LETTER OF DEMAND:
Extension to Graduate Waiver of Non-Resident Supplemental Tuition

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31 August 2020

Dean Susan Etner (UCLA Graduate Division), Vice Chancellor Gregg Goldman (Finance)

CC: Chancellor Gene Block, Executive Chancellor Emily Carter, Assistant Vice Provost Samuel Bersola (UCLA Graduate Division), Associate Dean Renate Lux (UCLA Graduate Division), Acting Associate Dean Onyebuchi Arah (UCLA Graduate Division)

Dear Dean Etner, VC. Goldman,

On April 19th 2020, our union UAW 2865 sent out a letter to the UC Office of President (UCOP) calling for extensions of Non-Residential Supplemental Tuition (NRST) waivers and a lift of the six-year teaching limit. These measures are important for many doctoral students, especially international students, who are currently dealing with disruptions brought on by the COVID-19 crisis in their professional and personal lives. After sustained efforts by our members to organize around this issue, UCOP has deferred this decision to individual UC schools.
Since that time, as a result of pressure from graduate students on each campus, the UC as a whole has agreed to lift the six-year teaching limit, yet only UC Davis and UC Berkeley have taken steps to extend NRST waivers; the former has indicated that it will utilize an existing fellowship program to ensure access to NRST funding for international graduate students, while the latter instituted a universal one-year NRST waiver extension. We, the undersigned UAW 2865 members and graduate students, representing the richness of our campus’ plurality and diversity across fields of study, urge UCLA to follow suit.

Access to research resources, including Library materials, has drastically been curtailed in addition to the economic, political, social, physical, and psychological hardships we already face as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated effects. Our research in many fields has effectively come to a grinding halt, while fees and deadlines have not sufficiently adapted to the reality that we have all made sacrifices to meet responsibly.

Effectively financially penalizing doctoral students who are, or will become subject to NRST – many of whom are international students – is completely unacceptable, cannot be justified, and goes against the values of UCLA and the UC system, particularly the words of Chancellor Gene Block dated 7th July 2020 in response to the ICE directive against our international student community:

“UCLA is proud that we have attracted the best minds from around the world who have helped us build a vibrant learning community, advanced vital research and strengthened essential international collaborations...We value the voices, insights and presence of every single member of the UCLA family, including those from other countries who have created an intellectual home here, who have established roots in our communities, and who greatly contribute to our campus. UCLA stands with our international students during this challenging period”

The imposition of NRST, which often amounts to an extra $15,000.00 a year, is a heavy and disproportionate burden on students who are paying for resources they can no longer access during this period. International students do not qualify for federal assistance like that contemplated in the CARES Act, cannot ordinarily seek employment outside UCLA, cannot work more than 20 hours a week during term, cannot safely return to their home countries in many instances, and, moreover, face challenges working from abroad if they do return. All of this amounts to an economic strangulation that is further compounded by NRST.
We therefore urge UCLA to:

1. to issue a universal extension to the graduate waiver of NRST for a period of no less than 1 year;
2. apply this extension to doctoral students who have already advanced to candidacy and those who will advance to candidacy within the next 3 years

Students who are affected are not just those who have advanced to candidacy, but also those who have planned to advance and now are struggling to meet deadlines and requirements because of the drastic changes to inter alia teaching, housing, employment, research access, and administration. In addition doctoral students who were planning to go on the job market next year now find that option a remote possibility, and many would have to stay in their programs longer as a result of this disruption in their job search.

Union members believe this is a serious issue concerning equity among the student body across all UCs and will continue to take strong organizing efforts to advocate for this demand. We hope to see UCLA live up to its rhetoric by taking timely action to demonstrate its commitment to the well-being of all its students by covering the NRST for all affected students. At this stage, we call on you to meet with us to discuss these issues, such that they can be sufficiently resolved.

Yours sincerely,

Graduate student members of UAW 2865

Signed:

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447. Indraneel Tambe, PhD student, Mathematics
448. Madie Dunlap, MA Student, Spanish & Portuguese
449. Anthony Meyer, PhD Candidate, Art History
450. Clive L. Lau, PhD Student, Ecology and Evolutionary Biology
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510. Jennifer Uribe, phd student, sociology
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