

UC SANTA BARBARA

Graduate Student Association

2502 University Center MC 6052
University of California, Santa Barbara
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gsa.ucsb.edu

February 14th, 2025

To the UCSB Community, UC Office of the President, UC Regents, and Chancellor Yang,

As the top public university system in the United States and a land-grant university, the University of California has a unique responsibility towards—and an entwined fate with—education in the United States. We, the Graduate Student Association of UC Santa Barbara, take it to be our responsibility to speak out against the recent spate of Executive Orders and changes in federal policy that jeopardize the safety and wellbeing of our members, the pursuit of education in the United States, and our vocation as teachers and scholars.

The past weeks have brought an unprecedented amount of confusion and disruption to the United States of America. From the deportation of our neighbors, to the erasure of our trans community members, to the muzzle on disseminating public health and safety information, to the investigation and undermining of diversity initiatives, to the suppression of free speech within and beyond the academy, to the removal of the United States from global efforts to combat climate change, to the temporary freezing of federal funds that support critical research, to the looming threat of dismantling the Department of Education—as scholars and future leaders in our fields, we would be remiss if we did not highlight how all of these actions combine to threaten our community as a student body, and our community and identity as a nation.¹

As the Graduate Student Association, we want to assure our members that we see the frustration, the fear, and the uncertainty we all face. You are not alone in these feelings, and in wondering what the next few days and weeks will bring. We will continuously advocate for inclusivity and protections for our student body in our work with administrators at UCSB and throughout the UC system.

At the University of California, Santa Barbara, 34% of our graduate student population are international students. Within our domestic student population, 46% are members of a minority group, and 25% are members of an unrepresented minority group. Our undergraduate population is 57% minority students and 31% underrepresented minorities. Over 27% of both graduate and undergraduate students on our campus are first generation college students.² In 2015, we received the Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institution (AANAPISI) designations. We were the first Association of American Universities (AAU) university to receive a HSI designation, and the third campus in the UC system after UC Riverside and UC Merced.³ We believe it is our diversity of background and experience that makes our community at UC Santa Barbara strong. Threats of visa revocation and deportation for the exercise of free speech and academic freedom, the

¹ See a full list of Executive Orders issued by President Trump maintained by National Public Radio here or the UC system's own tracker here: [NPR: Running list of executive orders](#); [UCOP's EO tracker](#)

² [UCSB Enrollment Dashboard](#)

³ [UCSB MSI Designation](#); UC Riverside is now both a HSI and AAU as well, having received its AAU membership in 2023.

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expansion of ICE powers, and the reduction of women’s and trans peoples’ rights directly target our community. Our community, both graduate and undergraduate, deserves the right to pursue their education without fear of discrimination, bigotry, and violence. The responsibility of ensuring a safe, equitable, and supportive learning environment—where free speech is protected and students are welcomed for who they are— falls to the administrators of the University.

As a graduate student body, we call upon the University of California Regents and the University of California President Drake to further solidify programs and structures that support our students, defend our academy, and preserve our future.⁴ We demand the university continue to take tangible steps to protect all community members who are directly affected by the recent Executive Orders and changes in federal policy, especially our undocumented and trans community members. We demand that the university continuously reaffirm its commitment to free speech and academic freedom in Higher Education. Further, we call upon Chancellor Yang to staunchly reaffirm our university’s commitment to inclusion, equal opportunity, and safety for all students. We demand greater transparency and more efficient dissemination of information from all three bodies to the UCSB community.

Sincerely,
Graduate Student Association Assembly
University of California, Santa Barbara

⁴ [UCOP FAQ for possible federal immigration enforcement](#)