

GEU-UNH-UAW Initial Bargaining Goals

We, the graduate workers at the University of New Hampshire, present the following contract goals to (1) improve our conditions as workers, (2) better support the academic excellence of our university, and (3) ensure the dignity and flourishing of our members and broader community. These goals are based exclusively on the bargaining survey completed by a majority of graduate workers at UNH.

These goals reflect the everyday needs and aspirations of graduate workers at UNH, who currently perform world class research and education under increasingly strenuous conditions. These goals consider the historic and rapid increase in cost-of-living in the Granite State, the unique challenges faced by our international members, and our need for the university to operate equitably. We will achieve these goals by ensuring fair pay and benefits, demanding stronger workplace protections, safeguarding our rights as academics and individuals, and protecting the rights of our union.

Our bargaining goals include, but are not limited to, the following:

Wages, Hours, and Benefits

Fair Wage

Improve wages for all graduate workers, including a substantial increase to the minimum salary, guaranteed annual increases, guaranteed summer funding, and cost-of-living adjustments. Without this increase to our wages, graduate students face unstable, unsafe, and insecure living conditions that affect our ability to perform and complete our degrees.

Health Benefits

Provide increased coverage and access to our current health insurance plans, including the establishment of new benefits, an expanded network, and reduced out-of-pocket costs for workers. Further, we will push to secure better vision and dental benefits that meet the needs of our workers. We demand the university provides increased access to mental health resources and reinstates the campus pharmacy.

Housing

Provide affordable housing to all graduate workers, including the expansion of graduate housing, providing housing subsidies, and assistance with relocation costs. New Hampshire is experiencing an unprecedented housing crisis, with few options and average rent prices taking 50% of some graduate workers' income. UNH has a responsibility to assist in the acquisition of livable housing for graduate workers.

Visa and Immigration

Improve and expedite visa processing and the transition to permanent residency by university coverage of all immigration-related costs, providing free legal advice, and paid time off for immigration related affairs. If UNH is going to benefit from some of the top academic researchers from across the globe, they must ensure a smooth transition and secure stay.

Childcare

Establish access to high-quality childcare services for all graduate workers, including subsidized on-campus childcare facilities, staff, and resources for parents to ensure the flourishing of both the parent and their children. Graduate workers, especially women, should not have to choose between having a family and professionalization.

Leave, Holidays, and Vacation

Establish parameters and compensation for leaves of absence and holidays, ensuring that time-off is at the worker's discretion, not their PI. We aim to provide graduate workers with the ability to roll over unused annual leave and compensation of unused leave upon the completion of their time at UNH.

Parking and Transit Benefits

Improve access for graduate workers on campus, including, but not limited to, allowing them to park in areas most applicable to their workspace, ensuring free parking for all graduate workers, preferential parking for those with ~~long term~~ disabilities, short term injuries, and those who are pregnant, and reinstating bus routes to nearby towns such as Newmarket, which offer increased access to affordable housing.

Retirement

Create retirement benefits equivalent to other state employees so graduate workers are able to live secure lives after their degree. Graduate workers currently are burdened by unprecedented and compounding student debt with subpar wages, preventing them from living financially free lives after their time at UNH. Retirement benefits will ensure long-term financial stability while minimizing the economic consequences of getting a degree.

Professional Development

Increase opportunities and services for professional and career development, including but not limited to, paid access to conferences, advanced payment for travel, paid time off for job interviews, and improved mentorship.

Workplace Rights and Protections

Workload

Establish enforceable workload protections, including limits to hours worked and compensation for additional labor.

Grievance and Arbitration

Establish a fair grievance procedure with the option of neutral, binding arbitration. Currently, there is no process for graduate workers to report abuse and misconduct from their PIs or faculty members. Without these protections, graduate workers remain at risk. Without a fair grievance procedure, the contract we win will be more difficult to defend and enforce.

Health and Safety

Increase standards for workplace safety that meet industry standards for safety of all forms. This includes, but is not limited to, all buildings reaching state health and safety standards, protections for immunocompromised graduate workers, enforceable timelines for remedies to reported health and safety issues, and protections against workplace harm related to racism, sexism, ableism, homophobia, xenophobia, and transphobia.

Non-Discrimination and Harassment

Establish stronger protections against discrimination and harassment, especially sexual harassment and racism experienced in the workplace, strong grievance procedures, access to neutral and binding arbitration, and improvements to the processing of discrimination and harassment claims. We deserve a healthy workplace free from bullying and harassment of any kind.

Personal Space

The university must provide reasonable and private workspaces for all graduate workers. Many graduate workers are forced into cramped and unsafe spaces that disallow personal and professional privacy, offer little autonomy, and suffer from inequality in the spaces provided to their peers across departments.

Appointment Rights

Establish fair appointment procedures that provide fair processes for the appointment of assistantships and clear enforceable guidelines for funding length. As it stands, graduate workers are not guaranteed comprehensive funding that covers their needed time at UNH.

Discipline and Dismissal

Establish a transparent and progressive discipline structure built upon the concepts of just cause and productive coaching. The ability to arbitrarily control our appointments threatens our professional and personal well-being while undermining a culture of dignity and growth.

Academic and Personal Freedom

Ensure the school respects our rights to academic and personal freedom, including, but not limited to, the right to speak and protest publicly about sensitive issues, the right of political expression, and the right to criticize the UNH administration without fear of retribution.

Fellowship Worker Recognition

Ensure UNH includes graduate workers on fellowship in our bargaining unit. As it stands, graduate workers on the Dissertation Year Fellowship and other internal and external fellowships have been excluded from union protection by the UNH administration, meaning that many of the protections and gains made in this contract will not benefit graduate workers at sensitive times in their career. It is vital that we get UNH to acknowledge the worker status of these graduate workers.

Personal Safety and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Guarantee the physical and mental safety for all community members at UNH, including, but not limited to, freedom from police violence and intimidation, secure sanctuary for all communities, and resource management that prioritizes diversity and community initiatives.