

## Tuition Waivers are Under Attack

Throughout our union's history, GEO members have consistently fought to protect tuition waivers in the face of repeated attempts by UIUC to diminish them.

Over 1,000 GEO members went on strike on November 16-17, 2009 to win tuition waiver protection in our collective bargaining agreement. Almost immediately (January, 2010) the University took away tuition waivers from incoming graduate employees in the College of Fine and Applied Arts.

In 2011, the GEO won an arbitration regarding changes in tuition waiver policy in Fine and Applied Arts; the arbitrator agreed that the University could not change tuition waivers for graduate employees already at the University. The University owed the FAA students the tuition they had paid. However, the University refused to comply with the arbitrator's decision until the GEO threatened to strike in 2012. In early 2013, University finally paid FAA graduate students nearly half a millions dollars for tuition they were forced to pay.

In 2013, Masters in Computer Science (MCS) students and MA students in Statistics were informed that they could not hold waiver-generating appointments. The two departments agreed to reverse their stance on assistantships after meeting with GEO.

In 2014, incoming MCS students were informed that the Computer Science department would not allow them to hold assistantships in CS and would seek a cash sum as tuition reimbursement for all MCS students who received waiver-generating appointments outside of CS. As a result of this policy change, most MCS students were hired as hourly employees. Hourly employees do the same work as Graduate Assistants and Teaching Assistants, but are not awarded tuition waivers. We went to arbitration in August 2015 and still await a decision in that case. **If departments designated as "reimbursable" were allowed to operate in this way, 95% of graduate employees on campus could be impacted.**

In fall 2015, the Materials Science and Energy Systems programs told their students that they would not be able hold appointments because the Department was designated as self-supporting. Although the Department said that the self-supporting classification was an error, the Department reiterated that the program is designated to ask for a cash sum as tuition reimbursement. Like the MCS students, the MS and ES students are functionally unable to get appointments because their employing department would have to reimburse their academic departments. **During the course of this grievance the University Administration told GEO representatives that the Graduate College Handbook (which sets the tuition and fee waiver policy) is "merely supplemental" and "not meant to impede the business practices of the University."**

### Why should you care?

If these departments can change tuition waiver policies, ignore the Graduate Handbook, the GEO Contract, and agreements with the GEO, what prevents other departments from doing the same thing? Do you think the University should operate as a business or as an institute of higher learning? Do you want the University to prioritize your livelihood over its business practices?

**The University works because we do!**

**Questions?**

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