Why Sign a Yellow GEO Membership Card?

Will I get in trouble for being a steward?

Stewards have even more protection against retaliation than other union members. The best way to prevent retaliation is to be as visible as possible, so that the university knows that the GEO is strong.

Why should I sign a membership card?

Signing a membership card doesn’t cost you anything, but it does allow you to vote on all of the union’s affairs. Card-signing members elect the volunteer GEO officers, ratify contracts, vote on the union’s budget, and have a say in everything the union does.

Who do I contact with questions?

Email Chief Steward Andrea Craft at stewards@uic-geo.net. Or you can call the GEO at 312-733-9641.

What should I do next?

Contact the GEO. Pick up some yellow GEO membership cards and ask your colleagues to sign them. Attend the next Stewards Council meeting. Set up a meeting in your department to talk about the GEO. If you have questions, email or call us!

The GEO is the labor union that represents Teaching Assistants and Graduate Assistants at UIC. By coming together and working through your union, graduate employees negotiate wages, benefits, and working conditions with the UIC administration.

The GEO is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Illinois Federation of Teachers, and the AFL-CIO. The GEO is one of about 50 recognized unions of graduate employees throughout the United States and Canada.

By working through the GEO, graduate employees have won guaranteed tuition waivers, job security, back pay, minimum stipends, dental and vision insurance, and much more.
Why are Stewards Important to GEO?

Stewards create a stronger sense of support and solidarity among graduate employees across the university.

Stewards represent their departments to the GEO. That’s why we need several stewards in every department.

Stewards establish the networks and organization needed for collective action.

Stewards are visible and daily reminders to fellow members and the UIC administration that the GEO is here to protect employees’ rights.

Stewards are the union’s eyes and ears. They are the first to locate problems and begin to solve them through the grievance procedure or other actions.

What can I do to get started?

Know the GEO contract. If you have questions, email a union leader who can answer them at geo@uic-geo.net.

Be visible! Let everyone in your department know that you are a steward by sending an email to your colleagues. Wear your GEO t-shirt, GEO buttons, and hang a GEO door card on your office door.

Start talking to people in your department about the GEO by asking them to sign a yellow membership card. Ask people about their work, and find out if there are any problems. Invite them to upcoming GEO events, such as socials and bargaining sessions.

When most people have signed membership cards, set up a GEO meeting in your department. GEO leaders and staff can help by providing agendas, materials, and other resources.

The Stewards Council makes decisions about and carries out GEO’s organizing campaigns. Come to Stewards Council meetings to help set your union’s course!

FAQs for Stewards

How do I become a steward?

You can be elected by other graduate employees in your department, or volunteer—we’re always looking for active members.

How much time will it take?

Generally, being a steward takes only a couple hours per week. As you do your normal work activities, remember to talk to your colleagues about their work and the GEO.

I’m an international student. Am I in the union?

Yes. International graduate employees may participate in the union, become stewards, and hold elected union offices. Union participation may not be considered or used against you when renewing a visa.