February 12, 2020

Dear Chancellor Larive and iCPEVC Kletzer:

We, the undersigned faculty members, are writing to express our concern over the numbers of police and the excessive show of force by the police at the base of campus during the first two days of the UC Santa Cruz graduate student COLA strike. Their presence has escalated tensions and unnecessarily exacerbated an already stressful situation. Nothing justifies lines of police in riot gear standing in opposition to our graduate students. We call upon you to:

1) decrease the police presence at the COLA strike. There is no reason for large numbers (50+) of officers to be policing one intersection of peacefully protesting students; and

2) shift away from the intimidation and threat-of-violence tactics that currently characterize the police presence. Riot gear, phalanxes of police blocking the street, and baton use are completely unnecessary and do not belong at peaceful protests.

Several first-hand faculty accounts document the problems of over-policing, intimidation, and violence at the base of campus COLA strike on Monday, February 10th and Tuesday, Feb 11th.

These faculty accounts result from a stepped-up observer effort by faculty directly responding to accounts of police violence on the first day of the strike and reports that students feel unsafe to protest peacefully. A video captures the moment on Monday, February 10th when police marched with batons out and swinging into a group of peaceful student protesters. According to several reports, one student received a head injury and had to seek medical care.

A faculty member at the base of campus on Monday, February 10 reports:

Police presence at the base of campus on the first day of the strike was larger than I expected. I think it’s helpful to have a few first responders on hand in case of emergencies, I see no need for the large numbers of uniformed officers in phalanx formation that I observed on the first day of the picket line.

I was at the base of campus after the faculty procession, talking to a student who was volunteering for Food Not Bombs near the campus sign. Someone came out of the bushes and announced that the police were arresting someone. I walked back to observe along with a large crowd of students who were witnessing, taking pictures, and recording. I observed a police officer instructing an older man with a hat who had emerged from a vehicle to come with him. I later learned from the Food Not Bombs volunteers that this man was Keith, one of the organizers of Food Not Bombs. This officer was backed up by about four nearby officers. It was not clear what the charges were. Keith said he was there to deliver water, and that the police were interfering with his delivery. I saw the phalanx of police take him with his arms behind his back to the median, where many other police and police vehicles were waiting. Students from the picket line went over
in a large group to continue to observe and to protest the arrest. This resulted in a standoff, where police pushed forward into the students to move them away from the SUV that sped off after Keith was put inside.

I did not see the student get arrested, but I heard later they had also taken a student volunteer for Food Not Bombs. This action escalated the protest, and we blocked the entrance of campus in two rows. I was on the outside row since I had gone back to the intersection to ask more faculty to come observe. I saw what appeared to be a skirmish with a number of police and students before the car sped off. Later, I saw one of the graduate students who looked dazed and had his white COLA t-shirt ripped violently. I asked him what had happened, and he said he was near the altercation and had been pulled forcefully by the collar of his t-shirt and thrown to the ground. I asked him if he was OK and he said yes, but he appeared to be shaken. There is no need for a police presence of that size at a peaceful protest, even if protesters are blocking the entrance.

A faculty member present at the base of campus to teach a class on Tuesday, February 11 reports:

I was shocked to see fifty plus police officers lined-up and standing directly across the street from the protesters. Their mere presence was intimidating but before long I was to see a much more harrowing show of force.

The students were mostly protesting on the grass by the UC Santa Cruz sign and marching with the crosswalk lights back and forth across the entrance as the pedestrian lights allowed. Suddenly, in a surge of excitement many of the strikers moved into the intersection at Bay and High Streets - thereby blocking access to the campus. They were in the street for a short period of time before student leaders successfully urged them to resume their position on the grass and to not “escalate the situation.” The student leaders clearly told them the goal was peaceful protest and not obstruction.

Shortly thereafter a group marched down High Street from the West entrance. The protesters on the lawn flowed out to meet them. Collectively the students - both graduate and undergraduate - formed a square blocking all four corners at Bay and High Street. Again the student leaders mobilized to call students out of the street. Again they were quickly successful at clearing the intersection as protesters returned to the lawn.

In both brief instances of protest street blockage, the student leaders worked quickly and effectively to de-escalate the situation and move students back to the lawn where the protest could continue without blocking the street.

Only after all students were back on the lawn did the police mobilize into position to block the streets themselves in phalanxes with batons out and held in an offensive stance. It was a chilling image to face - Ten officers spanned High Street and another forty stood in and along the campus entrance road. It was a completely unnecessary move as all students had peacefully returned to the lawn and none were moving toward the street. They held their position for over thirty minutes.
Another faculty member, who was acting as a liaison between police and student organizers on Tuesday, February 11 reports:

> As faculty liaison I went over to speak to the police. The officer told me that we were not to be in the street and that we needed to get out of the street. I asked why today (Tuesday) was different than Monday in terms of being in the street. He said today they were ready for us, prepared, and organized. I asked what would happen if we did not get out of the street. The officer said that they were "prepared to do what was needed to be done" to get us out of the street. At this point, I went back to the protestors who took the mic to communicate this message and ask students to consider moving onto the grass to de-escalate. Shortly after everyone moved over to the grass and resumed picketing during walk signs.

> Folks from the west entrance marched down to the base in the street followed by three police vans. When they came down, students went into the street, linking arm-to-arm and occupying the entire intersection. At this point, the officers began putting on their riot gear. A graduate student took the mic to de-escalate and students moved off the street. Picketing during the walk signs resumed. At this point, for no clear reason, more officers showed up, including an arrest van. Police officers also moved into the streets and stood holding their batons in a wide stance across the street.
This heightened tactic of intimidation must stop. The University of California, Santa Cruz is not a place for fear and violence. As Chancellor Larive herself said in her January 27th, 2020 message to the campus:

*UC Santa Cruz has a proud history of activism, and the university is committed to ensuring that all people may exercise the constitutionally protected rights of free expression, speech, and assembly.*

We call upon you to honor that history of activism and protect the rights of free expression, nospeech, and assembly by reducing the number of police at the strike and to change the tenor of the police engagement away from intimidation and violence.

Sincerely,

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2. Lora Bartlett, Associate Professor and Graduate Director, Education
3. Felicity Amaya Schaeffer, Associate Professor and Chair, Feminist Studies
4. T. J. Demos, Professor, History of Art and Visual Culture
5. Ben Leeds Carson, Associate Professor of Music; Provost, Kresge College
6. Nick Mitchell, Associate Professor, Feminist Studies
7. Christie McCullen, Sociology & Oakes College
8. Camilla Hawthorne, Sociology and Critical Race and Ethnic Studies
9. Catherine Carlstroem, Lecturer, Cowell College, Continuing
10. A.M. Darke, Assistant Professor, DANM and AGPM
11. Cynthia Ling Lee, Theater Arts
12. Zac Zimmer, Literature
13. Hunter Bivens, Literature
14. Lindsey Dillon, Assistant Professor, Sociology
15. Nidhi Mahajan, Assistant Professor, Anthropology
16. Vilashini Cooppan, Professor, Literature
17. Amanda Smith, Assistant Professor, Literature
18. Camilo Gomez-Rivas, Associate Professor, Literature
19. Anjuli Verma, Assistant Professor, Politics
20. Carla Freccero, Distinguished Professor, Literature & History of Consciousness
21. A. Laurie Palmer, Professor, Art
22. Norma Klahn, Prof Emerita, Literature
23. Rick Prelinger, Professor, Film & Digital Media
24. Madeleine Fairbain, Assistant Professor, Environmental Studies
25. Bob Majzler, Psychology and College 10
26. Linnea Beckett, College 10
27. Amy Mihyang Ginther, Assistant Professor, Theater Arts
28. Madhavi Murty, Assistant Professor, Feminist Studies
29. Cynthia Lewis, Professor, Education
30. Megan Thomas, Associate Professor, Politics
31. Maria Evangelatou, Associate Professor, HAVC
32. Maywa Montenegro, Assistant Professor, Environmental Studies
33. Megan Moodie, Associate Professor, Anthropology
34. Shelley Stamp, Professor, Film + Digital Media, UC Santa Cruz Presidential Chair
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36. Karen Bassi, Professor, Literature and Classics
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93. Mark Nash, Professor Arts Division
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173. Sharon Daniel, Professor, Film and Digital Media
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