



For Immediate Release

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ISU Graduate Workers Announce Strike Authorization Vote

Bloomington, IL – The Graduate Workers Union announced a strike authorization vote during a rally demanding a fair contract and higher wages. The strike authorization vote begins October 12 through October 23.

The GWU represents 450 graduate teaching assistants at ISU. Graduate Teaching Assistants have been in contract negotiations with ISU since March and have been working without a contract since June. Graduate workers teach hundreds of classes for ISU, prepare and grade tests, conduct labs, and bring in millions of dollars in student tuition and research grants, yet receive some of the lowest pay for their jobs among institutions considered comparable to ISU.

“I can attest to ISU’s poverty wages firsthand. Despite working another job, I can’t afford food. I’m relying on the food pantry to provide food so I can live. I can’t afford to fix my car, so I need a job that I can get to by bus. I can’t afford Wi-Fi in my apartment or the medicine I need. I shouldn’t have to worry about that going to a University of this scale. ISU ought to be ashamed of themselves for offering a small wage increase,” said Joe Sandy, a Music Theory Graduate Teaching Assistant and GWU member.

The GWU is proposing a living wage based on MIT’s cost of living analysis for the Bloomington-Normal area. ISU is proposing poverty wages and has offered a paltry wage increase of \$46/month for master’s students and \$146/month for Ph.D. students.

“After seven months of bargaining, we received a wage proposal from the administrators in Hovey Hall. Their proposal is beyond insulting when interim President Aondover Tarihule makes \$320,000 a year, equivalent to the combined salaries of 29 grad workers. Is one President Tarihule worth 29 grad workers? We are 29 human beings, and we deserve dignity,” said Steven Lazarov, GWU Bargaining Committee member.

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SEIU Local 73 represents more than 34,000 workers, primarily in public service and publicly funded positions in school districts, municipalities, social service agencies, and many other job classifications in Illinois and Indiana. We are dedicated to improving the lives of workers and their families.