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A year after faculty won job improvements following their strike,

Seven Loyola University Chicago Graduate Workers & Their Student Supporters Arrested During Peaceful Protest

*Following the arrests, graduate workers called for a **walk out on April 24th** unless the university agrees to a fair union contract*

CHICAGO – Seven Loyola University Chicago graduate workers and their undergraduate student supporters were arrested on Monday morning during a peaceful protest over the school’s refusal to negotiate a fair union contract. The group, joined by undergraduates, faculty and community advocates, planned to hold a sit-in blockade at President Rooney’s office until they were invited in to discuss job improvements. They were arrested shortly after.

“If Loyola administrators thought today’s arrests would intimidate us, they were wrong,” said Yiran Zhang a graduate worker at Loyola University Chicago. “Their actions leave us no other choice. The prospect of facing more weeks, months, semesters constantly worried about making ends meet intimidates us more than taking arrest. If this is what it takes to get a contract, so be it. We’re calling on all of our colleagues and students to join us in a walk out on April 24th if administrators don’t agree to a fair deal with graduate workers. If we don’t get a contract, it will no longer be business as usual.”

A year after a faculty strike and student walkout over working conditions, tensions are mounting as the school again refuses to provide its employees with a contract and fair working conditions. Even though graduate workers – the masters and PhD students who do much of the research, teaching and grading on campus for extremely low pay – won their union back in February of 2017 with SEIU Local 73, the school has refused to come to a fair agreement.

“Loyola administrators should be ashamed. Despite using it’s so-called Jesuit social justice values as a promotional tool to lure in new students, when it comes to the labor of its workers, our school conveniently chooses to ignore them, refusing to pay us a fair wage or even begin talking about what that might look like,” said Liza DiStefano, a graduate worker at Loyola University Chicago. “No school that charges students over \$40,000 in tuition and fees should have employees who are racking up equivalent amounts of debt just to cover medical care and rent when their sub-par health insurance and measly paycheck regularly fail to cover the costs of living.”

BACKGROUND:

Graduate workers united together to build the Loyola University Chicago Graduate Workers Union, represented by SEIU Local 73. The union is a part of a larger movement among graduate workers and non-tenure track faculty at colleges and universities nationwide, who are unionizing to raise work standards, improve wages and benefits, establish job security and restore respect for their professions. At the neighboring University of Illinois Chicago, graduate workers just concluded a two-week strike, reaching a tentative agreement with the administration that includes pay increases, less expensive health care and other wins.

In April 2018, Loyola University non-tenure track faculty, represented by SEIU Local 73, ratified their first contract with the university, more than a year of negotiations, a strike and other protests. Graduate workers supported the efforts of the faculty. In July 2018, non-tenure track faculty at Fordham University won a new three-year contract, after a long fight, that secures huge wage increases for most adjunct faculty. In April 2018, Georgetown University agreed to allow a union election for graduate workers through a third-party process. Non-tenure track faculty at Saint Louis University have also formed a union. In September 2018, Brandeis University graduate workers won their first contract. By December 2018, Graduate workers at Illinois State University and Southern University of Illinois Edwardsville voted overwhelmingly to form their union, represented by SEIU Local 73. Now, the pressure is building for Jesuit institutions to live up to their values for all their workers, including graduate workers.

Visit <http://seiufacultyforward.org/will-not-silenced-loyola/> for more details.

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Faculty Forward, a project of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), is home to more than 57,000 unionized college and university faculty who have won improvements in pay, job security, benefits and more on more than 60 campuses nationwide. For more information, visit seiufacultyforward.org.