

## GEO offers counters on Union Rights and Dues, waits for Admin's major proposals

Bargaining sessions continued on Wednesday, January 12 and Friday, January 14 with a series of counterproposals passed between GEO and the University on contract articles governing Union Rights, Dues, Grievances, and Employee Rights.

During Wednesday's session, the University passed along a counterproposal on Article 6, Union Rights. GEO offered a counterproposal on Article 14, Grievances, and productive discussion followed. The session closed with a Work Group meeting on job posting.

On Friday, January 14, GEO put across counterproposals on Dues and Union Rights. The latter was a response to the University's counter on Article 6 (Union Rights). Specifically, in this counter, GEO requested a contact list of departmental coordinators of employee orientations to facilitate scheduling required GEO presentations.

The University also made an Employee Rights counterproposal on Friday. The University's counterproposal rejected GEO's proposed language that would have provided GSIs with access to multimedia classrooms and increased printing allotments. It also struck proposed language guaranteeing adequate lactation rooms for nursing mothers and language concerning the SEVIS fee, with the suggestion that these issues would be discussed as part of the Childcare and Salaries articles, respectively. The bargaining team plans to take these issues to stewards for further discussion and hopes to receive feedback from members on possible responses for the Union's next counterproposal.

### We want feedback!

What are your concerns about job posting? What would be an adequate printing allotment to request in our counter on Employee Rights?

Tell us what you think about bargaining:

- Post a comment online at <http://umgeo.org/webcaucus>
- Attend a Bargaining meeting: the next one is Monday, January 17th, 1pm, at the GEO office
- Come to bargaining & share your thoughts during a caucus

### Bargaining Proposal Tally

Proposals & Counterproposals Contributed	
GEO	20
UM	10

GEO proposals to which the University has yet to substantively respond: 9 (Job Posting, Salaries, Benefits, Leaves, Childcare, Disability Accommodations, GSI Training, Tuition Waiver, and a refusal to discuss GSRAs)

Bargaining team member Jonathan McLaughlin made a statement regarding the University's unwillingness to discuss including a provision on academic damages in the Employee Rights article. He reiterated members' concerns that participating in union activities could, in some circumstances, have an unfair negative impact on their relationship to members of their department vital to their academic career. The University considers this concern to be unrelated to work activities and therefore not a concern they are willing to address in the contract, but it remains an important issue for our members. Currently, there is no provision in either the contract, which addresses members' work as employees, or Rackham policy, intended to address the needs of our members in their role as students, for pursuing a grievance in this area.

While the productive back-and-forth regarding these articles continued, this week's bargaining sessions were also marked by the absence of now overdue responses to initial proposals made by GEO in December of last year. GEO recognizes that some proposals, such as those regarding childcare and disability accommodations, may require extensive research in order to offer a response. One member of the University bargaining team briefly mentioned that options for drop-in childcare were currently being investigated, for example. Other proposals, such as salaries and benefits, are routine and expected elements of bargaining-begging the question of why no response has yet been offered. The continued delay in the presentation of such proposals could begin to raise questions about why discussion of crucial issues is being pushed later and later into the bargaining process.

## *From the grassroots:* Lisa Langdon Koch, Political Science

*Lisa Langdon Koch is a PhD candidate in the Political Science department, and she is also a parent. Recently, she has confronted bureaucratic challenges in securing subsidies for childcare. With the help of the Office of the Dean of Students and support from fellow GEO members, the problems were successfully resolved. Her experiences shed light on the importance of campaigning for increased access to childcare, especially for expanding eligibility and increasing transparency about what support is available and how to obtain it.*

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I'm a PhD candidate in political science and the parent of two young children who attend daycare part-time in Ann Arbor. Each semester, I have applied for the child care subsidy managed by the Office of Financial Aid (OFA) to cover part of the cost of daycare. The process by which the OFA determines whether I qualify for the subsidy, and how much should be awarded to me, is opaque. Some semesters, the award has been lower than others. I have asked different staff members at the OFA why that would be true, and I have gotten vague and nonresponsive replies.

This semester (Winter '11), I tried to enroll in classes, only to find I couldn't due to a hold that had been placed on my account. I learned that the OFA had, over the December break, retroactively reduced my subsidy award for Fall '10 and eliminated my award for Winter '11: the hold was due to the fact that they were now charging me for the money I had already paid out to daycare the semester before. I could not enroll because I suddenly owed the University the child care money I had already spent on child care. The OFA staff member I spoke to believed this was because I was an employee in the fall but on fellowship in the winter, and fellowship money falls under a different category, which led to the reduction of the award. She could not explain why the award would also have been reduced for the fall, when I was not on fellowship. Not only could I not enroll as a student, I also wound up significantly poorer with the fellowship and loss of child care funding than I would have had I turned down the fellowship and stayed employed.

Thanks to the intervention of the Office of the Dean of Students, I was able to have the hold lifted and could enroll by that evening. A few days later (I attribute the quick turnaround time to the Office of the Dean of Students as well), the OFA restored what appears to be almost all of the award for winter and all of the award for fall after I provided documentation of my expenses, which allowed them to "adjust my budget," in the words of the staff member I worked with. Working with the Dean of Students team and the OFA led to a good outcome. But retroactively demanding child care funds that were awarded to a parent and then spent on child care is an unjust and poor policy.

## In the news & on the move



GEO is working on multiple fronts to share members' experiences and communicate the goals of this year's contract campaign across campus. Take a look at what's going on right now:

- **Our campaign for Disability Accommodations** was featured in an in-depth article in the Michigan Daily. The challenges faced by GSIs who require and are legally entitled to accommodations in order to teach are profiled in "Fighting to be heard: The struggles disabled GSIs face are being brought to light." Check it out at <http://www.michigandaily.com/content/graduate-student-instructors-disability-geo>
- **Tuesday, January 18 and Wednesday January 19 are Blitz Days to reach out to RAs.** For two days straight, GEO officers, stewards, and members of the bargaining team have committed to reaching out to every RA on campus.

## Mark your calendar!

### This week's bargaining sessions:

**Jan. 19:** Discussion of Grievances, Job posting and Union rights, with concurrent Work Group on Childcare. (**North Campus** in the **Johnson Rooms of the Lurie Engineering Center**, just west of the Duderstadt Center.)

Interested members can be invited to attend Work Groups as consultants. Please contact **Matt Desan** ([bargainingchair@geo3550.org](mailto:bargainingchair@geo3550.org)) if interested.

**Jan 21:** Possible topic: Employee Rights, other topics TBD (Palmer Commons, Great Lakes South, 4th Floor)

Closed captioning TBD. Bargaining runs from 1-5pm, but come at any time to make our union's presence known.

### General Membership Meetings

Wednesday, January 26 @ the Michigan Union, 6-8pm

Wednesday, February 23 @ the Michigan Union, 6-8pm

## Getting involved is getting easier!

- We want feedback! Tell us what you think about bargaining @ <http://umgeo.org/webcaucus>
- Come to bargaining! (see calendar above for times and locations)
- Friend us on Facebook: Michigan GEO & Follow us on Twitter: geo3550
- Check the GEO Events Calendar @ <http://umgeo.org/events> (& subscribe via Google Calendar)
- Check out the website: [www.umgeo.org](http://www.umgeo.org) - includes RSS updates