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February 14, 2020

An Open Letter to Faculty, Staff and Students at UC Santa Cruz

Dear Faculty, Staff and Students:

The University of California respects its labor unions and its unionized workers. They provide valuable services throughout the University, from gardening and food service on our campuses to patient care in our hospitals to lecturers in our classrooms. The obligations between the University and its unions are negotiated and memorialized systemwide in collective bargaining agreements, which must be voted on and ratified by the union membership. With respect to the collective bargaining agreement between the University and Academic Student Employee - Teaching Assistants (TAs) and their union, the United Auto Workers (UAW), the TAs received the following benefits:

- A waiver of tuition, plus a \$300 campus fee remission
- 3% annual wage increases (in line with other University employees)
- A child care subsidy of \$3,300 per year (unique to TAs)
- A one-time signing bonus
- A complete remission of any health care premiums

In exchange for these guaranteed benefits, the University received a contractual promise that the TAs would not strike while the collective bargaining agreement was in effect through June 30, 2022.

Consequently, the wildcat strike by UC Santa Cruz TAs, where a number of TAs have withheld or deleted fall grades and are refusing to teach classes, is unauthorized and in direct violation of the existing collective bargaining agreement. The striking TAs have asked whether the University would either re-open the agreement or negotiate a separate side letter with them to provide a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) over and above the wage increase already in the agreement to account for the high cost of housing in Santa Cruz.

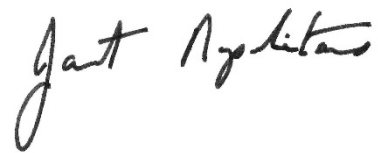
The University will not re-open the agreement or negotiate a separate side-letter. To accede to the demands of a group of employees engaged in an unauthorized wildcat strike would undercut the very foundation of an agreement negotiated in good faith by the UAW and ratified by thousands of members across the system.

We are sympathetic to the high cost of housing in Santa Cruz and the pressure this puts on TAs, but a wildcat strike is not the way to get relief. Chancellor Larive has already proposed two measures to help graduate students: a \$2,500 need-based housing fellowship; and for doctoral students a 5-year, funding program at the minimum support level of a 50 percent teaching assistantship. We can work together to persuade our legislators in Sacramento to support the University's request for more graduate student support. We could also work together to develop other legislative proposals to speed the construction of student housing.

However, holding undergraduate grades hostage and refusing to carry out contracted teaching responsibilities is the wrong way to go. Therefore, participation in the wildcat strike will have consequences, up to and including the termination of existing employment at the University.

It should not come to this. We urge the striking TAs to turn in their grades and return to the classroom. The TAs must honor their side of the bargain, just as the University must honor its commitments. The wildcat strike must come to an end.

Yours very truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janet Napolitano". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

Janet Napolitano
President