UCSB NSU STATEMENT OF SUPPORT FOR COLA

Statement in Support of UC Santa Barbara Graduate Students (March 13, 2020)

We, the Nikkei Student Union, are writing in solidarity with UC Santa Barbara graduate student faculty and the COLA movement across the entire UC system as they strike for a well-deserved cost of living increase. The University of California states that they have a “mission of discovering and advancing knowledge”. However, by refusing to pay our graduate students a living wage, the education of both graduates and undergraduates suffer immensely. As undergraduates, we see the crucial work our graduate students have put forth to aid in our education and the growth of this institution. We acknowledge that our classes would not function without graduate student work.

We call on the UC administration to provide our graduate students with a living wage that accounts for the high cost of living in Santa Barbara county. The University must be willing to properly communicate and negotiate with graduate student faculty. We condemn the firing of the 54 graduate students in UC Santa Cruz that were dismissed for participating in the strike. This is a disproportionate response to the protest, and by punishing graduate students for standing up for their rights, the UC administration is sending a message to the faculty and students that it does not support grassroots advocacy. We also believe that the Union for the graduate students should support the wildcat strikers in order to give them legitimacy and bargaining power. The reason why grades are being withheld is because the graduate students don’t have any other form of leverage once the union stepped back.

We encourage members not to ask for grades in order to show solidarity with the strikers and add legitimacy to their protest. If members need their grades sent in for visa or financial aid/scholarship purposes, graduate students have provided resources to help undergrads and are willing to make exceptions to make sure undergrads do not suffer because of the UC administration’s stubbornness. Our board and general members of Nikkei Student stand in solidarity with graduate students at UC Santa Barbara and across the University of California system, and we hope that this matter can be resolved soon to the benefit of all parties.

In solidarity,
UCSB Nikkei Student Union