

## U-M, GEO Still Far Apart at Bargaining Table

	<b>GEO proposed:</b>	<b>UM responded:</b>						
<b>Article 10: Salaries</b>	Yearly raises for life of contract: <b>3%, 3%, 4.5%</b>	Yearly raises for life of contract: <b>2%, 1.5%, 2%</b>						
<b>Article 11: Benefits</b>	Accepted co-pay increase if out-of-pocket co-pay of \$250 added to contract	<b>Kept increased co-pays, rejected co-pay cap</b>						
		<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Doctor visit</td> <td>\$20 (33% increase)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>ER visit</td> <td>\$75 (50% increase)</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Tier 3 prescriptions</td> <td>\$35 (17% increase)</td> </tr> </table>	Doctor visit	\$20 (33% increase)	ER visit	\$75 (50% increase)	Tier 3 prescriptions	\$35 (17% increase)
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Tier 3 prescriptions	\$35 (17% increase)							
	Vision coverage included	<b>No vision coverage</b>						
	Dental II standard coverage	<b>No Dental II standard coverage</b>						
	Low fraction employees auto-enrolled in Dental I	Accepted						
<b>Article 12: Childcare</b>	Eliminating spousal work/study requirement	Kept requirement, <b>no</b> expanded access						
	Eliminating financial qualifications	Kept requirement, <b>no</b> expanded access						
	Increasing subsidy to \$2500 for each child up to three	Subsidy of \$2250 for one child, \$3300 for two children, and \$4350 for three or more children (slight increases)						
<b>Article 19: Training</b>	Compenstated, lab-specific training	Accepted						
<b>Article 20: Tuition Waiver &amp; Fees</b>	Fee waiver (~\$90 a term)	<b>Rejected</b> request for fee waiver						
<b>Article 21: Employee Rights</b>	Guarantee of access to existing lactation space	Accepted						
<b>GSRA Representation</b>	Discussion of GSRA organizing rights	<b>Refused</b> to discuss						

**...show your support for our platform at Wednesday's Bargaining Session and Friday's GRADE-IN**

# Understanding the Issues

## Parents Speak Out about the 20 Hour Work Requirement

A priority for GEO this year has been to increase access to the child care subsidy. In particular, we have tried to eliminate the rule restricting eligibility for the subsidy to single parents and to parents whose spouses are either enrolled at least half-time to an undergraduate or graduate degree program or are employed outside the home for at least 20 hours per week. GEO's position has been that this rule falsely assumes that a spouse who does not work or study outside the home for at least 20 hours is available to provide child care. Rather than a one size fits all rule, subsidy eligibility should consider the circumstances of each family. This rule has had an outsized effect international students, whose spouses are often unable to work outside the home for more than 20 hours due to visa restrictions. In a bad economy, this rule has also burdened parents whose spouses are unemployed, underemployed or actively searching for work. The following are stories from GEO members about their experiences with the 20 hour work/study eligibility requirement:

### **Anonymous Grad Parent**

In the summer of 2009 I was deemed to be ineligible for a childcare subsidy. I was enrolled full time while studying for my prelim doctoral exams here at our home in Ann Arbor. My husband, who had just graduated from law school, was having trouble finding a job near our home in Michigan, so he returned to the city where he grew up to try using family connections to find work. During this time he was also studying for bar exam more than 40 hours per week.

The problem was that in order to get a job, he had to get a license and in order to get the license, he had to pass the bar exam, which requires months of preparation.

Where did that leave me? Back in Michigan, a de facto single Mom, studying full-time, paying our mortgage, and financially supporting myself, my daughter, and my husband who was living in another state and looking for work.

Despite all this, I was denied the subsidy by the financial aid office due to the 20 hr work/study requirement.

I appealed but had a terrible time. One of the counselors actually became inappropriate and, I'm sorry to say, just plain rude. For example, when I explained the situation with the bar exam, I also

### **Federico Pous, Romance Languages & Literatures**

My daughter was born during my first year of graduate school in March of 2007. In my second year (2007-08), my wife and I thought of sending her to day-care a couple days a week. When I applied for the subsidy, my wife was working 20 hours but pretty soon her hours were reduced to 8 hours per week. In consequence, I couldn't receive the subsidy and we ended up not sending her to day care. Both semesters were very chaotic as I was teaching for the first time and trying to complete all my classes while coordinating with my wife's schedule. In addition to her regular 8 hours of work, she was also looking for a job and applying to graduate school. We don't have family living in the area to help us out and give us a break.

The whole experience was overwhelming and in the last instance, very sad. How is it possible that people who need the subsidy are unable to get it? Even if for a few days, having access to child care would make a great difference.

Each time I see an international student who cannot have access to the child care subsidy due to this rule, or I find a student whose spouse has lost their job recently, I remember the hard times I had in my second year. This situation can be avoided. This rule should be changed for the best interest of all.

*Anonymous continues on next page*

# After Disappointing Admin Counter-proposals, Both Sides Work to Get Closer to Agreement

Although disappointed by the most recent economic proposals passed across the table by the Admin, the GEO Bargaining Team was encouraged by discussions held during Winter Break. Initially no bargaining sessions had been scheduled for the break, but after seeing the proposals presented by the Admin on the Friday before break, the GEO team requested that additional sessions be scheduled.

“When we saw their proposals last Friday we realized that we were further from agreement than we had hoped,” commented Patrick O’Mahen, GEO Bargaining Team member.

GEO took the initiative in finding space for a session on the Tuesday of Winter Break. The Administration was able to schedule a room for Friday.

“The additional sessions gave our team a chance to convey to the Admin the broad priorities that were decided at the last General Membership Meeting,” said Renee Echols, GEO’s Lead Negotiator. “We made it clear to the Admin that progress needs to be made in the areas of salary, out-of-pocket medical cost caps, dental coverage, and on the issue of opening up access to the child care subsidy.”

In a series of frank discussions, both sides worked to lay the groundwork for agreement on remaining issues.

“While we didn’t reach any agreement on these issues during the week, the team found the sessions extremely useful in determining the our best responses to the Admin’s most recent -- and disappointing -- round of counter proposals,” said Bargaining Team member Lauren Squires.

Especially encouraging was the Admin team’s invitation to GEO to propose a separate fund for grad parents who are denied access to the child care subsidy because of the 20 hour work requirement.

Another issue discussed at length was the co-pay cap proposed by GEO. In GEO’s last proposal, the introduction of an out of pocket cap was linked to acceptance of increased co-pays for doctor appointments, ER visits, and Tier 3 prescription drugs.

“It was good to know that the Admin is taking our ideas seriously and is working with us to find a framework within which we can make progress,” said O’Mahen. “That said, putting these caps into the contract will cost money, and we haven’t seen much of that from the University.”

Echols agreed, saying, “Thus far, negotiations over issues including disability accommodations, employee rights, and GSI training have proceeded cordially and collaboratively. What we need to see now is some movement from the university on our major economic proposals.”

## *Anonymous Grad Parent, continued*

confessed that it was my husband’s, not my, choice to find work in another state and that all of this put a serious burden on me as a mother. The pregnancy was unexpected and we were trying to fulfill all of our responsibilities. Rather than demonstrate sympathy, the financial aid counselor responded sarcastically saying: “the subsidy doesn’t cover situations where spouses CHOOSE to live apart.” Then went on to say, “Now, if you file for divorce, then I could help you.”

This comment really crossed the line. I felt personally attacked by a branch of the university that I had previously believed was supposed to support me so that I could focus on my education.

In the end I did get the subsidy due to a technicality that (I think) was intended for partners who were legally separated. Following the instructions from the Financial Aid office and the social worker at CEW, I provided statements from a marriage counselor, the social worker at CEW, and also our priest stating that my husband and I were “separated.” Throughout the process, I made it clear that this was a temporary separation. Despite all the support I received from third parties and despite my honesty with him, the original financial aid counselor accused me of trying to deceive him.

In my experience, the financial aid office acted as an adversary to my receiving assistance to help pay for childcare. They were unsupportive, to say the least.

# ***IGSI Voices bring movement on SEVIS reimbursement issue***

Our Bargaining Team was having trouble convincing the Administration that IGSI's were missing out on their right to have their SEVIS fee reimbursed. We reached out to international grads and shared some of their comments with the Administration. In its next round of proposals, the Admin brought back language that, while not perfect, comes closer to meeting the needs of IGSI's. Below are samples of the feedback we heard.

"I was not informed of the fact that I can get the SEVIS fee reimbursed until the end of the first year of my employment as a GSI and thus missed my opportunity. I'd be happy to see the first term deadline removed or adjusted so that we can rightfully claim the reimbursement."

"It has come to my knowledge that SEVIS fees are refundable to GSIs. Unfortunately I only found this out much later after my first term of employment from GEO. I was not aware of any information available on this in my department when I was hired. Can I still apply for my SEVIS fee reimbursement?"

"I applied for the SEVIS fee reimbursement in the first term itself, and received my payment soon after. I wouldn't have known about it, though, if the GEO hadn't told me."

"I myself didn't know the SEVIS fee could be reimbursed, and didn't apply for it when I was employed as a GSI. When one GEO representative in my department informed me about this, I was not able to do it, since it was my 3rd term of the employment. So I support to automate the reimbursement process to make the process easier and transparent."

"This is from an international GSI. I did not learned that I could ask the university for a reimbursement of my SEVIS fee until I was in my second or third year. At the time I learned about this, almost none of my friends knew that this possibility existed. Moreover, not a single one of my friends had claimed this reimbursement, since they found out about it when they were passed the second year themselves (which is pass the deadline)."

**Save the Date: Urgent Actions**  
**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:***

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

**March 9:** GEO counters on economic proposals (Palmer Commons, Great Lakes Central, 4th Floor)

**March 11:** Topics TBD (Palmer Commons, Plaza Room, 3rd Floor)

## ***General Membership Meeting***

**Wednesday, March 16** @ the Michigan League, Vandenburg Room, 6-8pm

## ***Upcoming Campaign Actions***

**Friday, March 11:** GRADE-IN!!

## **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 & bargaining update hash #geobarg
- 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
- Planning a department meeting & want some fellow members or staff there? Request @ [umgeo.org/meeting](http://umgeo.org/meeting)