

HELP GEO GET A GOOD CONTRACT :

BARGAINING:

TODAY March 3: 11 a.m. -2:30 p.m.
Mason Hall 1427

THURSDAY March 6: 11 a.m. -4:30 p.m.
Great Lakes Room, Palmer Commons

MEMBERSHIP MEETING:

March 18, 7 p.m.
Ballroom Michigan League

Contact your department steward or e-mail
umgeo@umich.edu with any questions.

Admin bends a bit on pay

GEO urges GSIs to up pressure for increased gains

An old Chinese proverb states that a journey of 1,000 miles begins with a single step.

And with plenty of hand-holding from the hundreds of graduate employees who have been showing up at bargaining sessions, UM administrators have begun toddling toward a reasonable pay increase.

But GEO leaders say there is a long way the admin has to walk before GSIs earn a living wage.

Administrators proposed salary increases of 3, 2.5 and 2.25 percent over each year a of a three-year contract, which was a slight concession from its original proposal of a 2 percent raise each year.

GEO had originally proposed a 9 percent raise in each of the three years, before countering the admin's proposal with a 9 percent raise in the first year with cost-of-living adjustments during the next years.

GEO has made about \$3 million in concessions from its first proposal, while UM has only moved \$425,000 from its initial proposal.

On Feb. 20, GEO members had voted to place a 9, 3, 3 raise on the strike platform.

GEO lead negotiator Colleen Woods emphasized that turnout at bargaining and other GEO events increases the union's visibility and puts pressure on administrators to make further concessions.

"We have to show them that we will not settle for anything less than a living wage," she said. "We also need to be educating our students and professors about our proposals," she added.

GEO backs strike platform

Members also vote to extend contract to March 17

In a packed Rackham amphitheatre on Feb. 20, GEO members voted overwhelmingly to approve a nine-item strike platform.

The centerpiece of the strike platform (see page 2) was a pay increase of 9 percent in the first year of a new contract and three percent for each of the next two years. The vote was unanimous.

Currently, the UM office of Financial Aid estimates the eight-month cost of attendance at UM for a single graduate student with no dependents at \$15,980 a year. Currently, a .5 fraction GSI makes \$15,199 during that same time period.

The \$780 deficit, when adding taxes and a 3 percent estimate for inflation leads to a 9 percent gap.

GEO members ironically refer to the gap as "the Michigan Difference"

Seven additional items also made the final strike platform in full.

Members voted to place seven other items on the strike platform in full. Those items included parity for mental health care coverage, increased tuition waivers for low fractions, wage parity for low fractions and full coverage of health care premiums for low fractions. The other three items were family oriented, eliminating the spousal work requirement to receive childcare, increasing parental leave and increasing the child-care subsidy.

In addition to the nine issues that made it on the platform in full, members also voted to "make significant progress" toward eliminating the 10-term rule, providing summer bridge pay and increasing the flexibility of parents to spend their childcare subsidy.

On every proposed item, at least two-thirds

(Continued on page 2)

Strike Platform:

GEO wants in full

- 1 Pay increase: 9%, 3%, 3%
- 2 Parity for mental health care
- 3 Wage parity for low-fractions
- 4 All premiums covered for low-fractions
- 5 Increases in low-fraction tuition waivers
- 6 Increased parental leave
- 7 Increased child care subsidy
- 8 Eliminating work requirement for childcare subsidy access

GEO needs “significant progress”

1. Summer bridge pay
2. Easing 10-term rule
3. Increasing flexibility of childcare subsidy

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of the members in attendance voted to make at least substantial progress. The support for the nine-percent pay raise was unanimous.

GEO president Colleen Woods emphasized that the approval of a strike platform was did not mean that GEO was voting to go on strike. Instead, she said that it was a signal to the administration of the issues that GEO members would be willing to strike.

The general GEO membership would have to vote to give the Stewards' Council the ability to call a strike.

During the meeting, members also voted unanimously to extend the current contract's expiration date to March 17 as a good-faith move to keep talking with administrators.

Members also discussed potential job actions that GEO might take to force UM administrators to fairly compensate GSIs.

GEO President Helen Ho said that organizing was the key to getting a good contract, adding that members had to talk to their friends to get them involved.

“We need everyone here to go out and bring two of their friends to the next meeting,” she said,

According to sign-in sheets, 219 members attended the meeting, which more than doubled the turnout from the term's first meeting.

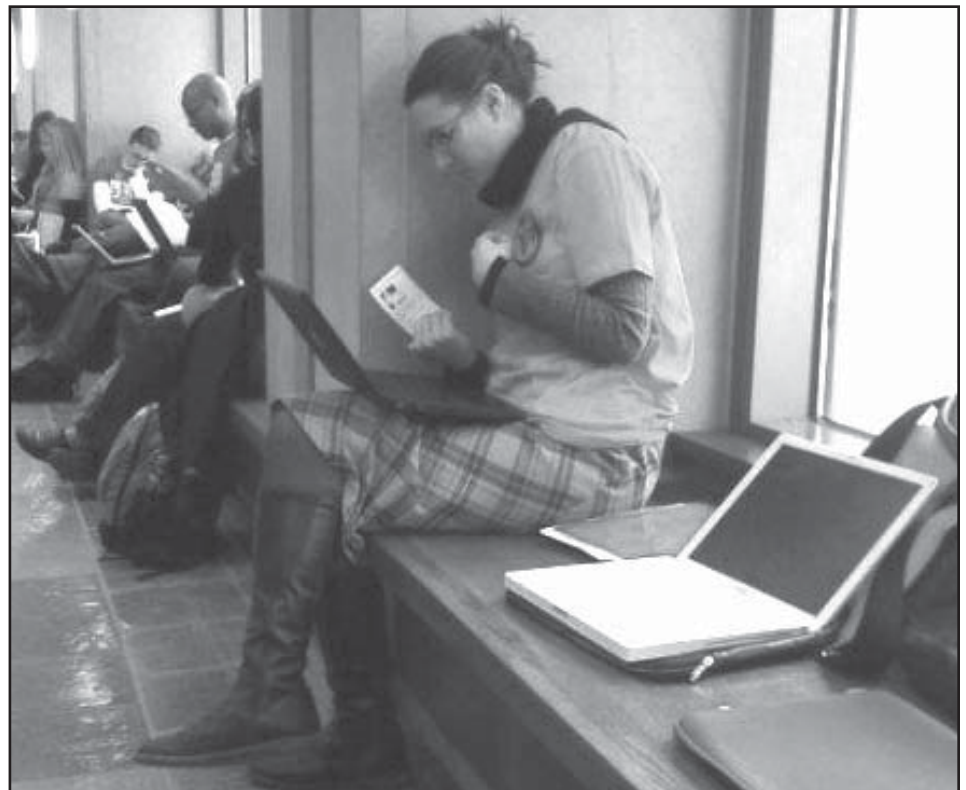
GSIs pack Haven Hall for grade-in

In what GEO organizers are calling a success, more than 125 GSIs turned out the union's first grade-in on the first floor Haven Hall on Wednesday, Feb. 20 from 12:-3:30 p.m.

The event was designed to draw public attention to the slow pace of contract talks. Visitors to Haven were greeted with an assortment of graduate employees wearing bright GEO T-shirts packing the sides of the entrance hall.

GSIs graded exams, essays and homework assignments while passing out information on GEO's negotiating positions to passersby.

“This kind of visibility makes undergrads and faculty aware of what we do and how important we are,” Nafissa Essop-Sheik, a GSI in the history department, said.



Carolina G. De Miguel from the Department of Political Science takes part in GEO's Feb. 20 grade in. More than 125 GSIs turned out to the event.