

# Ad Astra

*A newsletter by and for UC Astrophysics Graduate Students*

April 3, 2020

## COLA: Cost of Living Adjustment



On Sunday, December 8, 2019, hundreds of UCSC graduate student workers voted to strike in demand of a cost of living adjustment (COLA). Many graduate students in Santa Cruz and across the state are severely rent-burdened, spending more than 50% of their paychecks on rent. What began as a TA grading strike, where final grades for Fall Quarter were not being submitted to the registrar, escalated in February to a full teaching strike with a picket line at the base of the UCSC campus held for four weeks. Thousands of graduate students, undergraduates, staff, lecturers, and faculty joined in on the picketing, and city buses refused to cross into campus. On multiple occasions the entrance to campus was blocked and classes

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were cancelled by the administration. There was heavy police presence from across the Bay Area at the picket line, often in full riot gear, and costing ~\$300,000 per day, according to the Executive Vice Chancellor. This has resulted in 18 people being arrested, some of which sustained physical injuries. Over 80 UCSC fall TAs (~10% of UCSC TAs) have been fired from their TA appointment in the Spring or barred from taking a TA position, effectively leaving some of them without the means to remain in their program or, for international students, in the country. The movement has extended to other campuses, and as of the writing of this post, UC Santa Barbara, UC Davis, and UC San Diego are all on strike as well, and UC Berkeley has voted to strike, with others likely to follow given that all 10 UC campuses have had COLA actions of their own. Our statewide union, UAW 2865, has filed Unfair Labor Practice (ULP) grievances against the university because they “refused to meet and confer” with the union to negotiate a COLA, and for “unlawful actions regarding the termination and further acts of discipline” on the UCSC workers. They also drafted a [new bargaining framework](#) with a three-step proposal to eliminate rent burden, including a monthly housing stipend. The Bargaining Team has called for a ULP UC-wide strike vote to occur in early April if there are enough [pledges](#). [Here](#) are some FAQs about the ULP Strike and COLA .

Follow along with the COLA movement at your campus:

UCB: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Website](#)

UCR: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

UCD: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Website](#)

UCSB: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Website](#)

UCI: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

UCSC: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#) | [Website](#)

UCLA: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

UCSD: [Twitter](#) | [Instagram](#)

UCM: [Twitter](#)

UCSF: [Twitter](#)

If you are willing and able, you can [donate to the strike fund](#) to help the fired students.



Courtesy of University of California, Santa Cruz graduate students



Strike at UC Santa Barbara

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## **General Announcements:**

- If you are not on our Slack workspace and would like to be, please email Sunil Simha (shassans@ucsc.edu) .
- If you have feedback about the newsletter, please email Victoria Strait ([vbstrait@ucdavis.edu](mailto:vbstrait@ucdavis.edu)).
- **In the next newsletter we will include papers that grad students are a part of and proud of, regardless of author number.**

## **First Author Papers by UC Grad Students in 2019:**

1. Kevin Andrade (**UCI**)- [Detecting dark matter cores in galaxy clusters with strong lensing](#)
2. Mirek Brandt (**UCSB**)- [Automatic echelle spectrograph wavelength calibration](#)
3. Jared Goldberg (**UCSB**)- *A Massive Star's Dying Breaths: Pulsating Red Supergiants and Their Resulting Type IIP Supernovae* (submitted to ApJ, will post on arxiv when accepted)
4. Erica Gonzales (**UCSC**) - The TRENDS High-contrast Imaging Survey. VIII. Compendium of Benchmark Objects
5. Tsang Keung (TK) Chan, (recently graduated, **UCSD**)- [Cosmic ray feedback in the FIRE simulations: constraining cosmic ray propagation with GeV  \$\gamma\$ -ray emission](#)
6. Yifei Luo (**UCSC**)- [Structural and Stellar Population Properties vs. Bulge Types in Sloan Digital Sky Survey Central Galaxies](#)
7. Isaiah Santistevan (**UCD**)- [Growing Pains: The Formation Times and Building Blocks of Milky Way-mass Galaxies in the FIRE Simulations](#)

## **Department News:**

- **Irvine** is officially creating a separate Astronomy/Astrophysics PhD track. This will start with next year's incoming class. These students will have different required classes, a different qualifier exam, etc. A new class has been created for this which is a grad level intro to astronomy for those students who focused on a different subject in undergrad but switched to astro for grad.
- Also at **Irvine**, the physics qualifier exam has been changed. Previously, everyone had to take and pass the qualifier exam in classical mech., stat. mech, quantum, and E&M. Now, if students receive a grade of A- or higher, they do not have to take that subject's qualifier exam.

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## Upcoming Local Events:

- **UC Davis:**
  - [Astronomy on Tap Davis](#), every third Thursday at Sudwerk Brewing. Patty Bolan (UCD) and Pratik Gandhi (UCD) are the new co-organisers for Astronomy on Tap, Davis - they are looking to continue bringing in exciting new speakers, and also expand it to the greater Sacramento area.
- **UC Santa Barbara:**
  - Astronomy on Tap Santa Barbara: The first Wednesday of every month at M8RX Santa Barbara. Contact Dr. Andy Howell (ahowell@lco.global) if you are interested in speaking.
- **UC San Diego:**
  - San Diego EXPO Day 2020: Graduate students will present hands-on science demos for the public. March 7, 2020.
- **UC Santa Cruz:**
  - Astronomy on Tap the first Thursday of every month @ Santa Cruz Mountain Brewing.

## Attendees at Upcoming Conferences:

- ~~**Massive Stars Near and Far**~~ (IAU Symposium 361—Ireland, May 2020) **POSTPONED**
  - William Schultz and Jared Goldberg (UCSB)
- ~~**TMT Early Career Initiative (TECI) workshop**~~ (Victoria, B.C. May 2020) **CANCELLED**
  - Victoria Strait, Jessie Hirtenstein (UCD)

## Other braggables:

- Diversity in Physics (DIP) at **UCD** put on our first Imposter Syndrome and Applying to Grad school workshops this fall. They were each about 2 hours long and were well attended by undergrad and grad students, and some post docs.
- Respect is Part of Research ran a two-day workshop at **UC Berkeley** focused on teaching grads how to start peer-led climate workshops at their home institutions. Respect is Part of Research focuses on sexual violence / sexual harassment (SVSH) prevention training, but also incorporates some discussion of broader climate issues as well as facilitated small-group discussions of case studies. The workshop satisfies the UC Title IX SVSH training requirements and is (hopefully!) easily portable to other UC institutions. For more info, check out [respectispartofresearch.com](http://respectispartofresearch.com) or email Wren Suess at [suess@berkeley.edu](mailto:suess@berkeley.edu)
- Conference for Undergraduate Women in Physics (CUWiP, **UCI**): This year UCI was one of the 13 international sites to host the American Physical Society's Conference for Undergraduate

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Women in Physics (CUWiP) - the UCI session was the largest in CUWiP's history with >300 participants! The conference was put on by a physics interdisciplinary group of faculty

(Chaired by Prof. Mu-Chun Chen and Co-Chaired by Profs. Simona Murgia and Albert Siryaporn), post-docs, grads and undergrads - many of whom are astronomers (woo!). The 3 day conference was a huge success with a wide variety of programming - from undergraduate research presentations and an international keynote address by Prof. Andrea Liu to panel sessions on topics such as Self Care through Adversity and Out in STEM.



Additionally, astro grad students Katy Rodriguez Wimberly and Arianna Long hosted an ASCEND (The ActionS for Community Excellence & Development) Mini Conference featuring an interactive workshops on Developing & Celebrating Goals and Building Your Mentor Network. While for many of us Local Organizing Committee volunteers, the workload of putting on a conference seemed daunting at times, the reactions from the undergrad participants made all the extra work fully worth while - some participants even said the conference and workshops taught them to believe in themselves!

