



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## UCSA President Gives Speech about UC Housing and Food Crisis, Reacts to New Initiative

SAN FRANCISCO – Kevin Sabo, UC Student Association President, provided the following reaction to President Janet Napolitano’s announcement today that she will pioneer a Student Housing Initiative to add 14,000 new student beds before 2020.

“President Napolitano acknowledges that the housing crisis is the biggest anxiety of students as the UC plans to add 10,000 students over the next three years. Her action gives me relief, knowing that future UC students will not have the same concerns in their search for affordable housing, but for students on campus today, 2020 is too long to wait.”

He also presented this speech to the Board of Regents illustrating the urgency of UC’s food and housing crisis.

“Last month, I sent an email to students across the UC system simply asking them to take a survey. Within hours, almost 300 students had responded with their testimonies about the real cost of attending a UC. Their stories tell us we are living in a time of crisis.

This is what students living in campus buildings told me.

- “I can see the wiring through holes in the wall. The shower was broken for half of last quarter.”
- “They packed so many people into my dorm that they couldn’t fit desks.”

In the communities surrounding our campuses, students fight to find housing despite high costs and low availability. This is what those students told me.

- “I live in a house with 12 people in order to afford rent.”
- “My landlord sold the building I lived in and I had to move into a trailer park with no internet access.”
- One student summoned up the courage to write: “I’m scared. I live with my boyfriend but I can’t break up with him because I’ll be homeless.”

Housing isn’t their only struggle. This is what hungry students told me.

- “My primary food source my first year was from dumpsters or expired food.”
- “I sit in my chair in agony while accepting the idea I won’t have dinner tonight.”
- And someone else brought up an issue that we can do something about right now. “I couldn’t afford a meal plan so I enrolled in EBT. But nowhere on campus accepts EBT.”



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Today, I am asking for your leadership, because this is what struggling students told me.

- "My first worry is tuition. Second is food. Third is housing. I don't have time to worry about my classes."
- And finally, "I couldn't find housing so I withdrew and went to community college back home."

The UC is better than this. For low-income students, it is insulting to work hard throughout high school and community college to get a coveted seat at the University of California and then not be given full financial support to succeed. These students are balancing the dreams of their families with the profound mental health burdens of not having their most basic needs met. Our financial aid system is barely meeting the demand of sky high tuition prices and neglecting our fundamental need to survive.

This is not a problem the UC created. But it is one you must solve.

On behalf of students, I compel you to solve it soon. The stories I just told you weigh heavily on me, knowing that in the next three years the UC system will swell to accommodate 10,000 additional students. Please look past your enrollment numbers and see us living in the shadows.

I want more students to have the opportunity to receive a UC education. It is what I personally worked so hard for, from community college in the Central Valley to where I am now, on the homestretch of finishing my degree at UC Berkeley. But I can't say with a straight face to potential students that increased enrollment makes anything better for them. Sure, their chances of getting in have gone up. But enrollment is an investment in accessibility. Where is the investment in quality?

A quality enrollment plan would include specific provisions for:

- short-term affordable housing growth for students and their families
- long-term commitment to support the Global Food Initiative after its current funding expires
- expanded Graduate Student enrollment to teach new undergrads
- Tier 1 mental health services
- public transportation stipends
- reduced class sizes
- and wages and benefits for on-campus service workers

This is the request students will make of the State legislature as it reviews the Governor's budget, because we understand that it can provide much needed support for these priorities. But let me be clear:

Whether it is here in this room or up in Sacramento, we will be heard. You will know that we are living in crisis and we are looking to you for a solution."

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