

Issue

#15

GRADUATE EMPLOYEES' ORGANIZATION BARGAINING BULLETIN



GSRAS AND INT'L WORKERS DENIED RIGHTS ONCE AGAIN

WHAT HAPPENED?

On May 15, we passed articles establishing clearer definitions of academic good standing; expanding available training on fieldwork, immigration know-your-rights, and deescalation for graduate workers; and extending the minimum guaranteed funding to 6 years for all graduate students.

We heard powerful testimonials (excerpted here!) from students who were unjustly dismissed from their programs based on capricious definitions of good standing, who were provided with inadequate training, and who have felt increasingly less safe without care-based alternatives to armed police for crisis resolution.

HR claimed that good standing definitions are not an employment-related issue, despite the fact that grad workers have lost employment and faced job insecurity as a result of these definitions. They went on to deny that guaranteed funding is in any way related to wages, hours, or working conditions; and stated that de-escalation training by police officers was appropriate and sufficient. These are all fundamentally flawed positions!

In the afternoon, HR passed counter-proposals that struck down essentially all of GEO's proposed expansions of healthcare access and support for international graduate workers.

When asked for clarification about why HR separated newly-accreted GSRAs out of healthcare eligibility, they gestured vaguely towards "standard practices in GSRA departments," undermining GSRAs' inclusion in our collective bargaining unit.

When asked why they struck a much-needed increase to the \$20,000 international worker support fund (which has been fully depleted within months each year since we won it), Katie DeLong said: **"that is just as much as we are willing to offer at this time."** Meanwhile, GEO made up for U-M's lack of immigration support by organizing Know-Your-Rights trainings, retaining lawyers, operating a crisis hotline, and raising funds for our coworkers. It's time U-M stepped up.



ON THE IMPORTANCE OF ABOLITION... HEAR FROM YOUR CO-WORKER

"On October 7, 2024, I, along with many students, staff, faculty, and my own advisor, was indiscriminately pepper-sprayed by a UMPD sergeant during a campus protest. That experience was not just personally painful and frightening. It was also a very clear reminder of what many Black people, organizers, and racially marginalized students already know: police presence does not automatically produce safety [...] **Abolition is not the absence of safety. It is the presence of the resources, relationships, and structures that actually keep people alive and supported.** For graduate workers, that means having the training, time, compensation, and institutional support to respond to conflict and crisis without defaulting to police. That is why this matters."



WHAT'S NEXT?



TESTIMONIALS FROM DEPARTMENTS! HEAR FROM YOUR CO-WORKERS!



A previous advisor unilaterally initiated a change of advisor without timely prior notice to the grad worker. Even though the grad worker found two other faculty members who offered to fund the next three years of study while the grad worker searched for a new advisor, the department concluded that the grad worker was on probation because of the lack of an advisor. As such, the department denied the grad worker's GSI candidacy, explaining it was because they lacked proper academic standing by having no advisor at the time. They had to scramble to find a new advisor. Once they did, the grad worker was able to initiate an appeal on their academic standing. The grad worker is an international student, so they had no other access to lawful employment during the time it took to conduct the appeal. That process took ~4 months, and the timespan implicated their student visa. They had another three-month delay due to administrative checks for their visa."

-Robotics

Based on the increased confidence he gained from a Wilderness First Aid training prior to working at Camp Davis (a training not made available to previous GSIs), a second year PhD student stressed the importance of this article. It is vital to have employee training for worker and student safety and confidence. Camp Davis GSIs are often in national forests doing field work, and without adequate safety training students and GSIs felt unprepared to deal with health emergencies. Camp Davis GSIs are also required to drive fleet vehicles and large vans, and do not receive the specialized training they need. Fieldwork experiences like those offered at Camp Davis and the Biostation make U-M a leader in place-based learning, but these unique experiences require a safe environment where students can flourish and us as GSI can provide the best kind of education for them.

-Earth Sciences

NEXT BAGAGINING SESSION: JUNE 5TH

- Location and time info

SEE YOU AT:

- Contract Committee gMondays @ 1 PM, GEO Office and Zoom
- Organizing Committee: Mondays @ 3 PM, GEO Office and Zoom
- Organizing Assembly: Every other Wednesday @ 6 PM, GEO Office and Zoom

"We were confused and increasingly frustrated at the university's email response: simply contact DPSS and comply with ICE if they are right in front of us? We needed more resources and more ways to protect each other. When the university did not provide enough resources, we took matters into our own hands because we needed a Know Your Rights training and multi-lingual resources."

-Climate and Space

🔊 Hear from our coworkers about what *actually* went down in the bargaining room on our new podcast, **This Week at the Table!** bit.ly/GEOPodcast



GRADUATE EMPLOYEES ORGANIZATION

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