

UCLA Department of Art Faculty
Statement of Support for UC Graduate Student Workers
October 17, 2022

The faculty of the Department of Art calls upon the University of California to put into practice its stated commitment to a fair and equitable UC as it negotiates a new contract with its graduate student workers. Graduate student workers are essential to the fulfillment of the university's three institutional responsibilities of education, research, and public service. They are the pillars of excellence as well as of equity, diversity, and inclusion at UCLA and across the UC system. They are essential to our department's status as the top graduate Art program" in the United States and to UCLA's status as the top public university in the US.

It is unconscionable that, despite their essential contributions, graduate student workers at UCLA face significant economic burdens and often struggle to make ends meet. Living in one of the most expensive counties in the United States, many face housing, food, and basic needs insecurity, providing ample evidence that their compensation does not amount to a living wage. Adding to the already high costs of attending UCLA, our graduate students also are subject to professional degree supplemental tuition fees, which our department was forced to adopt during a past financial crisis. Many of our students are forced to seek employment off-campus in addition to their TAs in order to cover their costs. These financial burdens and stresses negatively impact the capacity of our graduate students to contribute to the campus community and undermine their educational experiences. That these burdens disproportionately fall on students already subject to systemic oppression belies the university's commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.

As a faculty, we unanimously support graduate student workers' demands for salary increases, public transit and childcare support, job security, and a more equitable approach to addressing disability needs. Adequate and equitable support for our graduate student workers is essential to fulfilling the mission and values of UCLA and UC and to maintaining the excellence that has lifted our department and campus to the top of national rankings. We urge UC to hold justice and equity as guiding principles in their negotiations with graduate student workers and to agree to a contract that will provide levels of compensation and support that are fully commensurable with the contributions these workers make to our campus communities.