

Dr. Michael Drake
President, University of California
Office of the President
1111 Franklin Street
Oakland, CA 94607

November 29, 2022

President Drake,

UC-AFT represents 6,500 Non-Senate Faculty and 350 Librarians at the ten campuses of the University of California; as such, we are responsible for teaching almost half of all undergraduate instruction at the UC. Twenty-five percent of our lecturers teach full time, and half of our lecturers teach fifty percent time or more. Most departments and programs across the UC rely on Unit 18 lecturers to teach large introductory level courses that rely heavily on graduate student grading and instruction. This experience gives us unparalleled insight into how undergraduate instruction at the UC has been impacted by the ongoing strike of our fellow academic workers represented by the UAW.

Campus administrators have been telling Unit 18 lecturers to consult with their union regarding how to continue our instruction without the essential help of GSIs in our classes. The many questions being directed to UC-AFT leadership have made apparent the university's lack of awareness and understanding of how this strike is affecting its teaching faculty. Many of the administrators and supervisors who are making these recommendations are so far removed from the classroom, they don't recognize the implications for our students. The suggested solutions being offered not only are inadequate, but also often instruct our members to violate provisions of our contract. Likewise, these recommendations are not fair to our undergraduate students, who depend on us to provide them with a consistent and high-quality education. The university has created an impossible situation for its students and teaching faculty and the only solution to these problems is to settle the strike now.

Our members in the sciences supervise laboratory and field work based courses where a majority of instructional hours are taught by UAW-represented academic workers. Lecturers in Music, Theatre and Dance and Visual Arts departments have performance based assessments that cannot continue in the absence of graduate students and instructors. Many of the UC's largest introductory level courses are taught by lecturers who cannot make up the volume of grading work left by legally striking graders and teaching assistants. These courses often depend on TAs to proctor and grade final exams. Unit 18 lecturers may not have the ability to evaluate student performance in discussion sections that they have not and do not teach.

Recommendations offered to UC teaching faculty about how to ensure “continuity of instruction” suggest that our members take on additional work and/or duties that would be in violation of our Unit 18 contract. As we stated in [our Nov. 10th letter to Letitia Silas](#), UC-AFT objects to the transfer of any work from UAW members to UC-AFT members. Suggestions that we modify pedagogy, create new assignments, or remove exams would be asking lecturers to replace the work of our fellow academic workers and/or it would require an increase in our workload above the normal workload required for a course. Under Article 24 of our Unit 18 MOU, any increase in work must be compensated or mitigated with a modification so as not to increase workload for a specific course, and any additional assigned duties and/or changes of workload to an assigned course can only be made with a minimum of 30 days written notice to the Unit 18 member and/or UC-AFT. Unit 18 faculty bore the brunt of the instructional workload increase during the COVID-19 pandemic, enduring significant mental and physical health issues as a result, and we are resolved not to go through that again. We have already made our position clear to your administration: we will use every available clause in our contracts to ensure that our members are not exploited as replacement workers for our striking UAW colleagues.

In the past two weeks, Unit 18 lecturers have been talking with our students who have voiced fears that their grades will be negatively impacted by the disruptions of the strike. Many of us teach crucial introductory courses that students rely on as prerequisites and graduation requirements and we work closely with first-generation, underrepresented, and transfer students who have already had their education disrupted by the pandemic. Our students depend on their grades to access financial aid, to earn scholarships and awards, to maintain their benefits as veterans and service members, and to support their applications to graduate school. While we share the university’s concern for these students, the recommendations being offered to Unit 18 faculty violate our academic integrity and responsibilities. To grade our students on a small portion of already-completed assignments would not reflect their work in their discussion sections and labs throughout the term, which we did not observe. Any encouragement by the administration to relax standards or modify pedagogy in order to ensure “continuity of instruction” could cause us to violate Article 3 of our contract that obligates our faculty to maintain and uphold strict measures of academic responsibility. Giving incompletes, or NG’s, only postpones the inevitable: for many Unit 18 lecturers, it will be impossible to give their students fair and full assessments this fall term.

The university’s guidance and proposed mitigations thus far have fallen woefully short and time is running out. The academic term is ending, and our students are exceedingly concerned about missing final review sessions, final week presentations and projects, final exams, and most importantly, final grades. Our members and their students need you to demonstrate your leadership. We urge you to bring an end to bad faith bargaining, end the university’s unfair labor practices, and settle the UAW contracts immediately.

Sincerely,



Katie Rodger, UC-AFT 1474 President
On behalf of UC-AFT leaders

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CC:

Letitia Silas, Executive Director, UC Labor Relations

Nadine Fishel, Associate Director, UC Labor Relations

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