



CONSENT CALENDAR  
December 14, 2021

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Councilmember Rigel Robinson (Author) and Councilmember Hahn (Co-Sponsor)

Subject: Letter to UC President Michael Drake in Support of Student Researchers United-UAW

### RECOMMENDATION

Send a letter to UC President Drake and Provost Michael Brown in support of the full recognition of the Student Researchers United-UAW labor union.

### BACKGROUND

In 2017, California passed SB 201, which grants students researchers full employment rights. During the pandemic, student researchers on UC campuses began to organize around common issues. On May 24th, 2021, Student Researchers United-UAW submitted cards representing a supermajority of student researchers seeking union representation. The California Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) verified that they achieved majority support. The UC was expected, therefore, to grant recognition to the new union. However, the UC has attempted to subvert PERB regulations and has refused full recognition, instead offering to only partially “recognize” SRU-UAW.

The UC has argued that Student Researchers paid with training grants and fellowships are not workers and do not have the right to unionize, and that only Student Researchers directly funded by the UC should be recognized. This spurious distinction, however, ignores the fact that Student Researchers report and take instructions from the same supervisors and perform the same duties regardless of their funding sources. The attempt to divide Student Researchers by funding is a ploy to undermine the union's strength and subvert state law that was passed with the clear intention of granting the specific workers in question the right to collective representation.

It is crucial that the UC immediately grant full recognition to SRU-UAW. Student Researchers have raised issues of insufficient compensation, discrimination, harassment, and excessive workloads that urgently need to be addressed. The UC's union busting ploy in attempting to divide Student Researchers is a distraction from these urgent matters and an insult to the hardworking people who perform the essential function that makes the UC a network of premier research institutions.

The Council would join more than 50 members of the State Legislature and 30 members of the California Congressional delegation in calling for full recognition of SRU-UAW.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

No impact.

CONTACT PERSON

Councilmember Rigel Robinson, Council District 7, (510) 981-7170  
Christine Youn, Intern

Attachments:

1: Letter

2: Other Letters from Legislators in Support of SRU-UHW

(<https://studentresearchersunited.org/legislative-support-for-sru-uaw>)

December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2021

Michael Drake, President  
University of California  
1111 Franklin St., 12th Floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

RE: Student Researchers United-UAW Recognition

Dear President Drake,

We are writing to strongly urge that you recognize and begin bargaining with Student Researchers United-UAW. Research is integral to the UC mission — that was reflected last year in the 3.7 billion dollars that the University of California received in federal research contracts and grant revenue. Student Researchers are leading the central work of the university in advancing knowledge while they are given insufficient financial compensation, working unreasonable hours, experiencing harassment, facing discrimination, and expected to pay increasingly unaffordable rents. Unions are needed to address these issues so that research can be carried out in the most efficient and equitable environment.

The UC should not deny Student Researchers the right to unionize. In 2017, California passed SB 201, which grants student researchers full employment rights. This includes the right to unionize. Refusing to recognize Student Researchers United-UAW as a formal labor union is refusing to acknowledge the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act and exploiting Student Researchers' labor.

It is our understanding that the UC has disputed the composition of the bargaining unit, arguing that workers in certain job titles are merely students and not workers with the same arguments the UC made against SB 201. We urge you to swiftly drop this dispute and recognize Student Researchers United-UAW as the union for Student Researchers in all the titles in which they work.

We are in full support of Student Researchers United-UAW in their fight recognition and better pay and working conditions from the UC and hope to see the UC finally putting to practice what the California legislature has already mandated as Student Researchers deserve a better working environment.

Sincerely,  
The Berkeley City Council

CC: Michael Brown, Provost & Executive Vice President