To Chancellor Christ,

We, Graduate Students of UC Berkeley’s Department of Geography, wrote to you on February 20th, 2020 to express solidarity with our colleagues at UC Santa Cruz and to call upon your office to intervene in support of a just and necessary cost of living adjustment (COLA) for UCSC graduate students. In that letter, we expressed our particular concern regarding the intimidation and violence directed towards the striking graduate students at Santa Cruz. That letter received no reply. Last week, 54 of our colleagues at UCSC were summarily fired from their jobs. Our concern has turned to outrage.

Once again, University of California leadership has failed to live up to its obligations to graduate students, those at the core of its “fundamental missions to teaching, research and public service.” Like our fellow UC Berkeley Graduate Students in the Department of African American Studies, we fully recognize that the refusal of the University of California to listen to the graduate students at UCSC signifies a willful refusal to consider how inequalities of wealth and income are distributed unequally among graduate students. Such inequality undermines the University’s mission of public service and purported commitments to diversity. The University’s decisions — failing to support student workers, ignoring their legitimate demands for basic subsistence, and violently dismissing students engaged in labor politics — must be understood as raced, classed, and gendered in direct violation of the University’s stated commitment to “respect and inclusion.”

We will not stand by and watch as the rights and wellbeing of our colleagues and friends are violated. Once again, we write as part of a broader coalition of graduate students across UC Berkeley and in solidarity with movements emerging across other UC campuses to condemn the violence against our colleagues at UCSC. We are asking you, as Chancellor, to issue an immediate statement supporting the striking students and condemning the retaliatory actions against them. To not do so would only further prove the hypocrisy of a UC administration that claims to value graduate student labor while paying what amounts to poverty wages.

The actions against the UCSC students affect all of us. Our colleagues at UCSC must be reinstated immediately. University officials responsible for the punitive and discriminatory actions against our colleagues must be held accountable. We ask that you, as Chancellor, stand with us, and bring your authority to bear in a just resolution to the strike. Like our colleagues at other UC campuses, we will continue to work for a just outcome at UCSC and our own campus. We are increasingly convinced that this means nothing less than a system-wide COLA for all UC graduate students.

Signed,
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