# Graduate Students at U.C. Santa Cruz Strike Over Free Speech Rights



**Graduate Students at U.C. Santa Cruz to Strike Over Free Speech Concerns**

On May 20, 2024, academic workers at the University of California, Santa Cruz, began a strike following a vote by United Auto Workers Local 4811. The union, representing 48,000 graduate students and academic workers system-wide, cited violations of free speech rights amid protests against the Israel-Hamas war as the impetus for the strike. The union claims the university's crackdown on these protests constitutes unfair labor practices.

The decision for the "stand up" strike, where campuses may join incrementally, follows weeks of unrest on UC campuses, including incidents at UCLA where pro-Palestinian protesters faced violence from counterprotesters. More than 500 protesters have been arrested at various campuses since mid-April.

The UC system has filed an unfair labor practice charge with the state, arguing the strike is illegal due to a no-strike clause in the workers' contracts. The university asserts the strike is not directly related to labor issues and seeks a cease-and-desist order.

U.C. Santa Cruz has seen support from other UC campuses, with potential for rolling strikes at locations such as UCLA, UC Irvine, UC Davis, and UC San Diego. Union leaders emphasize the demand for the university to negotiate in good faith and respect free speech on campus.

The strike could complicate the end of the spring quarter, affecting the 20,000 students at U.C. Santa Cruz. The union plans for the action to be temporary, concluding by June 30, and has set up a strike fund to support members during the stoppage.