

An Open Letter to the UC Davis Community

April 30, 2007

We are writing as faculty members deeply concerned about the lives and working conditions of employees on campus. It has come to our attention that two groups of workers on campus, the food service workers employed by Sodexo and those custodians employed by outside contractors, do not enjoy the same wages, benefits, and working conditions as do the University's employees. There are currently about 550 contracted-out service workers at UC Davis.

These non-university employees are paid significantly lower wages, and the health insurance plan offered by their employer is prohibitively expensive for them. Yet they live and work in our midst, facing the same high costs of housing in Davis and its environs, and they pay the same prices in the grocery stores. Worse yet, without health insurance, they often do without necessary medical care that the rest of us take for granted.

In the past, members of our community have spoken out about the working conditions overseas of people who produce UC Davis sweatshirts and the farmers who make their living producing the coffee that gets us started in the morning. As a community, we have responded and worked to improve the compensation for some of these distant people on whose labor we rely. We have an even greater obligation to respond to those who live and work right here in Davis.

UC Davis is apparently the only UC campus to continue to contract out its food service operations. Other campuses have ended the practice and now directly employ all food service workers. In addition, at the UC Davis Medical Center, just twenty minutes away in Sacramento, the food service workers are directly employed by UCD, earn from \$3 to \$5 more per hour than the Davis campus workers, and pay approximately 95% less for their health insurance benefits.

It is simply wrong for the University to save money by allowing private companies to exploit low wage workers on this campus. We support the service workers in their request to become employees of the University. We urge the University to live up to our Principles of Community and our tradition of social justice by ending the practice of contracting out to cut labor costs. We call upon the Administration to respond favorably to what these community members are requesting. They want to be university employees and this is what they should be.

The following members of the faculty have endorsed this open letter:

- Fred Block, Sociology
- Martha West, King School of Law
- Andrea Bjorklund, King Law School
- Marc Blanchard, Comparative Literature
- Monique Borgerhoff-Mulder, Anthropology
- Joan Cadden, History
- Karen Caplan, Women and Gender Studies
- Steven Carlip, Physics
- Patrick Carroll, Sociology
- Jennifer Chacon, King Law School
- Natalia Deeb-Sossa, Sociology
- Marisol de la Cadena, Anthropology
- Sergio de la Mora, Chicano/a Studies
- Adela de la Torre, Chicano/a Studies
- Omnia El Shakry, History
- Isao Fujimoto, Asian American Studies
- Laura Grindstaff, Sociology
- Penny Gullan, Entomology
- Joyce Gutstein, Public Service Research Program
- Bruce Hackett, Sociology, Emeritus
- William Hagen, History
- Drew Halfmann, Sociology
- John R. Hall, Sociology
- Bruce Haynes, Sociology
- Frank Hirtz, CRD
- Wendy Ho, Ethnic Studies & Asian American Studies Chair
- Lisa Ikemoto, King Law School
- Mary Jackman, Sociology
- Carole Joffe, Sociology
- Saud Joseph, Anthropology and Women Studies
- Catherine Kudlick, History
- Neil Larsen, Comparative Literature
- Lyn Lofland, Sociology
- Jonathan London, Human and Community Development
- Sunaina Maira, Asian American Studies
- Bill McCarthy, Sociology
- Michael McQuarrie, Sociology
- Judy Newton, Women & Gender Studies
- Benjamin Orlove, Ecology
- Amagda Perez, King Law School
- Beatriz Pesquera, Chicano/a Studies
- Lisa Pruitt, King Law School
- Leslie Rabine, Women/Gender Studies and French
- Cruz Reynoso, King Law School
- Kevin Roddy, Medieval Studies
- Suzana Sawyer, Anthropology
- Richard Scalettar, Physics
- Seth Schein, Comparative Literature
- Donna Shestowsky, King Law School
- Carol Smith, Anthropology
- Michael Peter Smith, Community Studies & Development, Chair
- Vicki Smith, Sociology
- Baki Tezcan, History and Religious Studies
- Craig Tracy, Math
- Miriam Wells, Human and Community Development
- Stephen Wheeler, Environmental Design
- Carter White, King Law School
- Michael Winter, Sociology
- Diane L. Wolf, Sociology
- Michael Ziser, English