

PRESIDENT

Kiara Vigil
American Culture

As the current Vice President of GEO during this past contract year, and as an active member of the solidarity and political action committee during the 06-07 year working on the "Vote No on Prop 2" campaign and also the "Benefits for All" campaign I feel excited about the opportunity to serve GEO as President, and therefore, continue building on the skills I have been developing thus far through these other roles in the union. In particular, I have already attended the Huron Valley Central Labor Council and All Campus Labor Council meetings and would like to continue to represent GEO as necessary to these and other organizations, as well as represent GEO at the convention for the American Federation of Teachers. In addition, work as VP has brought me into close contact with non-union organizations, both graduate and undergraduate in nature, and as the chair of the Stewards Council I have come to know individual members of GEO and would like to continue this type of one-on-one organizing as the President of GEO. Furthermore, as the VP I was responsible for planning stewards' meetings, and supervising the staff, both of these activities position me well to continue to plan larger meetings, like membership meetings, and to help facilitate smaller meetings between the officer core and the staff, and to actively contribute to committees that I could sit-in on as needed. All this previous GEO work aside, I have been continuously inspired by the work of other volunteers who have contributed to making this past contract campaign an incredible success, and I look forward to the opportunity to continue to work closely with such a dedicated and caring group of people, fighting for what is just and working to enforce the benefits we have fought for in our new contract.

In solidarity,
Kiara M. Vigil (American Culture, PhD candidate)

VICE PRESIDENT

Melissa Sanders
Psychology

Of all the positions available, I think that my natural talents are most closely aligned with this one. It takes a particular kind of person to be vice president: one who has a good understanding of both the short and long-term pressures facing GEO (in order to set effective agendas), one who enjoys lots of invisible, perhaps even thankless, behind the scenes work (such as, say, data entry), and someone who doesn't mind playing phone/email tag with tons of people. Personally, I feel most comfortable in exactly these kinds of roles, and find myself taking them on over and over. For example, I was a leading member (and chaired virtually every meeting) of a socialist group while I was at Oberlin College. Since then, I have been elected onto the group's national leadership and given the task of orchestrating regular phone conferences between our women members and our more isolated members. In both situations, I am primarily responsible with setting agendas that will be and stay relevant, remind people to call in, and chair the meeting itself.

Qualifications aside, I am running for the same reason everyone else is: I love GEO! I was very active in the contract campaign this year and made some good strides in organizing the psychology department. I believe I have proved to be an adaptive and flexible union member, and since October I have chaired membership meetings, entered and analyzed data for the union, and led picket lines. I am fully committed to keeping GEO as strong next year as it is right now, and as Vice President I would try and provide the union with a solid organizational infrastructure and good lines of communication.

Ian Flora
Philosophy

My campaign for vice-president spins, like a hurricane, around frustration and dismay at the University's official response to GEO's efforts in extending fair and equitable treatment to all Graduate Employees. Said response is enshrined in LS&A Dean Terrence McDonald's letter of March 21. I envision a campus where no University official would even *think* of directing such trivializing, gossipmongering and misrepresentative remarks at members of the University community in an official capacity. I plan to move toward this vision in three ways: 1) aggressive outreach, 2) supportive leadership, 3) substantive party line.

1) This contract cycle showed that GEO cares and is willing to fight for the most vulnerable aspects of our bargaining unit: low-fraction employees, parents, members with mental health concerns...the list goes on. Our unprecedented victories in these and other areas make absolutely clear what has always been true: that this Union is for all Graduate Employees. As vice-president, I would support and facilitate aggressive efforts to bring previously-marginal groups, departments and programs into the active core of the Union. We saw wonderful progress this year in places

like Urban Planning and Physics. I have my eye on Music and Engineering, among others. GEO will march into the next contract campaign stronger than ever. They thought we were organized this year? Wait till they see us next time.

2) As GEO vice-president, I would be at the service of the Stewards' Council. The Council is the main decision-making body of the Union. As this last contract campaign proved, it is made up of talented organizers who will do what it takes to serve their Union. Such a group, however, needs a compass to align its energies and facilitate its efforts. I would continue Kiara Vigil's tradition of excellent service in this regard. I would create a space that allows the Council's enthusiasm and talent to strengthen the Union as we move into the future. I would turn all my knowledge of organization and persuasion toward developing a productive cohesion and harmony among officers, staff and Stewards. I would foster a space where productive conversation is the norm, dissent is welcome, and dialogue leads smoothly into action.

3) GEO is renowned among labor organizations for its responsiveness to its membership, and the way in which every member has a genuine say in what their Union does. Sometimes, that responsiveness means delivering substantive positions for members to consider and respond to. Hence, I would spend a portion of the Stewards' Council's time to develop, as needed, the Union's stance on various issues of importance to our membership and the community.

In my organizing conversations during this last campaign, my interlocutors (which included undergrads, professors and fellow employees) would often ask me "what does the Union think of x?" x ranged from issues as mundane as whether GSIs should make up classes following a job action to its reaction to various University pronouncements (such as Dean McDonald's letter). I often didn't know what to tell them, and not because I was out of the loop. My inability to speak for the organization of which I was a leader was often awkward and potentially disorganizing. What I gleaned from these experiences is that people often want to know what the Union thinks before they get involved. They don't have to agree—solidarity does not equal uniformity—but they want to know that their leadership has thought about the issue and has a plan. We must serve such members just as much as we serve the members who want to get involved and shape Union decision-making.

Every officer, committee chair and steward has a solemn duty to pass on a stronger Union than the one they inherited. The current leadership has more than lived up to that, and I hope to join in the proud tradition of building labor strength at the University and standing strong against exploitation. I would appreciate your vote.

TREASURER

Denise Bailey
Sociology

Before I came to grad school I worked in an accounts receivables department for two years, so I'm familiar with budgets, payments, keeping track of money, and the software that usually goes along with such things. I also have already received a little training for the position as I was treasurer this past semester. As treasurer I'd also like to work on increasing membership numbers and familiarizing more people on campus about GEO and what we do. I'm a fast learner and a leader with a cooperative spirit.

SECRETARY

COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE CHAIR

Katie Will

Comm Chair nomination statement

April 15, 2008

Hi! I'm a third-year PhD student in English, and I'm running for chair of the Communications committee. In complete defiance of the five-paragraph essay form, I'd like to list—in no particularly argumentative order—why I'm qualified for (and would love to hold) this position.

- I have committee experience. I've been on the Comm committee for over a year and have helped do the grunt work for our major projects, including the monthly newsletters and yearly planner. I'm in close contact with our current chair, Patrick O'Mahen, and have a clear sense of the position's duties.
- I have other communications qualifications. I'm an English grad student, so that's a big plus. I have undergrad degrees in journalism and English; I also reported, wrote articles and feature stories, copy edited, and did page layout for our daily college newspaper. I've worked as a PR intern for the Wisconsin Supreme Court, and I spent a couple of summers writing and proofreading advertising copy at a magazine publishing company. That means I've written and read a lot of "strategic communication," making me qualified to both criticize and produce it for GEO.
- I have surreptitious dreams of being a graphic designer. The visual creativity required by this position is one of my favorite things about it. I helped design the 2007-2008 GEO planner using Adobe InDesign; I also make posters for various English department events, and I love fonts enough to count "Helvetica" among my favorite recent movies. If my dorkiness doesn't qualify me, I don't know what will.
- I'm committed to promoting public understanding of GEO's activities and initiatives. I'm extremely invested in talking with others—in GEO, in my department, and across the university—about their relationships with our union, but also about their personal interests and concerns. I'm committed to listening to and synthesizing a diverse range of opinions and viewpoints. My goal as Comm chair will be to provide a clear line of communication between GEO and everyone who comes in contact with it, whether they're union members, non-members, faculty, undergrads, or others in and beyond the Ann Arbor community.

ORGANIZING COMMITTEE CHAIR

Alex Reusing
Anthropology

I've been looking forward to contract year one since I started organizing with GEO a little less than two years ago. This contract proved that we are very strong, but we can be still stronger! Year one is our chance to focus on long-term goals for development in under-represented departments and on increasing our associate member numbers and their involvement. We do this the same way we ran this contract campaign: by finding issues that matter to our members and prospective associate members, and by developing member-driven campaigns around specific issues we create a process and an institution in which EVERY GRADUATE STUDENT can feel invested. This is possible, and the next twelve months presents both significant challenges and opportunities for doing it. For example, the upcoming presidential election could be something that brings members together and gets people previously not involved to reflect on the power of collective action; or, it could fracture us and the good will we have built with the excellent contract we just won. By continuing the project of building an effective and responsive union, we continue to grow stronger. I came to my first stewards meeting almost on a whim, thankful that my department (anthropology) had informed stewards that could serve as a source of information. I quickly came to realize that not all departments had equally robust organizations which effectively served to marginalize students in some departments from the resources and protection GEO provides. I've spent the past two academic years on the OC working to spread the word about GEO, helping in the important constitutional referendum, and organizing to win the new contract. I think that I have the experience to help GEO take this next step.

Melissa Sanders
Psychology

If the best decision I made over the last year was getting involved in GEO, then the second best decision was definitely joining the organizing committee. Until then, I had been volunteering to do odd jobs around the union and half-assedly trying to organize my home department, psychology. I felt too green and uninformed to go office visiting anywhere but there, but psych itself was monolithic and daunting...organizing it seemed like a Sisyphean task, to say the least. Being on the organizing committee helped me understand how organizing is approached in this union in a more holistic way, and with it came the confidence to contribute ideas about organizing strategies and how to implement them. This certainly helped me organize better - my work in the psych department certainly became more regular and turned out a decent (for psych, at least) number of people to bargaining sessions, membership meetings, and the strike (WOO!).

As organizing chair, I would work hard to make the steward's council feel as empowered to organize as I do now. I think that organizing needs to have a prominent place on every stew's agenda in order to discuss the how and why stews should organize their

departments. I hope to instill union members with a fine appreciation of commitment tracking, which will give the union insight into where it stands with its own membership, and office visiting, which as handouts full of graphs and tables can tell you is one of our most effective organizing tools. And most importantly, I will try to keep the OC meetings themselves awesome and welcoming, in the fine tradition of the outgoing co-chairs, S(matt).

GRIEVANCE COMMITTEE CHAIR

Patrick Parker
History

I have only been with GEO for one year, but the more involved I get with this organization, be it as a member of the Grievance Committee, a strike captain, or an activist-at-large, the more excited I get about the work that we do. It is with this in mind, as well as my acknowledged naked ambition, that I am running for chair (or co-chair) of either the Grievance or Solidarity/Political Action Committee. As an undergraduate, I was heavily involved in leadership positions in several student organizations, such as running both the radio station and concert promotions group, which involved dealing with faculty, administrators, and fellow students and coordinating hundreds of volunteers. As a committee chair, I would put the organizational and logistical skills that I learned in those positions, and in my involvement with GEO this year, to work towards the continuing project of building a culture of solidarity on campus in order to protect our members and fight for greater social and academic justice.

This will be a busy year for both committees, with Grievance enforcing the new contract and playing a central role in the hours tracking campaign, and S/PAC working to build our relationships with other groups and organize campaigns around "Continuous Enrollment," diversity of faculty and the student body, the upcoming elections, and other pressing issues facing the grad student community. Either as chair or as a member, I hope to be heavily involved in this important work. Also, I really like meetings. My name is Patrick Parker, and I approve this message.

SOLIDARITY/POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE CHAIR

Shana Greenstein
Urban Planning

During the recent GEO strike, it became patently obvious that our power as a union came not only from our internal collective action, but from the solidarity shown to us by the other area unions, especially those working on campus projects. When thanking them, many of those who'd volunteered to lose a day's pay told us that by standing with us, they were, in fact, standing with all unions...that our victory was a victory for labor in general.

We had a big win. We didn't do it by ourselves.

Now, there are unions striking around the area and around the nation with whom we have the opportunity to stand in solidarity. I consider it an honor to reach across divides of class, of race, of profession, and stand together *as workers*.

Patrick Parker
History

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