



Seattle Fire Fighters Union, Local 27 IAFF, AFL-CIO

517 Second Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119 • (206) 285-1271 or (800)423-4224

May 14, 2018

Doug Avello-Castro
UAW Local 4121
2633 Eastlake Ave E.
Suite 200
Seattle, WA 98102

Dear Mr. Avello-Castro,

Seattle Fire Fighters Union, IAFF Local 27, wish to express our support of UAW 4121 in its effort to achieve a fair contract with UW Academic Students Employees. We understand that UW is currently claiming that it has “no money” to address the fact that over 80% of ASEs are increasingly rent-burdened, forced to pay 30% **or more** of their earnings on housing alone, not even accounting for student fees. Many are forced to take second and third jobs simply to make ends meet, which can undermine timely progress to degrees. In response to the UW’s failure to adequately support its ASEs, members of UAW 4121 have voted overwhelmingly, and with the union’s highest-ever election turnout, to **authorize a strike**, which grants the bargaining committee the authority to call a strike if they believe circumstances justify doing so. We write to affirm our support for UAW 4121’s bargaining efforts and to pledge our continued support should ASEs go on strike. We also write to urge the UW to respect all its employees and to honor the union’s demands for a fair, livable wage.

The skyrocketing cost of living in Seattle is a function of a booming economy, which produces increased state revenues. These can and should translate into higher levels of funding for UW. It is also the University Administration’s responsibility to manage its funds effectively, and so therefore unacceptable that UW employees – ASEs, faculty, or staff – should be **losing** ground economically as the region thrives. We are told that the university’s external vendors must be compensated at (rising) market rates. We believe that UW’s internal suppliers – the ASEs, faculty, and staff on whose creative, intellectual labor this university runs – **also** have a right to compensation commensurate with the rising cost of housing, healthcare, and other essentials.

Also at issue in the current ASE contract negotiations are resources for anti-discrimination (including anti-sexual harassment) peer trainings and structured collaboration between ASEs and departmental administrators to promote a climate of equity and inclusion. These demands are in line with the university’s existing commitment to equity and inclusion. ASEs are simply asking to be more directly involved in defining and promoting these values, which seems especially appropriate considering their dual roles as teachers and students.

All of these demands are consistent with the university’s stated commitments to social justice. We support ASEs’ efforts to improve their working conditions, and we urge the university to bargain in good faith with UAW 4121.

In solidarity,

Kenny Stuart, President
Seattle Firefighters Local 27

www.iaff27.com • email: info@iaff27org • fax: (206) 285-9479

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