

UC grad students stage walkout

Union seeks recognition

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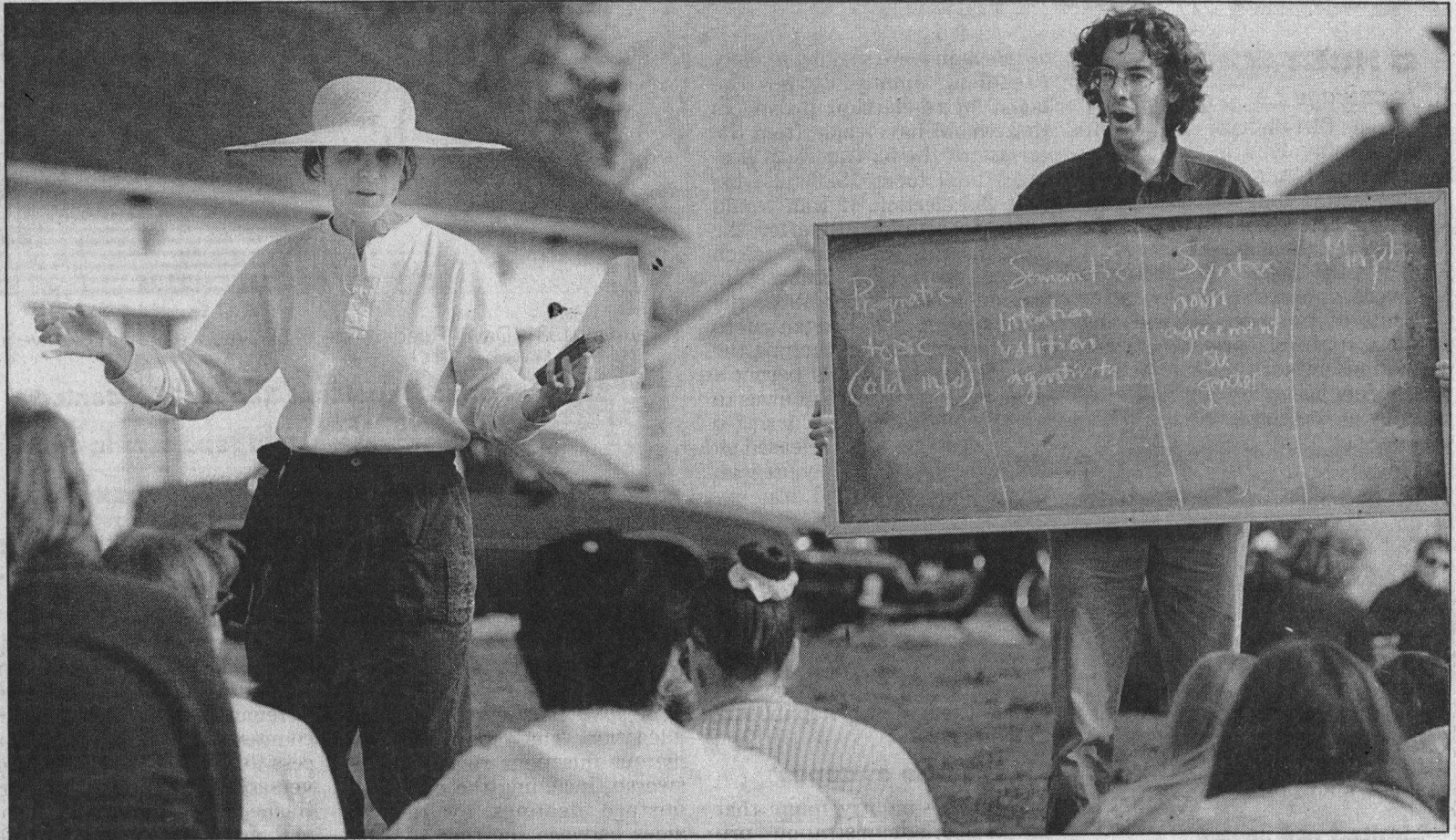
Hundreds of graduate students at UC-Santa Cruz boycotted classes they were scheduled to teach Monday, in a widening protest for recognition of their union.

The walkout, which left lecture halls deserted and administrators threatening firings, followed a similar strike by UC-Berkeley graduate students last Thursday.

University of California, Santa Cruz officials said a majority of undergraduate students honored the strike Monday. Between 50 percent and 70 percent of classes were canceled, administrators reported.

Student teaching assistants are not seeking higher wages or reduced hours. Rather, they are demanding a contract as protection during a period of state budget cuts and fee increases. The organizing effort has the backing of the United Auto Workers.

The university system argues that state law prohibits it from



EUGENE LOUIE — MERCURY NEWS

Robin Schaefer honors her fellow teaching assistants' picket line by teaching her class in a parking lot at the entrance of UC-Santa Cruz.

granting collective bargaining rights to graduate students.

As dozens of professors taught classes in community centers off campus and in private homes Monday, UC administrators did not budge. At Berkeley and at Santa Cruz, they made it clear that graduate

students who failed to return to teaching would be disciplined.

"If it is necessary, we can dock their pay," said Michael Tanner, executive vice chancellor at UC-Santa Cruz. "If there is a pattern of unreliability, that person can be terminated."

Tanner said he would begin

punitive sanctions next Monday. Local lecturers may be hired as replacement teaching assistants, he added.

In Berkeley, administrators warned they may not rehire students who walked off their jobs.

"We can't play around," said Joseph Duggan, associate dean

of the university's graduate division. "If you're engaged in a job, the presumption is that you'd do it. If they're not going to do it, we're under no obligation to rehire them next semester. Otherwise the assumption is we're using state money well by paying people who don't work."

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UC grad students boycott classes over job security issue

■ ASSISTANTS

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Duggan said university officials are still deciding how to identify the striking workers. They may ask departments to report to the university who has worked, or to require students to sign a statement next semester saying they taught for all the hours for which they were paid.

In other sanctions, the university will not pay students for hours they didn't work, and will require them to pay a share of their university-paid health insurance and student fees, he said.

Students, in turn, said the effort to identify striking teaching

assistants and take away their jobs next semester amounted to blackmail.

"It's divisive and it smacks of McCarthyism," said Russ Paulsen, spokesman for the Association of Graduate Student Employees at UC-Berkeley. "It's pretty appalling that the University of California would resort to that kind of tactic."

UC-Berkeley officials said the warning was reasonable.

The first day of striking in Santa Cruz saw union delivery drivers turning away from campus and ridership on shuttle buses down by 50 percent.

From 7 a.m. until late afternoon, about 75 picketing gradu-

ate students toted signs and shouted chants at the entrance to UC-Santa Cruz.

To show solidarity, some professors held lectures at the Louden Nelson Center and the Resource Center for Nonviolence, as well in the living rooms and basements of private homes.

Graduate students rescheduled other classes for evening hours, so as not to cross the picket lines.

"It's been very successful," said Marcella Greening, a spokeswoman for the Santa Cruz Graduate Students Employees Association.

"We have run out of arm bands on the hour."

There are 991 graduate stu-

dents at UC-Santa Cruz, from a total student enrollment of 10,255 students.

About 600 are hired at \$15 an hour to teach discussion sections, 20 hours a week. They often grade papers and complete written evaluations. The intent is to lessen the workload of tenured professors who lead large lecture-hall sessions.

The impasse at UC-Santa Cruz is stark. Tanner met with graduate students a week ago. The students have promised to continue meeting only if they are recognized as a labor union. He has promised to meet again only if they are not.

"I hope that we can get talks

going to move beyond this," Tanner said. "But as long as they are dealing with the United Auto Workers, that seems impossible."

In the strike's third day at UC-Berkeley, the 3,900-member Association of Graduate Student Employees reported just under 70 percent of classes were canceled. The university estimated it was closer to 15 percent.

Many teaching assistants ignored the picket lines and went off campus to meet with their students. Many met in coffee shops, at the UC-Berkeley International House or at the homes of students or teachers, associate dean Duggan said.

"Some of (the graduate stu-

dents) feel torn between their solidarity with the union and their loyalty to their students," Duggan said.

Duggan said he was optimistic that students would receive their final grades by the end of the semester.

"I'm less concerned than I was last week," he said. "To e, (grading) was the big obstacle that the university had to overcome."

At UC-San Diego and UC-Davis, some graduate students have held informational picket lines to support the students at Berkeley and Santa Cruz. But no action was reported Monday.