

Time for action is now: member involvement crucial as contract expiration looms

Negotiations continued this week as GEO and the 'U' discussed issues surrounding employee rights, leaves, job posting, and disability access. While continued talks on disability access have improved communication, GEO continues to wait for a proposal from the University on disability access. Though this week's talks were generally productive, they did not make significant progress toward agreements on major proposals.

There are 14 days and 4 bargaining sessions left before

the current GEO contract expires. For progress to be made, GEO needs to set priorities and send a message to the University about what our most important needs are. Time is running out to reach agreements on vital issues that affect the daily working lives of GSIs. Bargaining happens only once every three years--what will you do to make sure this year counts? Check out this timeline, decide which issues are the most important to you and pick at least one way to get involved now.

Wednesday, February 16: DISABILITY ACCESS **Bargaining, Palmer Commons, 3rd Floor, Plaza Room 1-5pm**

Six weeks after GEO presented its proposal to improve the process through which GSIs and GSSAs get accommodations necessary to do their jobs, The University still has not put across a counterproposal. Come to this session for as little or as long as you can to send a message that reasonable accommodations for GSIs and GSSAs with disabilities are crucial for the equitable working conditions of graduate Employees at this institution.

Thursday, February 17: REGENTS MEETING **Meet at LSA Building lobby at 3:45pm, walk with group to meeting at Fleming**

GEO will lobby the Regents to ask the University's team to negotiate on crucial contract issues, including GSRA union representation rights.

Friday, February 18: SALARIES & BENEFITS **Bargaining, Palmer Commons, 3rd Floor, Plaza Room 1-5pm**

GEO will present its counterproposals to the U's offer of a 1.5% raise, higher healthcare co-pays, and a refusal to guarantee monthly pay. Come to this session and let the Administration know you're worth more than that.

Wednesday, February 23: CHILDCARE **Bargaining, Palmer Commons, 4th Floor, Great Lakes South 1-5pm**

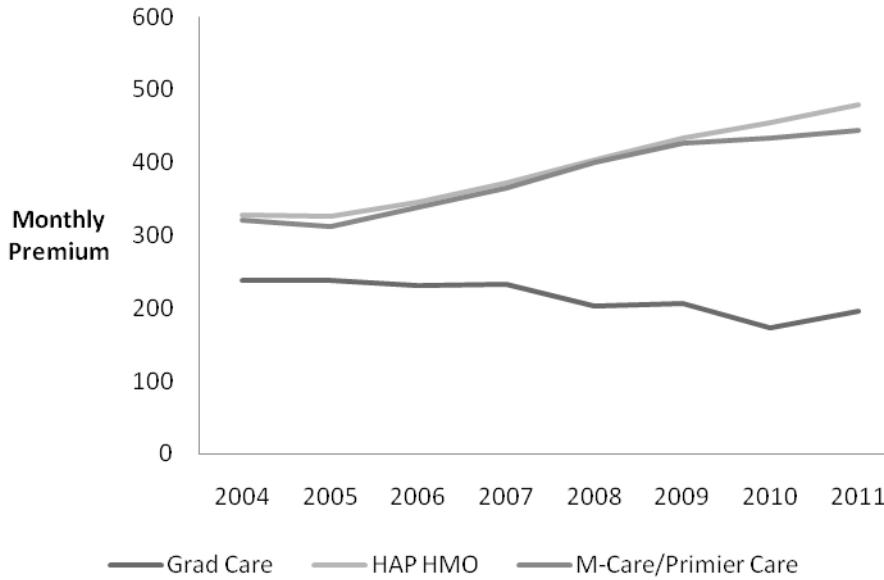
GEO intends to present its counterproposal on the Childcare article. The University offered a minimal increase in the childcare subsidy but refused to end the restrictive spousal work/study requirement and financial qualifications. They also refused to guarantee adequate lactation space. Turn out to show support for GEO parents and these important issues.

Wednesday, February 23: GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING **Michigan League, Vandenberg Room, 6-8pm**

Crucial decisions will be made at this meeting: what do we think of the University's proposals so far? Will we extend our contract past its expiration if negotiations do not conclude on Friday? What issues will we compromise on? What issues are too important to compromise on? GEO can't move forward without your voice and your vote.

GradCare premiums are going down...

Costs for Gradcare compared to general UM plans



Data from UM Insurance

...so why won't the 'U' discuss expanding health care benefits for GEO members?

Article 11: Benefits

GEO proposed:	UM responded:
No co-pay increase	Increased co-pays:
	\$20 Doctor's Visit (up 33%)
	\$75 ER Visit (up 50%)
	\$35 Tier 3 Prescriptions (up 17%)
Vision standard	Rejected
Dental II standard	Rejected

Organizing Update:

Call-in Day Puts the Pressure On



After sending an individual letter to President Coleman about GSRAs' right to union representation several weeks ago, delivering 200 letters last week with a crowd of 20 people, and still receiving no response, it definitely seemed like the time to put on a little more pressure. Last Thursday, February 10, GEO held a call-in day and received reports that hundreds of grads from all over campus sent faxes and made phone calls to let President Coleman know that GSRAs have the right to union representation.

In addition to phone calls and faxes, GEO delivered a large foam board copy of the letter to the president that stood higher than her receptionist's cubicle walls. Newly-elected VP Chelsea Del Rio helped with the delivery and made sure to let them know we hope that this copy of the letter will not get lost in the shuffle. Throughout the

day, several members went back every hour to check in and see if President Coleman had a response to the letter yet. She did not. Though we didn't get a response from President Coleman last Thursday, we let her office know we look forward to her finding the time to meet with us before the Regents meeting next week. This action led to coverage in the Michigan Daily, which can be read and commented on at: <http://www.michigandaily.com/content/geo-members-deliver-letter-u-presidents-office>

GEO members worked hard to send the message that GSRAs deserve the right to determine their own future with respect to union representation. Our calls and faxes flooded the offices of the President and other administrators. **Next up is the Regents Meeting next week, where we will continue to lobby the University to address this issue.**

Fast ways to get involved now!

- 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 - includes RSS updates