

## GEO and 'U' reach two more tentative agreements, start childcare discussions

Bargaining proceeded on Wednesday, January 19 and Friday, January 21, with GEO and the University reaching two more tentative agreements and starting discussions on childcare in smaller work groups.

Wednesday's sessions included productive discussions regarding proposals on Articles 14 and 15 and a brief presentation from GEO Music Steward Sarah Gerk. Gerk provided concrete examples of GSIs who were shut out from their offices during evenings and weekends and had not been able to get a key. Her presence helped the University team grasp the reality of this problem and paved the way for improved communication on this issue.

A work group on childcare ran concurrently, with GEO member consultants and a University consultant centrally involved in University-provided childcare present. (For more details, see p. 2 of this newsletter.)

As member Federico Helfgott (from Anthropology and History) reported, a major highlight of Wednesday's session was GSRA presence. "When we were bargaining on North Campus, several Engineering RAs and graduate students who had never come to bargaining before showed up to the session, listened to the proceedings and discussed the issues with the bargaining team during caucus," Helfgott said.

Wednesday's discussions helped lay the ground for Friday's session. During this session, tentative agreements were reached on Articles 6 (Union Rights) and 14 (Grievance and Arbitration Procedures). The Grievance article included agreements to amend the language around group

grievances and arbitrators' authority in cases involving academic judgment and course assignment.

The agreement on Union Rights marks a significant step forward for the Union's ability to educate and organize its members. GEO's right to meet with new GSIs during their orientation was strengthened by language clarifying that departments could not require GSIs to attend another meeting during GEO portions of orientation. Under this agreement, GEO will also be provided with the names and phone numbers of administrators responsible for hiring employees, making it much easier to contact them to schedule GEO's visits to orientations in their unit.

Bargaining team member Lauren Squires said of the Union Rights agreement, "What we've negotiated gives us better access to new employee orientations and trainings. This will help us reach out to new GSIs and GSSAs to educate them about their contract, their rights, and the role of the Union in ensuring those rights. This gets us to the places we need to be to serve our members."

This week brings the number of tentative agreements, which are now set until the end of bargaining, to three. GEO has demonstrated its responsiveness and commitment to progress by working with the University to address these technical and sometimes tricky articles in a timely manner. The University's response to GEO's major proposals is still forthcoming. There is some indication that Disability Access may be presented next week, and GEO eagerly awaits the University's engagement on this and other issues vitally important to members.

### **Come to the General Membership Meeting!**

It's time to turn our ideas into priorities as bargaining for key issues approaches. Topics at this GMM will include discussion of GEO's top issues and our strategies for ensuring a strong contract. Come and learn about what's been happening in bargaining so far and help us determine what our most important concerns are going forward.

**This Wednesday, January 26**  
**6-8pm @ Palmer Commons, 4th Floor, Forum Hall**

## Talking About Childcare

Lead Negotiator Renee Echols & Bargaining Team  
Member Katie Brion share their impressions

Wednesday's Child Care work group was productive. Topics covered included GEO's proposals on the UofM child care centers, drop-off child care, Kids' Kare (an emergency child care service), lactation accommodations and the Child Care Subsidy. Though concerned about the newly proposed contract language, the Administration and their consultant (Jennie McAlpine from UofM's Work/Life Resource Center) were sympathetic to the problems that graduate parent employees have experienced, particularly in relation to the Child Care Subsidy and lactation spaces. It was invaluable to have the testimony and experience of two graduate parent members, Lisa Langdon Koch and Jamie Small, who were able to be present as consultants. Langdon Koch (from political science) shared her often difficult experiences with the Child Care Subsidy and lactation spaces on campus; Small was able to provide feedback on a UofM center (UMCC). The work group was an opportunity for the Administration to express their concerns about the financial and practical implications of our proposals, and for us to communicate our priorities, as well as our desire to articulate best practice standards in our contract (creating better awareness on the part of supervisors and employees).

## Organizing Update



**On Tuesday, January 18 and Wednesday January 19 GEO held Blitz Days to reach out to GSRAs.** For two days straight, GEO officers, stewards, and members of the bargaining team worked together to reach out to more GSRAs. As a result of this effort, new cards were signed and GEO members got a chance to learn about GSRAs' concerns and experiences. "It's a great way to meet other grad students outside your department," bargaining team member Jonathan McLaughlin said of his experience.

Member and organizer Samantha Montgomery said of the campaign, "Ongoing organizing efforts will be really helpful to the success of our campaign. We are trying to get 120 new membership cards signed each week and it will be important to start off the new year with a strong, concerted effort from current GEO members and activists. Getting the University to recognize GSRAs will be one of the biggest things our union has ever done. It's exciting to be a part of this historic campaign!"

## Mark your calendar!

**Come when you can, leave when you need to.  
To win a strong contract, we need you in the room.**

### **This week's bargaining sessions:**

**Jan. 26:** Job Posting, other topics TBD. (Palmer Commons, Great Lakes South, 4th Floor)

**Jan 28:** Topics TBD (Palmer Commons, Plaza Room, 3rd Floor)

Work Groups on important issues may also be upcoming. Interested members can be invited to attend Work Groups as consultants. Please contact **Matt Desan** (bargainingchair@geo3550.org) if interested.

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