

Issue

#18

GRADUATE EMPLOYEES' ORGANIZATION MINI BARGAINING BULLETIN



U-M REFUSES TO EXPAND SUPPORT FOR INTERNATIONAL WORKERS AMID DHS ATTACKS; NO HOLIDAYS FOR GRAD WORKERS



Last bargaining session, grad workers...

- Questioned HR on the federal changes to duration of status, and emphasized increasing the assistance fund accordingly. U-M claimed visas aren't related to working conditions, and refused to engage
- Questioned HR on how to move towards agreeable language on AI and Data Rights
- Passed counterproposals on Changes Resulting in Special Conferences, Anti-Discrimination and Equal Opportunity, and Payroll Deductions (dues)
- Heard HR's counterproposals on Training as well as Working Hours and Workload

Swipe to learn more, and come discuss at Organizing Assembly on Wednesday, 8/5!

U-M refuses to discuss support for international students and workers

At the table, grad workers asked Academic HR (who represents the University) about how they plan to address a federal rule that sets a 4-year limit on international students and workers duration of status on their I-20s. Grad workers chose to discuss this at the table, because U-M has not released adequate guidance on this time-sensitive issue.

U-M's lead negotiator, who has struck all of our proposals to support international workers, **claimed that changes to I-20 rules are an "academic issue" that does not impact our working conditions. This is categorically false;** international grads need an I-20 to be able to work.

Even with this drastic rule on the horizon, U-M thinks a meager \$20k legal fund, no SEVIS fee reimbursements for GSRAs, no additional visa fee coverage, and no contractually-guaranteed funding is enough to support international grad workers.

Grad workers say:

"HR doesn't want to engage with anything related to international students' safety and protection"

Unlike AHR, grad workers have analyzed the entire rule, and have compiled resources at bit.ly/GEODSOnePager

What does HR actually have the power to give us?

Pretty much anything! Academic HR represents the interests of the U-M administration and the Regents. So when we as grad workers are asking for a larger legal aid fund for international workers at the bargaining table, we are essentially asking the Regents to provide more funds! When they refuse (which they have), that is the Regents not wanting to help support international workers!

U-M Says AI and Data Rights are Too Hard

The University argued for its ability to use AI to evaluate and track grad workers without restrictions, claiming they lack the infrastructure to track workers' consent to the use of these tools.

U-M also criticized grad workers for having "too broad" a definition for AI, but failed to provide its own definition

Grad workers say:

"I run human-subjects studies with several participants, managing multiple levels of consent. There is no reason U-M cannot do the same to ensure workers' AI and Data Rights. The IRB is proof this is possible. They just don't want to"

Grad Worker's Counterproposal: Changes Resulting in Special Conferences

U-M frequently changes its rules and guidelines in ways that impact grad workers. This article ensures that when they make such changes, grad workers are provided with documentation of the change, and can meet with the University to discuss it.

Grad Worker's Counterproposal: Anti-Discrimination

U-M's most recent language allowed them to disclose union membership status to the federal government, and tied membership status information to a Standard Practice Guideline (SPG) that the university could change at any time.

Grad workers passed a proposal with stronger language protecting membership status as part of a personnel record. It also requires the University to notify GEO and the worker of any request for membership status from the federal government.

Grad Worker's Counterproposal: Payroll Deductions (dues)

Our current contract has a "no interference" clause in the dues deduction protocol, which could be used by U-M to unilaterally end union dues collection under a broad set of circumstances interpreted as "interference".

Grad workers removed this clause because it threatened our ability to protect each other through dues-funded programs, like the solidarity fund. Labor law already allows the University to stop the automatic deduction of dues from the paychecks of union membership, if the union goes on strike.



Grad Workers Caucus: Visa changes, AI policies

In the break after lunch, grad workers caucused to unpack HR's ignorance of international work requirements. Grad workers also discussed how HR continuously puts the burden of defining "agreeable" terms on us. We based our proposal for the assistance fund on the facts of the financial burden international students face, but they say it's "too much" without bothering to come up with a fact-based number themselves. They say our definition of AI is "too broad," but they were unwilling to pass back an acceptable definition of AI in their counterproposal.

In caucus, grad workers also discussed U-M's initiation of "fact-finding", a process where a state-appointed fact finder will review both parties' proposals and make non-binding recommendations. we believe that this constitutes an attempt to pressure grad workers into conceding on our demands instead of continuing to fight for what we need. Stay tuned for more information on the process and what it might mean for our organizing!



HR Counter-Proposal: Training

On May 15th, GEO passed language to better protect workers at Camp Davis, who testified to feeling unprepared for the driving and wilderness conditions they face while performing fieldwork there. The language GEO passed on May 15th also codified KYR and De-Escalation training.

HR asked if “field work” referred to “field trips?” and said that adequately preparing workers wasn’t something that needed to be codified in the contract. HR said the cost of providing trainings, generally, is too high. HR also said that additional immigration and Know-Your-Rights (KYR) trainings wasn’t necessary, and that the University couldn’t support GEO-lead KYR trainings, **despite failing to provide evidence that U-M personnel had adequate experience in immigration law on the level of GEO’s own immigration lawyers.**

Grad workers say:

“Clearly [the immigration/de-escalation trainings] need to be better if employees are making administrative errors that result in people being detained by ICE,”

and

“The cost of not providing trainings is cases like Philippe[‘s] in Architecture [who was kidnapped by ICE].”

HR Counter-Proposal: Working Hours and Workload

On May 1st, GEO passed language codifying protections for GSRA working hours that would prevent grad workers on a 20-hr per week appointment from having to work 60-hr weeks, which is a common occurrence for GSRA's.

HR struck any language protecting GSRA working hours, replacing it with "Employment fractions for GSRA's shall be determined and assigned **at the sole discretion of the appointing unit.**" HR also struck existing contract language protecting graduate workers from having to work university holidays, and a proposed 4 weeks of vacation time.

HR insisted that management has the right to determine worker responsibilities, saying "we have a right to determine when the work is done." Apparently U-M is willing to sacrifice our wellbeing to achieve management goals.

Testimonial:

"In my [electrical engineering] lab, **PhD students are expected to work long hours through the weekend.** Many students stay up all night working and get very little sleep. Sometimes, students are given deadlines only 24-48 hours in advance, forced to **work without taking a break for 24-48 hours to meet the deadline.** Not sleeping and working long hours to meet deadline[s] is **bad for workers' physical and mental health...** If students don't meet these deadlines [...], they are sometimes told that they are not cut out to be in this lab."

Share your own experience by submitting a testimonial at bit.ly/GEOTestimonialForm

MY PI
MAKES ME WORK
80 HOURS A WEEK

**SEE YOU AT:
ORGANIZING ASSEMBLY ON
AUGUST 5TH @ 6 PM!
NEXT BARGAINING ON AUGUST
14TH**

GEO Office (213 W Liberty St), and on zoom
(bit.ly/GEOMemberPortal). There will be
pizza!!

