

Faculty resources for the 2022 UAW 2865, UAW 5810, and SRU-UAW Strike

Fall 2022 [updated Dec 1]

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New resources as of Dec 1

[UC-AFT guidance on lecturer rights and responsibilities](#)

[CUCFA message on picking up struck work](#)

[CUCFA FAQ on grading](#)

[Original CUCFA FAQ](#)

[Analysis by UC Labor Law Professors on faculty rights to respect the picket line](#)

[Letter from faculty to undergraduates](#) on the strike and final grades

Sign: [Faculty not picking up struck ASE labor: Tallying missing grades](#)

Sign: [Faculty letter to the CA Legislature](#)

Sign: [UC Faculty pledge of solidarity with the strike](#)

Dear faculty colleagues,

48,000 Academic Student Employees at the University of California represented by three unions have authorized a strike action with a vote of more than 97.5% in support. Extended negotiations with the UC administration have resulted in almost 30 Unfair Labor Practice charges against the university, and their demands remain unmet. Scheduled to begin next Monday, this would be one of the largest higher education labor actions in history. More information can be found at <https://www.fairucnow.org/>

On November 14, graduate workers, student researchers, postdocs, and Academic Researchers will stop their paid work in an open-ended [Unfair Labor Practice \(ULP\) strike](#). The strike has now reached Week 3, and negotiations with the UC are ongoing.

For UC senate faculty, as nonunion employees of the university, honoring the picket line is a protected right and there is much that senate faculty can do to show their solidarity (see Q5-8, Q12). For UC-AFT Unit 18 lecturers, please note that unionized lecturers do not have the individual right to respect the picket line by withholding labor or canceling class under the current UC-AFT contract. We address what UC-AFT lecturers can do in Q11.

Below are answers to frequently asked questions, as well as “models” that can be adapted by both departments and individual faculty that can help implement mechanisms to ensure equity for faculty, graduate students, and undergraduates.

Q1: Why are graduate students striking?

Graduate students are striking because they cannot bargain seriously for a contract as long as the UC keeps committing ULPs. Many UC graduate students [pay over 50 percent of their wages](#) on rent. What remains is overstretched to pay for food, monthly utilities, medical care, transportation expenses, and childcare. Some students live in their cars. Many are food insecure. Others work excessive hours in multiple jobs on and off campus to make ends meet, sacrificing the time they should be able to devote to their teaching and research in the process. Most students go into debt because it is not possible on their stipends to pay for these basic means of subsistence. Graduate student living conditions affect their ability to teach and mentor students effectively, as well as complete their degrees, thereby degrading the quality of education at the UCs.

Q2: What are the academic workers' demands?

Full details are available [here](#). We summarize critical items below:

- **Fair Compensation:** A change in wages that would take graduate workers out of rent burden - including a \$54,000/year minimum salary for all grad workers; \$70,000/year minimum salary for Postdocs, and 14% salary increase for academic researchers, along with annual cost of living adjustments and experience-based increases. Compensation that does not match the cost of living are pushing scholars out of academia. [Read UAW's housing research paper here](#).
- **Support for Parents & Families:** To support and retain parent-workers and promote gender equity at UC, UAW workers demand \$2000/month childcare reimbursements; full tuition subsidies at UC-affiliated childcare programs, dependent healthcare, and expanded paid parental and family leave.
- **Disability Justice:** That requests for access needs be met in a timely manner; and that workplace materials such as technology and software, and online access options, be fully accessible.
- **International Scholars and Immigrant Support:** That the UC cover the cost of Non-residential Supplemental Tuition (NRST), which places an unfair burden on student workers, as well as the cost of visas and fees currently required for international students, such as the SEVIS fee.
- **Respectful Work Environment:** Makes abusive conduct and bullying a violation of the contract, guaranteeing: clear timelines to investigate and resolve abusive conduct; a strong definition of abusive conduct; worker-centered protections; and secure protections that prevent UC from changing definitions of resolution procedures unilaterally. [All four bargaining units have reached agreement on this bargaining item]

Q3: How much are grad students at UC paid?

As you are no doubt aware, graduate student funding varies a great deal based on department and program year and from student to student. Some students are able to find on-campus jobs and intra- and extramural fellowships to supplement their guaranteed funding. Most students combine funding from multiple sources in a given academic year. Many have trouble finding summer employment on campus and summer support is rarely included in guaranteed funding packages. Forms of employment are particularly limited for graduate international students, who cannot work beyond 50% of their time and cannot work outside the university. Additionally, many students do not conform to the unspoken assumption underlying their compensation that graduate students are young, healthy, able-bodied, single, childless, and free of other financial responsibilities. You may want to talk to your graduate students directly about their specific compensation and financial challenges.

This academic year, the [pretax salaries](#) for common graduate student positions are:

- Teaching Assistant: \$2,583 per month, or \$23,246 per year (50 percent appointment, nine months)
- Teaching Associate: \$2,706 per month, or \$24,355 per year (Step 1, 50 percent appointment, nine months)
- Graduate Student Researcher: \$1,834 per month, or \$22,005 per year (Step 1, 50 percent appointment, twelve months)

These rates are standard across all UC campuses, regardless of local cost of living.

Q4: What does a strike mean?

Graduate students who choose to go on strike will stop all work enumerated in their contracts. All work for the university, such as teaching, holding sections, grading, office hours, sitting on faculty committees, etc. will stop. The important thing to keep in mind is that this is a protected Unfair Labor Practice strike, and as such, is lawful under the Higher Education Employment Relations Act. Academic student employees are protected from being terminated or disciplined for participating in the strike, and faculty should respect academic workers' right to strike.

Q5: Will immigrant and international graduate students' visas be in jeopardy if they strike?

No. See the UAW 2865 [strike FAQ for immigrant and international workers](#).

Q6: As a senate faculty member, do I have a right to respect academic workers' picket line and cancel classes to show my solidarity with the striking students?

Faculty members are legally obligated to respect the right of workers to strike, and should not

retaliate against or seek disclosure of striking workers under any circumstances. [For a detailed analysis, read [this analysis](#) authored by UC labor law professors]

In addition, All university employees covered under HEERA, including all Senate faculty, even department chairs or heads of similar academic units or programs, are non-managerial and so have the right to respect a picket line established by other university employees. (for details see Government Code Section 3580.3). This right is acknowledged in the materials that UCOP is currently circulating: "unrepresented non-managerial employees also have a protected right to honor a picket line and/or engage in a sympathy strike" (pg 3 of their FAQ and Guidance). Senate faculty are not subject to a "no strike" clause and so maintain their right to honor a picket line. University employees also have individual free speech rights that provide additional protections.

Q7: Isn't respecting the picket line a violation of the Faculty Code of Conduct?

No, [CUCFA](#) does not understand the Faculty Code of Conduct as prohibiting conduct protected under HEERA, including respecting a picket line. The Faculty Code of Conduct furthermore recognizes the constitutionally protected rights of Senate faculty to free expression.

Q8: Do I need to tell someone if I am choosing to respect the picket line?

It may be appropriate to inform your department chair if you want to make clear that you will be respecting the picket line. Still, you are under no legal obligation to affirmatively notify the university. If you are asked whether you will be honoring the picket line, you are not obligated to respond, but if you decide to answer, you should respond truthfully.

Q9: What do I tell my undergraduate students?

Do talk to your undergraduate classes about the strike: why it's happening, why support for and solidarity with the graduate students is important, and what they can do to show their support. One way to do so is to [use this teach-in](#) we have created for educating undergraduates about the strike. Assure them that their grades for work completed thus far have not been deleted. Be straightforward with your students about the uncertainty of this situation. Tell them that the cleanest way for this all to resolve is for the UC administration to resolve the Unfair Labor Practice lawsuits and stop committing more Unfair Labor Practices —and student and faculty support is key in that.

Q10: What about final grades?

The strike is ongoing in Week 10 of the quarter, and while we do not yet know whether it will continue into finals week, it will be helpful to prepare for this possibility and to figure out how

faculty who support the strike can best support the workers' demands. At this point, faculty can best be in solidarity by pledging to withhold grade submission until the strike ends, and can do so by [signing this letter](#). Please also see this [CUCFA FAQ on grading](#) for more detailed guidance.

Q11: What can I do if I am a UC-AFT Unit 18 lecturer?

Non-tenure track UC-AFT faculty have a no-strike clause in their contract. Wherever possible, UC-AFT faculty should not be making adjustments to their courses to allow the full impact of the strike to be felt. UC-AFT members should not attend or participate in any unassigned university activities during the strike. Assigned duties, in most cases, are limited to classes and office hours. Participation in nearly all other activities on campus (seminars, talks, department meetings, etc.) is unnecessarily crossing the picket line. UC-AFT recommends spending this time on the picket line instead! Most crucially, UC-AFT suggests following the guidance on rights and responsibilities at this link: <https://ucaft.org/content/uaw-strike-solidarity-guidance>

If you've been asked to assume any new work before or during the strike, [please complete this form](#).

Q12: How can I as a faculty member support the strike?

The UAW 2865 leadership across the University of California system defines the picket line as stopping *all* work for the university. For senate faculty, honoring the picket line means no classes, lectures, discussions, office hours, grading, serving on committees, or preparing course materials for the duration of the strike. [Here is an auto-reply](#) you can add to your email signature. Below, we lay out ways that you can implement withdrawing your labor in solidarity with UAW 2865, SRU-UAW, and UAW 5810.

1. Respect workers' right to strike. The strike is an Unfair Labor Practices strike and is protected by the National Labor Relations Act. Workers have a protected right to strike. Senate faculty should, as a baseline, respect academic workers' right to strike and be clear that we understand why they are not doing these duties, conveying that we respect their choice. This includes respecting your TAs' decisions to stop teaching discussion sections; hold office hours; attend lectures, input grades, and other TA responsibilities. This also includes respecting the right of Research Assistants to withdraw their labor from research responsibilities, and any other forms of paid work by UAW 2865, UAW 5810, and SRU-UAW workers.
2. Canceling undergraduate lectures and assignments. Senate faculty have the HEERA-protected right to respect a picket line. In solidarity with the strike, the

complete stoppage of all class activity, including classes without TAs, amplifies the essential role played by TAs in the classroom. UAW 2865 workers argue that this step is essential to creating the maximum disruption to undergraduate instruction that is key to an effective strike. This also includes online lectures and classes. Faculty solidarity in the form of canceled lectures were key to the success of graduate student workers in the recent [Columbia University strike](#).

3. Canceling graded assignments that are due during the duration of the strike. Graduate workers will be withdrawing their labor from all paid work during the strike, and this includes grading. The union will hold a vote to renew the strike every week, which will continue if the majority of workers in the respective bargaining units vote to continue their strike. We therefore do not yet know whether final grades will be affected. In the meantime, however, UAW 2865 workers have asked us to respect the picket line by canceling all graded assignments that are due during the duration of the strike. Changing assignments or grading policies does not achieve the aim of registering maximum disruption to the university's functioning, as it circumvents the impact of struck labor.
 - a. Instructors might cancel graded assignments in the following possible ways: cancel assignments that require grading for the duration of the strike; leave assignments ungraded; explain to students why their learning has been disrupted. The point of the strike is to convey how essential graduate workers are to the quality of undergraduate education. As such, UAW 2865 workers ask that we not undertake struck labor or seek to sidestep grading labor by altering graded assignments through options such as MCQ or peer-reviewed grading. Instead, we recommend educating your undergraduate students about the importance of TA labor to their learning, and telling undergraduate students how the university administration's refusal to bargain in good faith results in a decrease in their educational quality. The best way to be in solidarity with graduate workers *is to make clear that graduate students have the right to strike, are essential to the functioning of the university, and that the university administration's refusal to meet their basic demands is responsible for disruption to undergraduate learning.*
4. [Pledge to withhold grade submission](#) until the strike has ended.
5. Refuse to take on the labor of TAs and RAs. Taking on the responsibilities of TAs—including teaching section or grading assignments—undermines the power of TAs' collective withdrawal of labor. Under HEERA, faculty do not need to volunteer

to perform struck work that is outside our customary duties. One of the most important ways we can be in solidarity with striking workers is to not diminish the impact of their absence by volunteering to do the work they are withholding. Though it may seem helpful to fill a gap left when someone is out on strike, it undermines the action and can lead to conflict and resentment. See the [CUCFA FAQ](#), question 8, for more details.

6. Refuse retaliation and disclosure. This is a baseline expectation for faculty solidarity, since the strike is lawfully protected and faculty in supervisory positions are legally obligated to not interfere in workers' right to organize and strike. By doing so, you pledge that you will not penalize graduate students in any way for engaging in this strike; you will not disclose the name of striking Teaching Assistants to the university administration, nor will you endorse any disciplinary measures directed at graduate students who have participated in the strike.

We further *encourage* the following additional actions to stand in solidarity with TAs, tutors and readers:

7. Show up at the picket line! Academic workers will be on the picket line every day from 8am-6pm. You can find the location of the picket line on your respective campuses [here](#).
8. Communicate the reasons behind the strike to undergraduates, staff and faculty members and give updates to undergraduate students throughout the strike. Faculty should reiterate ASEs' right to strike and their reasons for striking to students and colleagues.
9. Hold a teach-in. We encourage instructors to hold a teach-in about why classes have been canceled. We have provided a sample teach in [here](#), which includes a powerpoint as well as teaching notes. The teach in may communicate how strikes are a tool for workers, the various ways that graduate students are integral to their education and the university's mission at large, and why graduate students exercising their rights as workers to participate in labor actions such as a strike benefits their undergraduate education overall
10. Sign this [Faculty letter to the CA Legislature](#)

11. Send a department letter of solidarity to the Office of the Chancellor. For example, the History Department at UCSB sent the [following resolution](#) to Chancellor Yang on Oct. 19 in solidarity with graduate students.
12. [Sign the CUCFA petition to register your public support of the strike.](#)
13. [Sign this pledge saying that you will respect the picket line](#) by stopping your work for the university in solidarity with striking workers
14. Ask UCOP to bargain in good faith. Encouraging undergraduate students to have their parents and/or guardians contact your chancellor's office and ask that he direct the UC Office of the President to bargain in good faith with the UAW bargaining teams.
15. [Contribute to the strike fund](#)
16. Canceling graduate seminars or holding them on the picket line. The graduate workers' union, UAW2865, has not asked for this show of support, since labor unions fall on the "student" side of the student/worker line. However, noting that many graduate workers will be involved in organizing on the picket line and may be very busy during the strike, as faculty, we might consider holding lectures on the picket line or canceling graduate seminars in support of the strike. Faculty who choose such actions are individually responsible for notifying their department chairs before choosing their course of action.

Q13: Should we be taking department-wide positions?

A department statement of solidarity will send a clear message that staff and faculty support graduate student workers and their demands for a contract. Department chairs may wish to hold a meeting and motion for a departmental vote on a department-wide position, such as collectively pledging non-disclosure, or collectively respecting all the actions that UAW 2865 has defined as essential to honoring the picket line. If faculty do not have consensus on taking a department-wide position, we suggest providing them with this FAQ and respecting faculty's individual decisions to honor the picket line.

We close with the graduate student demands: raising ASE salaries to bring them in line with the cost of living in California; an increase in benefits and childcare reimbursements for workers with children and dependents; visa and testing remissions for international student workers, and a safe and inclusive workplace environment. We wish them well in their endeavors.

Attachments:

[Sample letter to undergraduates on the strike and final grades](#)

Sample [Department solidarity statement](#)

[Sign the CUCFA petition in support of graduate workers](#)

[Add your signature to the faculty pledge of solidarity](#)

[2022 Powerpoint teach-in on the strike](#)