FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UC-AFT CONDEMNS PRESIDENT NAPOLITANO’S THREAT TO FIRE STRIKING ACADEMIC STUDENT EMPLOYEES

University Council-American Federation of Teachers
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In her February 14, 2020, letter threatening to fire striking UC Santa Cruz academic student employees, UC President Janet Napolitano claims that “The University of California respects its labor unions and its unionized workers,” specifically pointing to “lecturers in our classrooms” as an example of these supposedly respected workers.

Our experiences as UC-AFT lecturers tell a different story. An employer that uses part-time appointments to avoid providing health insurance is not respectful. An employer that uses short-term, temporary contracts to force 1600 teaching faculty out of the classroom annually is not respectful. An employer that commits wage theft against an entire bargaining unit is not respectful. An employer that collectively bargains with what the president of the Council of UC Faculty Associations called “snideness and condescension, snark and disdain,” is not respectful.

UC admin’s hostility to its workers and unions is not a secret. Nor is it an accident. It is the direct result of policies and decisions made by President Napolitano, Director of Labor Relations Peter Chester, and the staff they supervise. When UC’s lead negotiator Nadine Fishel recently told our volunteer faculty bargaining team, “Nobody thinks this is a great job or a gig you would want to sign up for,” she revealed how much senior management executives at the UC really respect lecturers.

The struggle for a living wage is one that unites graduate students, teaching faculty, and many other workers whom UC admin has been content to exploit for far too long. The median annual salary for a UC lecturer is $19,900, meaning that more than half of UC-AFT faculty earn less than the graduate students who have walked out in protest. Our fights are the same fight.

UC-AFT will not be instrumentalized in the service of brutality against our colleagues and co-workers. We fully support UAW 2865’s demand to bargain over a COLA that adequately reflects the skyrocketing cost of living in California. We commend the courage of our siblings who are striving to make the University of California a just, fair, and public-minded employer. We condemn the violent militarization of the UCSC campus and abhor the threat to cut short the careers of hundreds of promising scholars who, by enrolling in graduate school at UC Santa Cruz, have proven themselves to be committed to serving UC undergraduate students and the public trust. We urge President Napolitano to fulfill the UC’s educational mission through immediate investment in the UC’s frontline educators.

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University Council-American Federation of Teachers represents approximately 6500 teaching faculty as well as nearly 400 librarians at all UC campuses. An affiliate of CFT and AFT, we are a member-driven union, dedicated to protecting, preserving, and promoting public higher education and cultivating a strong academic community through activism and advocacy.

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