</sup>.

5  
6 Since initiating the strike, UCSC administration has brought police to campus from across the state  
7 (some from as far away as Irvine - South of Los Angeles) to intimidate, assault, and arrest striking  
8 workers and others joining graduate student workers on the picket line. Some 20 students were  
9 injured by the police, and 17 have been arrested. In addition to this intimidation, graduate students  
10 have received multiple communications from UCSC administration with notices of termination  
11 and revocation of necessary visas for international graduate students should the strike continue. In  
12 the face of these threats and intimidation, the graduate students have continued their strike past the  
13 “doomsday deadline” of midnight on Friday, February 21, and to date no graduate assistantships  
14 have been terminated in response to the strike.

15  
16 The issues faced by the graduate students at UCSC are not unique to them, and many at Penn State  
17 are similarly rent burdened, and in some cases must rely on public assistance to supplement the  
18 meager funding they receive from their departments. The graduate student workers of UCSC, in  
19 unison with faculty they work with and the undergraduate students they teach, are telling the  
20 University of California administration that they deserve more and that the current system is  
21 untenable.

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23 **Recommended Course of Action:**

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25 It is recommended that the Graduate and Professional Student Association (GPSA) adopt this  
26 resolution to stand in solidarity with striking workers at the University of California, Santa Cruz.  
27 No graduate student should be forced to subsist on unlivable wages or face the risk of retaliation  
28 from administrators when they call for change. As they continue to strike in the face of injustice  
29 from university administration, we additionally support the right of graduate student workers at  
30 UCSC and around the country to organize to improve their conditions without fear of retaliation.

Respectfully submitted,

**Claire Kelling**  
GPSA President

**Terry Torres Cruz**  
Delegate, College of Agricultural Sciences

<sup>4</sup><https://payusmoreucsc.com/campaign-timeline/>

President \_\_\_\_\_

Affirm

Veto

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The Graduate and Professional Student Association