

How to get involved

We are a member-run union, which means graduate employees like you are involved in every aspect of making the union work. There are many ways to get involved. You can:

- Become a department steward to improve working conditions in your department
- Become a member of the GEO Organizing Committee and reach out to grad employees across campus
- Work on the GEO Communications Committee to help share information with your colleagues
- Work with one of the caucuses (smaller working groups) to address more specific issues: current caucuses include a Health Care Working Group, a Trans/Queer Caucus, a Parents' Working Group, an International Students' Working Group, a Lab Sciences' Working Group, and a West Campus Working Group.
- Start a caucus to address issues that impact you

And much more! Contact your department steward, or email GEO at geo@uic-geo.net for more information about how to get involved in building a strong union for graduate employees at UIC.

Contact the GEO:

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GEO
GRADUATE
EMPLOYEES
ORGANIZATION
LOCAL 6297 IFT-AFT AFL-CIO

GRADUATE
EMPLOYEES
ORGANIZATION

What is the GEO?

The Graduate Employees Organization (GEO) is the labor union that represents more than 1,400 Teaching Assistants (TA) and Graduate Assistants (GA) at UIC. By working together, graduate students at UIC negotiate with the UIC administration for improvements in our working conditions. Because we have a union, we have the right to negotiate with the UIC administration about:

- Pay rates and pay increases
- Tuition waivers
- Workload limits
- Health, vision, and dental benefits
- A fair grievance procedure
- Protection for the benefits we have

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

What is a union?

A union is a formal organization of workers who have come together to advocate for their rights. It is a way for workers to have a say in their workplace and to bargain collectively with management to address issues of concern, including wages, benefits and workplace conditions. The result of the bargaining is a legally binding union contract, which lays out all the agreements between the union and management.

The only way GEO wins good terms in our contract is through organizing a contract campaign during which members participate in collective actions. We continue to actively build

the union to support our members, and to be ready for the next contract campaign.

What have we accomplished by working together?

Through the work of GEO members, TAs and GAs at UIC now have:

- Guaranteed tuition waivers
- Yearly wage increases
- Dental and vision coverage
- Fee waivers each semester:
- Service Fee
- Health Service Fee
- Academic Facilities and Maintenance Assessment
- Library & Information Technology Assessment
- A contribution toward Campus Care

What have we recently accomplished?

In March 2016, we negotiated a new contract with the UIC administration, which is valid until August 2018. We made significant gains during this period, including:

- Increased wages
- Improved health care coverage for graduate employees and their families
- 1 paid personal day per semester
- Stronger nondiscrimination protections, adding “gender identity and gender expression” and “pregnancy” as protected statuses, and using gender-neutral language throughout the contract
- Processes to address consistently late course assignments, and to address concerns with the university

We continue to build our union across campus, and to support graduate employees.

Why sign a yellow GEO membership card?

All TAs and GAs who have appointments between 25% and 67% FTE are covered by the GEO contract which sets our working conditions, such as our pay rate, health-care benefits, and much more. By signing a yellow membership card, you will have the right to vote on how the union is run: you get to vote for union leaders, run for office, and help set the future direction of our union. At the same time you will be able to show your support for the GEO’s mission to improve working conditions for TAs and GAs at UIC.

Don’t have a yellow card? Email us at geo@uic-geo.net to get one today.

RAs and the GEO

Research Assistants (RAs) support the work of GEO and by signing a yellow membership cards become non-voting, solidarity members of GEO. RAs also take on active roles as stewards and elected officials within the GEO. Unfortunately, due to state law RAs are not included in the bargaining unit. As a result, RAs are not covered by the GEO contract and cannot vote on GEO matters, although the union’s gains often prompt the University to improve RA working conditions. If you are an RA and would like to be part of GEO, welcome!