

Section 5



CENTRAL COAST REGIONAL EQUITY INITIATIVE



Image Credit: Santa Barbara Independent

THE CCREI INITIATIVE

A Conversation About Regional Equity

The Blum Center's **Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative (CCREI)** addresses widening inequities in the Central Coast region of California, which includes Santa Barbara, Ventura, and San Luis Obispo counties.

The Central Coast's high cost of housing is a key driver of inequity throughout the region and impacts the areas residents, which includes students. Access to affordable housing directly affects students' well-being and stability while achieving their academic goals. The CCREI's emphasis on finding meaningful solutions to address widening inequities also means students seeking a UC education are entitled to affordable housing.

THIS SECTION INTRODUCES:

- The CCREI's Housing Pledge
- Santa Barbara's housing disparities identified in the 2021 CCREI Study, *Towards a Just and Equitable Central Coast*
- UCSB graduate students fighting for a Cost of Living Adjustment - UCSB 4 COLA
- UCSB graduate student experience
- Santa Barbara housing inequities
- Advancing the CCREI cause

Access the CCREI Study for data on Santa Barbara inequities:
<https://centralcoastequity.org/regional-equity-study/>

THE CCREI

Housing & Equity Pledge

A just and equitable central coast cannot be realized without access to affordable student housing. The Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative (CCREI) pledges to address housing by calling for, (1) the protection of tenants, preservation of communities, (2) making housing affordable for all, and (3) investment in inclusive, universally accessible infrastructures of opportunity and social provision.*



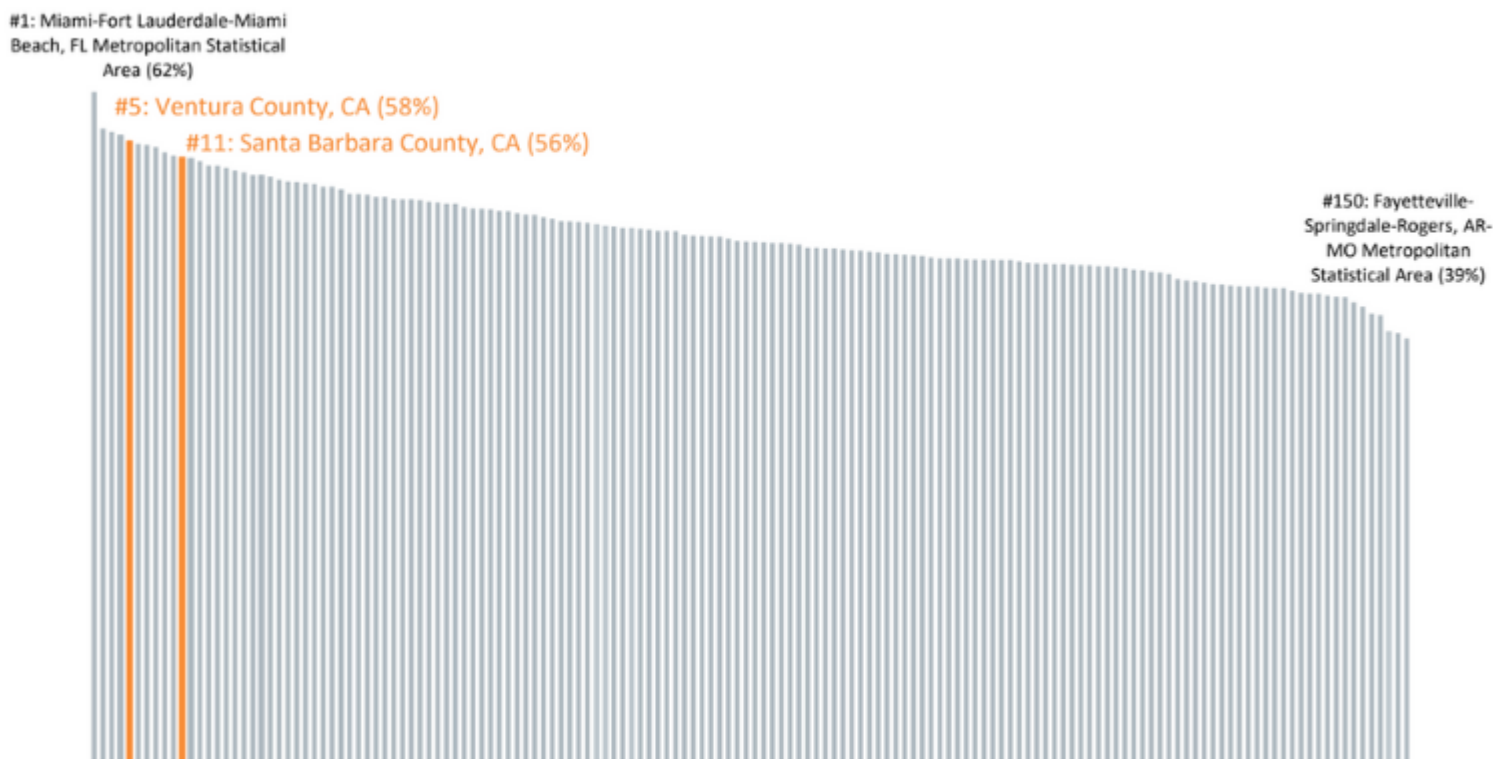
Source: *UCSB Blum Center and The Fund for Santa Barbara, *Towards a Just and Equitable Coast* (2021), 6.

THE CCREI STUDY

Key Findings on Housing

In 2021 the first CCREI Study, *Towards a Just and Equitable Coast*, utilized data indicators to bring the region's socioeconomic inequities -- and the price we pay for them -- to light, and to establish guideposts for advancing regional equity. The study identifies the central role housing plays in exacerbating the region's high cost of living and driving widening inequities.

Figure 7: Top 150 Metro Areas Ranked by Rent Burden, 2018



Santa Barbara was the **11th most rent-burdened city** in 2018. More than half of all Santa Barbara residents spend over 30% of their income on housing.*

Source: *UCSB Blum Center and The Fund for Santa Barbara, *Towards a Just and Equitable Coast* (2021), 18.

STUDENT HOUSING & COLA

Current Graduate Student Housing Experience

Many other UC campuses provide affordable subsidized housing for multiple years, however UCSB graduate students are **only guaranteed one year of housing at San Clemente.**



Average price of one-bedroom apartment in Santa Barbara in 2023: **\$2,540.***

Teaching Assistant Salary: **\$3,433 a month for 9 months**

85% of survey respondents from the 2023 Graduate Student Association housing survey report being **rent burdened** with more than 30% of income being spent on rent.**



Source: *University of California Office of the President official website (2023).

**UCSB Graduate Student Association official website (2023).

COLA Strikes and Housing Inequity

In 2020, UCSB graduate students were the first to join UCSC students in a wildcat strike seeking **Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA)**. The strike's purpose was to advocate for graduate students to receive a livable wage that addressed the high cost of housing. UCSB students staged daily protests to demonstrate their support for UC Santa Cruz. The strikes led to a number of student worker terminations at UCSC.*



Image Credit: The Santa Barbara Independent

In 2022, the largest student strike in history took place with 48,000 student employees across all 10 University of California campuses. The strike reached a ratification vote in December 2022 to increase UCSB graduate student wages from a range of 16.5 to 25.1%. By October 2024, Teaching Assistants will earn approximately \$34,000 for a 9-month 50% appointment.**

65% of UCSB graduate students & postdocs voted that the ratified contract did not adequately address their COLA needs.***

UCSB graduate TAs remain severely rent-burdened with 74% of their monthly salary necessary to cover the rent of a single-bedroom apartment in Santa Barbara.

Sources: *Jillian Wertzberger, UCSB Associated Students Living History Project (2022).

/ Santa Barbara Independent, December 26th, 2022.

GRADUATE HOUSING

Emily Fox, UAW2865 Union Secretary



[UCSB Grads] can only afford to live in unregulated units owned by landlords without permits from the city, which means they have few options for recourse against dangerous living conditions, unexpected evictions, or other forms of exploitation.

If we didn't have to work so many side jobs, we would be able to complete our programs quicker, produce higher quality research, have more time to dedicate to educating undergraduates, and have lower rates of anxiety and depression.

Many grads are forced to take on second, third, and fourth jobs on top of their studies and grad TA or Researcher positions just to make rent and afford food.



Emily Fox
UCSB Graduate student / UAW2865
Secretary / Union Organizer

MARKET INEQUITIES

Santa Barbara's Affordability Crisis

The Central Coast Regional Equity Study has identified how scarcity within Santa Barbara's private housing market, and inadequate public investment in affordable housing, exacerbates housing inequities for UCSB students.

*"The housing market for renters is one of the most unaffordable in the nation."**



Since 1969, California counties and cities are required by state law to plan for adequate levels of low and middle-income housing. Santa Barbara had **CONSTRUCTED ONLY HALF OF THEIR ALLOTMENT** by 2021 for the 2015-2023 period.**

A 2019 study by CAUSE found that 75% of residents experienced housing **HABITABILITY ISSUES** such as leaky roofs, pipes, mold, etc.***

Low income renters, *which includes students*, are forced to compete in a tight rental housing market. Little subsidized housing is available. Much less so in the private housing market, resulting in **LACK OF AVAILABLE QUALITY HOUSING FOR UCSB STUDENTS.**

Sources: */**UCSB Blum Center and The Fund for Santa Barbara, *Towards a Just and Equitable Coast* (2021), 70, 71.

***Central Coast United for a Sustainable Alliance. *Housing Crisis 805* (2019), 10.

SB INEQUITY POLITICS

Not In My Backyard

Key takeaways from the 2021 CCREI Study

*“Homeowners have clashed with community activists who have called for more housing construction to lower housing costs... opponents of new housing... have largely won out in these political battles.”**

Current Santa Barbara property owners are politically resistant to increasing affordable housing in their community fearing that it would lower property values.

Communities of color, low income earners including students, and immigrants are most likely to be harmed by these restrictive housing politics due to their limited voice and influence in Santa Barbara housing policy.



Source: *UCSB Blum Center and The Fund for Santa Barbara, *Towards a Just and Equitable Coast* (2021), 72.

ADVANCING THE CCREI CAUSE

How has UCSB aligned with the CCREI's equity-centered principles?

The CCREI supports investment in inclusive, universally accessible infrastructures of opportunity and social provision.

We have a long way to go:

- Munger Hall student housing project has since been canceled. It is not yet determined when more student housing resources will be available.
- Even with a new contract, graduate students' COLA needs remain. UCSB has yet to announce a plan to expand graduate access to affordable housing.
- Santa Barbara is not yet constructing an adequate supply of affordable housing, both private and public.
- Santa Barbara homeowners politically oppose new construction of affordable housing which affects students.

What we can do:

- Advocate for students, regardless of income, race, ethnicity, & gender identity, affordable access to a UC education, which includes housing.
- Advocate against the privatization of higher ed.
- Advocate for public university resources to be applied to providing affordable housing.





Works Cited

SECTION 5 - Central Coast Regional Equity Initiative

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