Workers of MSB Unite!

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Items 1 - 4: COLA Movement

During the summer months of 2018, our union, UAW 2865, was engaged in negotiations with the UC for a contract covering UC TAs, readers, graders, and tutors. At the time, the UAW 2865 contract negotiating team was composed of union members (mostly graduate students) from across the UC. Unfortunately, our negotiators were not united prior to entering negotiations. In addition to pushing the UC to provide TAs, readers, and graders with higher pay, better hours, and better health care, many on our side also wanted to push the UC to remove racist cops from campus, to end all threats of deportation against undocumented and international students, and to divest the UC from apartheid around the world. Other negotiators did not believe we should be asking for so much (but where better to ask for what you want than at the negotiating table?).

The people behind the current COLA movement were, at the time, involved in UAW 2865. They tried to convince the negotiating team to include demands that would actually alleviate the problems faced by graduate students at the UC. However, rather than including the COLA demands at the negotiating table, the negotiating team decided to put all their chips on state-wide and municipal rent control measures that were not certain to pass. As a result, a sub-par contract was signed, and (surprise, surprise) the statewide and municipal rent control measures failed. The most marginalized of us were once again left behind.

Today, our contract gives us an annual 3% raise, which is less than the legal allowable annual rent California increase of 4%. Many of our fellow graduate students are paying upwards of 60-70% of their income on rent (many are unable to have multiple roommates for a variety of reasons, others have unemployed spouses or family members, etc). A significant portion of graduate students experience homelessness each year. Our contract doesn’t even allow us to strike when we need to! UC Santa Cruz graduate students were fired for demanding a living wage. Organizers from across the UC called a UC-wide grade strike in solidarity with those who were fired.

The UC has filed an Unfair Labor Practices (ULP) lawsuit against UAW 2865, claiming the union was behind the COLA movement and the illegal strike (they weren’t). Soon after, UAW 2865 filed a ULP lawsuit against the UC for unfairly retaliating against COLA strikers.

UAW 2865 now wants to hold a vote to authorize a legal strike (a ULP strike). However, in order to authorize a legal strike, ⅔ of eligible voters must vote yes. But in order to vote, you
must be a union member, and less that 40% of eligible voters are union members! So unless we organize quicker than we have ever organized, this vote will fail.

We need to come together as fast as possible to get our friends to (a) join the union and (b) pledge to vote YES on the ULP strike. This is very time-sensitive, as the vote is this week. But also, knowing how unlikely success is, we need to stay vigilant and support each other in all ways. Wildcat strikes are great ways to extract concessions from management and potentially force them back to the bargaining table. We will achieve victory by any means necessary.
Items 5 - 6: UAW Elections

Election Information

UAW Local 2865 will hold vacancy elections this week, from Thursday April 2nd until Friday April 3rd 11:59pm. Union members in good standing at UC Davis are eligible to vote for 1 statewide Sergeant-at-Arms and 3 UC Davis Head Stewards. We are endorsing a COLA slate of candidates:

**Sergeant-at-Arms:**  
Sarah Manksi

**Head Stewards:**  
Ryan Chris Moreno-Vasquez  
Josh Shahryar

To vote in the election, fill out the UAW 2865 online ballot you receive from Simply Voting.

If you are not receiving union emails anymore, then please fill out the following form to request a ballot: [https://forms.gle/kDZSeKqhj5FHFTkL8](https://forms.gle/kDZSeKqhj5FHFTkL8)

**Ryan Chris' candidacy**

I am running for a Head Stewardship position to ensure that our union fights for each and every demand set forth by the UCD COLA movement (see: [https://www.ucdcola4all.org/](https://www.ucdcola4all.org/)).

I have been motivated to run by the tremendous work done by the COLA campaigns happening across the UC system, and by the courage of all wildcat strikers who demonstrate the power of people unfettered by bureaucracy. We must ride this grassroots energy to form a COLA caucus in our union that 1) bridges the gap between union leadership and COLA rank-and-file, and 2) represents all the demands articulated by the wildcat strikers putting themselves in the most danger.

While the union has adopted the language of COLA4All, reflecting its commitment to lifting us from rent burden, we must also elevate the demands of demilitarization and decolonization. The COLA4All movement sprung from UCSC graduate students from historically marginalized backgrounds who understand that these issues are connected -- not only do these issues impact our diverse workforce, but militant labor organizing is our greatest tactic against structural injustice.

As Head Steward, I will work to unify union activities with COLA and COLA4All agendas. Change happens when electoral politics follows movement politics.
Item 7: All-Gender Restrooms

Currently, there are no all-gender restrooms in MSB. Instead, there is a sign on the first floor by the gendered restrooms which reads:

The nearest gender inclusive restroom to the Mathematical Sciences building is located in Earth and Planetary Sciences room #1220 and 1257.

This sign represents an injustice: individuals who need access to an all-gender restroom should not be forced to walk to another building. The sign has also become inaccurate. Earth and Planetary Sciences (EPS) now only houses one all-gender restroom. This restroom is too small to reasonably serve the populations of both EPS and MSB and routinely runs out of basic hygiene supplies such as soap, toilet paper, and paper towels.

Redirecting all-gender restroom traffic to another building is neither inclusive nor practical. The TA contract negotiated by the union UAW guarantees that all TAs have “reasonable access” to an all-gender restroom. It is clear that the current arrangement is far from reasonable.

As a result, on March 20, Esha Datta, along with six additional math grad students, filed joint grievance through the UAW for reasonable access to an all-gender restroom. The next step is a meeting with the Employee and Labor Relations office, which will be held within 15 days of the grievance filing.

While we wait for progress on the grievance, it is important that the math community show support for the addition of an all-gender bathroom within MSB. To that end, we urge you to add your name to this petition. If you wish to be more actively involved in the fight for inclusive restrooms in MSB, please reach out to Esha Datta.
Item 8: Department Culture

On February 26 2020, a letter signed by thirteen graduate students from Math and Applied Math was sent to Ralph Hexter (Provost of UC Davis), Elizabeth Spiller (Dean of Letters & Sciences), Phil Kass (Vice Provost for Academic Affairs); Renetta Garrison Tull (Vice Chancellor of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion); Ken Burtis (Faculty Advisor to the Chancellor and Provost); and Ellen Hartigan O’Connor (Acting Associate Dean for Graduate Students and Postdoctoral Scholars). This letter detailed various examples of harassment and an unhealthy climate in the department. It also contained some recommendations for changes to policies within the department.

Graduate Studies replied and informed us that the administration is addressing these issues in multiple offices, including HDAPP, Academic Affairs, and Dean of L&S. We may have limited knowledge of most of these responses in the future, as administrative decisions regarding faculty often cannot be shared with graduate students. In addition to these behind-the-scenes measures, Grad Studies requested an ongoing dialogue with us. To this end, we have established a task force of three graduate students (Jorge Arroyo Esquivel, Esha Datta, and Emily Meyer) to work regularly with Grad Studies deans to develop and implement ways of improving the department environment.

On March 12 2020, Vice Chancellor Renetta Garrison Tull (DEI) responded to the Feb 26 letter. In particular, her response emphasized that UC Davis leadership takes concerns about diversity and inclusivity seriously and that the office of L&S will expect the committees in the Math department to meaningfully review at least some of these recommendations. Moreover, the DEI Office will be working with Grad Studies to help improve department climate.

Currently, progress has been slowed due to changes to university operations resulting from the coronavirus pandemic. However, the task force is in an ongoing virtual dialogue with Grad Studies deans to brainstorm concrete steps to improve the climate in the department.

Are you interested in actively participating? Let Emily, Esha, or Jorge know if you would like to receive more updates about this or be a potential alternative for task force members. If you have suggestions for strategies to improve department culture, let us know!