

GRADUATE EMPLOYEES' ORGANIZATION BARGAINING BULLETIN

Issue

#5



HR STALLS OVER TABLE PLACEMENT AND LACK OF NAME PLACARDS

HR refused, again, to meet us in-person on Friday, instead forcing us to communicate through the state-appointed mediator, Micki Czerniak.

This week, we tried to pass our **Salary article** which demanded: **a living wage for all workers** and the **end to U-M's pay disparity policy between the Ann Arbor and Dearborn campuses**. Our proposal, **an annual increase of 15%, 15%, 12%, is necessary**. The cost of living in Ann Arbor has consistently outpaced our wages. According to MIT's Living Wage Institute, the current living wage in Ann Arbor is \$46,000—and if current trends continue the living wage will reach approximately \$60,000 by 2029.

We also asked HR about language, proposed in the articles they passed in November, demanding the names of all departmental stewards. HR tried to pass this proposal off as simple housekeeping, to help departments recognize official union representatives in their unit. But it is obvious that their true intent is to surveil students, no doubt so that union members might find themselves on academic probation or in disciplinary hearings, whenever it is convenient for the university. Besides, when HR comes to the room, they will learn again that **any graduate worker can speak on our union business – and that they must respond to all of us**.

We asked HR to meet us in the room and discuss our salary proposals directly, but they refused, instead insisting on a sidebar meeting with Micki and five members of our bargaining team. We unequivocally rejected this proposal and informed HR that we intend to **only bargain together**, in a room full of grad workers. Instead of discussing cost-of-living, HR used their time to lodge complaints about the orientation of the bargaining table, as well as the absence of namecards for the bargaining team – objections so trivial it is difficult to take seriously as a basis for refusing to bargain at all.

HR continues to argue that ground rules are not a legally-required subject of bargaining, even as they make nonsensical excuses and use their concerns about ground rules to refuse in-person negotiations. **Make it make sense!** Their demand to negotiate exclusively through sidebars also contravenes the terms of open bargaining that we established in the 2023 contract cycle. In short, HR has remained unwilling to meet with workers and bargain in good faith over issues that directly impact our living conditions.



FROM THE BARGAINING TABLE

I went into Friday's bargaining session looking forward to it. A lot of graduate workers have worked to write proposals for a stronger contract that better suits our needs. We've also prepared arguments and rationale for those proposals. Yet Friday was ultimately maddening: HR is unwilling to accept these demands unless a tiny group of five workers presents them and, more importantly, so long as the vast majority of graduate workers never hear from the horse's mouth how much they believe we should earn. HR's twisted, deliberately invidious interpretation of labor law is somehow even more infuriating. Although they are required by law to discuss wages with us, HR seems to believe "shuttle bargaining" suffices as a means with which they might meet their obligations to us as workers. Last week made clear that "shuttle bargaining" is not really about bargaining, it's a method for undermining and ultimately breaking the power we have when we negotiate as a union, a collective of many more people than the five to whom HR wants to speak in private.

-Daniel, English

WHAT'S NEXT?

HR's continued refusal to come to the bargaining table and engage with our demands is indicative of one thing only: **their fear of our collective power.** We know that our leverage comes from our ability to organize our co-workers and when we are able to build enough pressure, we can achieve anything. Our goals are two-fold: 1) win our contract demands, and 2) get HR to the bargaining table.

On Friday, we will bring Article X: ICE Off Campus to the table (**Read our proposal here: bit.ly/GEOImmigrationDemands**). UM has proven time and again that they view our labor as disposable and if given the choice, would rather capitulate to federal pressures than protect their workers. The impacts of these demands reach far beyond graduate workers as they concern the safety and protection of every single person on UM's campus. As we approach our next bargaining session, we need to continue talking to our co-workers, staff, and faculty in our departments and get people to the bargaining room to show HR that ICE does not belong on our campus.

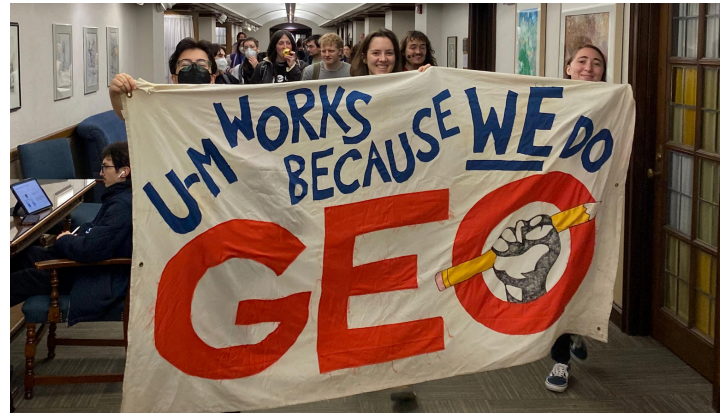
In the coming days, we must continue to build power and force HR to the table – that is the only way to wage a successful fight for every worker's safety, autonomy, and job security.

What to do this week:

- Go doorknocking in your departments with the ICE Off Campus proposal (bit.ly/GEOImmigrationDemands). You can sign up for a doorknocking session here: <http://bit.ly/GEOOutreachPlans>
- Make a plan with your co-workers to come to **bargaining on Friday, 02/06!**

I'm not a graduate worker. What can I do to help?

- **Sign this open-letter:** bit.ly/ICEOffCampusUM, demanding that ICE stay off UM's campus. Please share the letter with your communities
- Come to bargaining on Friday, 02/06, where we will bring these demands to HR and bring your co-workers. RSVP here: <http://bit.ly/GEOBargainingRSVP>
- Subscribe to the allies listserv to get regular updates about bargaining and other collective actions that need your support: <https://bit.ly/GEOAllies>



SEE YOU AT:

- Organizing Committee: Monday @ 4 PM, GEO Office and Zoom
- Organizing Assembly: Wednesday @ 6 PM, GEO Office and Zoom
- Bargaining Session #6: Friday, Feb 6th @ 11AM and on Zoom

BARGAIN! TOGETHER! NOW!



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