

UC Student-Workers Union, UAW Local 2865



--For Immediate Release--

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UC BERKELEY STUDENTS OCCUPY RESIDENTIAL SERVICES OFFICE, DEMANDING RENT FREEZE & AFFORDABLE HOUSING AT UC BERKELEY

BERKELEY, CA—Tenants of UC-Owned housing facilities are currently occupying the offices of David Surratt, Vice Chancellor of Residential and Student Service Programs (RSSP), following a rally on UC Berkeley's Sproul Plaza at 12pm May 3. Protesters are demanding that UC Berkeley immediately impose a freeze on rent at UC housing complexes, remove discriminatory language from lease agreements across UC, and bargain with the Student-Workers Union to establish affordable housing across the UC system.

The protest at Berkeley was sparked by a 3.5-6% rent hike recently announced at UC Berkeley housing complexes, new parking fees that will cost some families an additional \$370+ dollars per month, and the introduction of discriminatory language in lease agreements at UC housing complexes. The new lease language proposed to allow UC to unilaterally evict any resident who is suffering from a vaguely defined mental health crisis. Following mass mobilizations by residents – with support from the UC Student-Workers Union (UAW Local 2865) – this clause is being removed from Berkeley housing contracts. But the clause remains in housing contracts at other UC campuses, and among other goals, the protest on May 3rd seeks to pressure the UC to remove this language from all UC housing contracts.

The vast majority of graduate students at UC are rent-burdened, as defined by the federal government (paying 30% or more of their income in rent). The Student-Workers Union is currently in contract negotiations with the UC administration, and among their bargaining goals is a demand for living wages and access to affordable housing. So far, UC has made no commitments to address the housing burden and economic precarity facing students and workers on campuses.

The noon rally was attended by several hundred students, families, and allies among the faculty and staff. Speakers included family housing residents, student workers at UC, and Gayle McLaughlin, candidate for Lieutenant Governor of California and former two-term Mayor of Richmond, CA.

At 1pm, when the rally ended, students led a march to the offices of David Surratt, Vice Chancellor of RSSP, in order to present a letter outlining their demands for “real action from the UC administration to guarantee genuinely affordable housing for students and worker.” The march was met with UCPD and closed doors, and students commenced a sit-in after delivering the letter.

The letter particularly takes issue with the characterization of UC Housing as a “business.” In response to a petition with over 300 signatures, in which residents and student-workers called for an immediate rollback of rent and parking fee increases, the RSSP responded that UC housing is a business, and these rent and parking fee increases are necessary business expenses.

The letter states, *“Let us be clear: UC is a public institution, not a business. Housing should be a social right for all UC student-tenants, not a way for UC to extract ever-greater sums from student-workers subsisting*

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on poverty wages. Having denied all of our requests for a rent freeze, you have left us with no choice but to sit-in your office today to demand change. We will continue to take action until all students and workers have access to genuinely affordable housing. We demand that the UC administration move to immediately impose a freeze on rent and parking fees at UC housing complexes, remove discriminatory language from lease agreements across UC, and bargain with the Student-Workers Union to establish affordable housing across the UC system.”

The demands presented compliment [demands](#) advanced by the UC Student-Workers Union in its #UCForAll Contract Bargaining campaign. In its bargaining goals, the Union representing more than 17,000 undergraduate and graduate student-workers at the systemwide University of California has called upon the UC to create new housing for student-workers that is both affordable and will not result in displacement. While plans are underway to expand the amount of campus housing on UC campuses, current plans indicate that the units will be offered at “market rate,” failing to acknowledge the struggle of workers and their families to meet their cost-of-living expenses. The Union is also concerned that the current plans do not strive to mitigate the University’s impact on the inflation of living expenses in unjustly costly housing markets.

Union member and Ph.D. student Eric Peterson said, *“Maintaining the affordability of current student-worker housing and ensuring all future development is affordable is essential to ensuring a diverse student body and a UC for all.”*

UC student leaders and workers are available for interviews.

WHAT: Occupation of Residential and Student Services office
WHO: Student-workers and residents of UC Housing complexes
WHEN: Ongoing May 3, 1pm -)
WHERE: Office of the Assistant Vice Chancellor, Residential and Student Services Building
2610 Channing Way, 4th Floor, Berkeley, CA 94720

* The full list of the UC Student-Workers Union goals for bargaining is available at:

<http://www.uaw2865.org/wp-content/uploads/UAW-2865-Final-2018-Bargaining-Goals-for-Ratification.pdf>

This and previous press releases are available at: <http://www.uaw2865.org/current-campaigns/for-the-press-2/>

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