

Hello everyone! My name is Dora Rasch. I'm a fourth year Ecology and Evolution and Politics double major, and I serve as the Student Union Assembly's Vice President of Academic Affairs.

My name is Jimmy Gomez, I am a senior triple majoring in MCD Biology, Education, and Psychology, and serve as the Student Union Assembly Undergraduate President. We appreciate the opportunity to speak today.

We want to commence by addressing the most critical matter at hand: the Student Union Assembly stands in solidarity with the striking graduate student population at UCSC, and UC system-wide. Graduate students are an integral part of education at UCSC; without them, undergraduate education would suffer immensely. I can personally say that graduate students have contributed to my education at least as much as my professors have, in the form of hands-on help, mentorship, personal connection, career guidance/development, and much more - they are an enormous part of my academic experience. On top of that, I can confidently say that every one of my TAs has been very stressed. Graduate students need adequate support to do their jobs, and undergraduate education would be improved unequivocally if our TAs were not rent-burdened, had access to child care, and had their disability justice needs met. We know many of you agree, but we thought it was important to share the undergraduate student government's official stance on supporting the ongoing [UAW strike](#).

We also want to bring attention to the fact that the strike has impacted undergraduate studies deeply these past two weeks. Though many instructors have modified their courses to accommodate current restraints, students have still lost many vital tools in their education - they have not been able to attend the sections that give them time to understand class material with their TAs, they have not been able to meet with their tutors, many are unable to access their regular study spaces, and as a result, many are concerned about preparing for their finals. Along with that, transportation accessibility is limited and inconsistent - as you all know, metro service has been limited, and vital services such as the westside connector shuttle have been suspended. Many necessary assessments, such as finals and laboratory practicums, are scheduled to be held in person, and many students rely on currently unreliable or inaccessible public transit. These impacts are important, and we would like you to consider them.

We ask faculty to keep the current disruptions to undergraduates' ability to succeed academically in mind and to extend compassion and flexibility whenever possible as the quarter comes to a close. We would also like to thank the many faculty members who have been working extra to make their classes and finals accessible and have been going above and beyond to meet their students where they are. We are grateful for all of your commitment to undergraduate education.

Along with that, The Student Union Assembly has demands for the Academic Senate to mitigate these stresses.

First, the Academic Senate should extend the deadline to finish incomplete grades till the end of the Spring 2023 quarter. Many students no longer take courses on the same terms they originally were enrolled in and have been profoundly disrupted by the strike. The strike will possibly continue into the winter quarter, which means hundreds of students will have a similar difficulty with their Winter classes. Many students will have to take incompletes this quarter, and will require additional time to complete coursework without the usual academic support and resources they have access to and rely on.

Second, we ask that the Academic senate extend the pass/no pass deadline to the end of week ten. This would be a lifeline to students who have found that they could not succeed in their courses in the last two weeks of the quarter due to disruptions from the strike. We also ask that the courses with a pass/no pass deadline would not be counted towards the current 25% threshold this quarter.

Third, we ask that the Senate consider making an exception to the requirement that undergraduate courses must have final examinations this quarter, as they did in Spring 2020. If instructors believe they can evaluate students based on work completed and their department approves, allowing instructors to follow, their best judgment will benefit undergraduates struggling due to the strike's consequences. We are not asking that the Senate suspend finals entirely, but simply allow instructors to make that decision themselves.

We want to acknowledge that the consequences of the UAW strike are not as severe as the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, but we would also like to emphasize that the students who are struggling right now are our most vulnerable students: those who rely on public transit, and those who have been utilizing academic support resources and their TAs to succeed in their courses. We ask that you keep these students in mind and seek a way to accommodate them as long as the strike continues.

Separately, Academic retention is a philosophy the UC system believes in and thrives to accomplish, and we must acknowledge the ongoing housing crisis in Santa Cruz. **Therefore, the Academic Senate should prioritize and execute a seamless support network with the Dean of Students Office to address housing insecurity as a hindering barrier to academic success.** Also, for administration and faculty to acknowledge the social repercussions such as students continuing to experience homelessness and how decisions made inside classrooms translate to physical, mental, and emotional distress; and for the academic senate to consider basic needs when formulating policies.

Lastly, we would like to call on the Senate to compose a cohesive remote/hybrid course modality policy. The approval policy and process thus far has been confusing, ever changing, difficult to navigate, and above all, *temporary*, leaving faculty and students with courses whose modality has been regulated with last second decisions. We urge that the Senate does what it must to begin writing this policy, and of course that **this effort includes student representatives. We also ask that both students' and instructors' ability to succeed in or teach a course (and how they may be impacted by the housing crisis, classroom space limitations, or other such barriers) be taken into consideration when this policy is being written,** whether as part of pedagogical considerations or as a consideration of its own. We are so thankful for the Senate's continued commitment to working out this complex issue (I know no step of this has been easy), and we look forward to working together to find a long term solution.

I want to end by thanking the senate for the relationship we have with you. There are currently 14 students on Senate committees! Student voices being included in policy and decision making with the Senate is so essential, and we're very thankful to be involved. Student Involvement has been growing this quarter, and after an unusual start of the year for the SUA, the Student Academic Senate will convene next quarter - which I'm very excited for!

As a student, I appreciate you all so much. As a student leader, being a part of the Senate is my favorite part of my job. Thank you for the chance to speak on behalf of the student body today, and thank you for your continued support towards undergraduate students.

From,
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