

## Member Guide to GEO Platform Development

### Background

GEO is the exclusive bargaining agent for GSIs and GSSAs, meaning that it is GEO's legal responsibility to represent all GSIs and GSSAs in contract negotiations with the U-M Administration. Those negotiations take place on a three year cycle with the current GEO Contract expiring in March 2011. For the last year, GEO members have been talking together about what our priorities should be in this round of negotiations. We call the document which outlines these priorities our **bargaining platform**. One way to think of the bargaining platform is as membership's instructions to the bargaining team.

### Understanding our Bargaining Platform

GEO's bargaining platform is composed of **planks**. A bargaining plank has three parts: a **title**, a **purpose**, and one or more **specific proposals**. The title is just what it sounds like -- a name we can use when referring to the plank. The purpose is a sentence or two explaining what we hope the plank will accomplish. Ideally, the purpose will both describe a problem graduate employees face and outline GEO's preferred approach to solving that problem. Specific Proposals are the particular policies that GEO would like to see enacted. For some planks, there might not be much in the way of specific proposals beyond what's already there in the purpose clause. For other planks, there may be a number of related U-M policies that need to be changed in order to accomplish the purpose of the plank.

### Member voices and the Bargaining Platform

Members have had input into the development of the bargaining platform in a number of ways. As a first step toward development of the Bargaining Platform, GEO distributed a survey in Fall 2009. The results of that survey were discussed at department meetings and at the Winter 2010 General Membership Meeting. At that GMM, members in attendance broke up into numerous issue groups and discussed possible planks. Following those small-group discussions, those at the meeting voted plank by plank and adopted the Provisional Bargaining Platform. Copies of the Provisional Bargaining Platform have been widely distributed, and discussions of our bargaining priorities and strategies have continued to take place at the GEO Stewards Council meetings, at Department Meetings, and during one on one conversations between members. As we continue to move forward, members will have the opportunity to modify or remove planks from the GEO Bargaining Platform at each Membership Meeting. Stewards will also continue to organize department meetings and to seek out members in order to have one on one conversations about bargaining priorities. Once bargaining begins, we'll use the caucus time between sessions in order to conduct ad hoc meetings focused around that day's bargaining issue.

The key to having your voice heard is taking responsibility for seeing that it is heard. When there is a GEO meeting -- whether it is a General Membership Meeting or a meeting in your department -- do your best to attend. Stay informed and actively engaged in the bargaining process. Most importantly, if you think GEO isn't being responsive to membership, **speak up!**

## Three phases of GEO Platform Development

Phase:	Platform Building	Refining the Platform	Narrowing the Platform
<b>What are we asking?</b>	Which issues matter? What problems have members been encountering? Is there unfinished business from the last bargaining cycle?	Do we understand the issues well enough to write proposed contract language? Are there issues that we've overlooked? Has every member had a chance to have their voice heard?	Are some issues more important than others? Can we achieve our goals on these issues? What are we determined to fight for?
<b>When does this phase take place?</b>	Fall 2009 & Winter 2010	Summer 2010 & Fall 2010	Winter 2011
<b>Key vote(s):</b>	April 14, 2010 Membership Meeting	October 2010 Membership Meeting	Winter 2011 Membership Meeting(s)
<b>Outcome:</b>	Produces Bargaining Platform to guide Bargaining Committee in beginning to produce proposals for negotiations.	Ratifies Bargaining Platform; Bargaining Committee finalizes proposals, contacts U-M Administration to initiate bargaining.	Sets Strike Platform. Bargaining Committee takes GEO's final offer to the table.