

SCFA Supports our TA Union (Student-Workers Union UAW 2865)

February 28, 2014

This letter is being distributed to members of the UCSC Academic Senate

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NOTIFICATION OF
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Dear Colleagues,

Please join me in congratulating our AFSCME colleagues for the successful conclusion of their negotiations, which as you all have heard has averted next week's planned strike. This is an important victory for our workers.

Our TA union (Student-Workers Union UAW 2865) is, however, proceeding with its plans for a strike on March 5, next Wednesday. TA's cannot of course be penalized for participating in a legal strike, so please make the necessary adjustments due to TA's absence from work on that day. We at the Faculty Association encourage you to familiarize yourselves with the TA union's issues, and to do what you can to support their strike. The TA union is currently without a contract with the University of California, which limits the union's ability to pursue grievances by other means.

We attach a letter to the faculty from the UAW organizing committee, which provides details about the strike, and suggests ways for UCSC faculty to support the strike.

Sincerely yours, Christopher Connery
Professor, Literature

For the Executive Board of the SCFA

Dear Members of the Faculty,

The TA union at UC Santa Cruz, Student-Workers Union UAW 2865, is planning to go on strike next Wednesday, March 5. We will be striking over two grievances: one about workload and the other about the UC creating new forms of TAships that illegally undercut salaries and benefits by hiring non-union members. Because the union's current contract has expired and UC is not obligated to arbitrate in the absence of a contract, the union's options are to give up on these grievances or strike to pressure the UC to resolve them.

The first problem, discovered in December, is that the University had been hiring dozens of students to assist in classes by teaching discussion sections and grading--the exact position description of a Teaching Assistant. However, these individuals are paid much less than teaching assistants protected by the collective bargaining agreement and have no access to benefits such as health insurance and tuition remission. When UC creates positions like these, it takes better paying, benefited jobs and turns them into low-wage, low-security positions. And yet, after two months of discussion with UC management, the union feels the university is not sufficiently addressing the problem.

The second grievance was filed earlier this month about a class in which Teaching Assistants are being asked to spend 13.5+ hours in the classroom each week attending lectures and leading sections. This leaves only six hours each week for TAs to do several hours worth of reading, prepare lesson plans and materials for sections, answer student questions in person and email, and to grade assignments, making it impossible to stay under the 20 hours maximum workload per week. This would leave little time for TAs to provide meaningful feedback to students. It is a problem that is becoming chronic at UCSC: the same situation occurred last year in the same class. However, after meeting with the union and

discussing the problem last year, the university did not fix the issue. Instead, this year it is worse.

The strike will be Wednesday, March 5, all day. UAW members will not be performing their TA duties on Wednesday. The right of UAW members to participate in this strike without interference or retaliation is legally protected. The UC may announce that this strike is illegal, as it did with our sympathy strike last fall. After extensive consultation with our lawyers, we are confident that this strike is legal, as was our strike in the fall.

We invite all faculty to be in solidarity with us for the entire day on Wednesday. There will be a picket line all day, but it will be biggest between 10AM and 2PM. There are a number of ways that you can support us:

- Inform your students about the strike.
- Respect our picket line for the entire day.
- Do not penalize undergraduate students if they choose not to cross our picket line on that day.
- The campus community is encouraged to come to our picket line between 10 and 2 to show support.

We hope you will support us as we fight to protect the rights of our workers.

In solidarity,

UAW Organizing Committee