



# **Welcome to the Graduate Employees Organization!**

Graduate Employees' Organization

809 S. 5th St., Geneva Room

Champaign, IL 61820

Email: [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org)

Facebook: [/uigeo](https://www.facebook.com/uigeo)

Twitter: [@geo\\_uiuc](https://twitter.com/geo_uiuc)

Instagram: [geo\\_uiuc](https://www.instagram.com/geo_uiuc)

[www.uiucgeo.org](http://www.uiucgeo.org)

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I.F.T. / A.F.T. LOCAL 6300 AFL-CIO

# Graduate Employees Organization

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS AT URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

**“Congratulations for joining in Union with your community of graduate workers!”**

As Co-Presidents, we are deeply heartened and inspired that you have chosen to join our system of support, care and solidarity crystalized by the GEO. Together we celebrate our great beauty. We dig deep to produce profound knowledge. We share our inspiration and dreams to create rich lives with meaningful community. We are excited to share this work and joy with you.

Welcome. We are with you.

Chelsea Birchmier and Adrian Wong, Co-Presidents



**NOT A MEMBER YET?**

## **JOIN OUR UNION TO FIGHT FOR**

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- A living wage
  - Better healthcare access
  - Tuition Waivers
  - Community & Solidarity
  - Job security
  - Tuition Waivers
  - Protections for international grad workers
- ... and more!

# **JOIN THE GEO**

**Our union is  
only as  
powerful as  
its members!**

**JOIN HERE**



# FALL SOCIAL EVENTS



**MOVIE  
NIGHT**



**WELCOME  
BACK PARTY**



**& MORE!**



**FOLLOW THE QR CODE FOR MORE INFORMATION**

# Why Do Grad Employees Need a Union?

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You might wonder what difference the GEO makes.  
Consider the following things your union has won.

	<b>Pre-GEO</b>	<b>Post-GEO</b>
<b>Salary (inflation-adjusted)</b>	No raises	13.3% raises
<b>Tuition waiver security</b>	No	Yes
<b>Healthcare subsidy</b>	None	87%
<b>Dependent care subsidy</b>	No	25%
<b>Dental insurance</b>	No	Yes
<b>Vision insurance</b>	No	Yes
<b>McKinley Health Center fee</b>	Charged	Waived
<b>Immigration leave</b>	No	Yes
<b>Non-discrimination clause</b>	No	Yes
<b>Protection for nursing parents</b>	No	Yes
<b>Resolve grievances</b>	No	Yes

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**Graduate students work collectively to defend our rights as  
graduate employees at the University of Illinois.  
We are your union, and we hope you will join us in creating a  
better future at our university.**

# About your union

## About the GEO

The Graduate Employees' Organization (GEO) represents the Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Graduate Assistants (GAs) at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (UIUC) through contract negotiations and grievance procedures. The GEO is member-run, democratic and open to all graduate employees at UIUC. We are affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT) and Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT).

The GEO won legal recognition in 2002 and signed its first contract with the University of Illinois' Board of Trustees in 2004. Breaking a two-year wage freeze, that contract guaranteed 3% wage increases, the elimination of the McKinley clinic fee, and a phased reduction of medical insurance premiums. The University also agreed to provide dental and vision health insurance plans for graduate employees. Furthermore, the GEO successfully negotiated a series of employee protections, including a grievance procedure with third-party binding arbitration, which allows the Union to more effectively bargain with University officials and enforce the contract. With every new contract we have signed since -- in 2007, 2009, 2012, and 2017 -- we have been able to raise wages, reduce healthcare costs, and expand benefits for graduate employees and their families.

In addition to its specific contractual duties, the GEO works toward a more inclusive and just campus, community and world through its network of supportive relations with fellow unions and progressively oriented organizations. We stand for accessible and sustainable higher education.





# About your union

## Membership in the GEO

All TAs and GAs are protected by the GEO contract, but you become a voting member of the GEO only by signing a GEO membership card. If you would like to sign a card or are not sure if you have already done so, e-mail us at [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org).

## Fellow, RA and PGA Membership

Any graduate student can be a member of the GEO. Although Research Assistants (RAs), Pre-Professional Graduate Assistants (PGAs) and University Fellows are not covered by the GEO contract, their wages and benefit packages are determined with respect to the standard TA package. This is one reason why many RAs, PGAs, and Fellows become GEO members. The GEO's RA/PGA Working Group addresses concerns specific to RA & PGA working conditions. Find out more by emailing [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org).

## Membership Dues

All card-signed TAs and GAs contribute 2% of their monthly earnings as GEO dues. RAs and PGAs contribute monthly dues of \$8 after signing a GEO membership card. Graduate students on fellowship, employed hourly, or unemployed are not required to pay dues.





# About your union

## Bargaining your employment contract

Collective bargaining (or "bargaining"), is the process by which the GEO negotiates with the UIUC Administration for the terms and conditions of employment that will apply to members of the Bargaining Unit (TAs and GAs currently). These negotiations result in a legally-enforceable collective bargaining agreement (a contract) which binds the Union, its Bargaining Unit, and the Employer. The core strength of the GEO is to address needs and resolve grievances experienced by individual graduate employees and incorporate them into collective bargaining agreements. The contract secures health care contributions, wages, and workplace protections.

## International Students and Public Assistance

Immigration rules are changing rapidly and some public assistance programs may affect your future immigration status. If you believe this may affect you please contact an immigration attorney.

## Outside Employment

Though some departments discourage it, you can not be prevented from seeking and engaging in employment outside your appointment from your employing department. However, any student who accepts more than 67% in assistantships will lose their tuition waiver, and international students' visas typically restrict them from accepting more than 67% in assistantships. Further, students on F1 visas are subject to specific conditions in employment separate from their appointments: you may only work up to 20 hours a week (part-time) during fall and spring semesters, and your work must be on-campus. For the detailed explanation of what constitutes on-campus work, check this resource (<https://iss.illinois.edu/students/employment/f1employ.html>)

## Your Department

Every department is required to meet the requirements of our contract. But how your department goes about meeting those requirements can vary. If you have specific questions about how your department functions, please contact your department's steward or the GEO Steward's Council at [sc@uigeo.org](mailto:sc@uigeo.org).



# What do you get for your Union Dues?

**GEO**

**Your dues are  
\$39-\$62/month**

(for a 0.5 FTE graduate employee  
across departments; 2% of pay)

**Tuition Waiver**      \$1,410 - \$3,865/month

**Healthcare Premium**

**\$206/month**

**Annual Raise to**

**Minimum Wage**  
since 2003

**\$43/month**  
(varied raises among higher paying departments)

**Legal Representation  
in Labor Disputes**

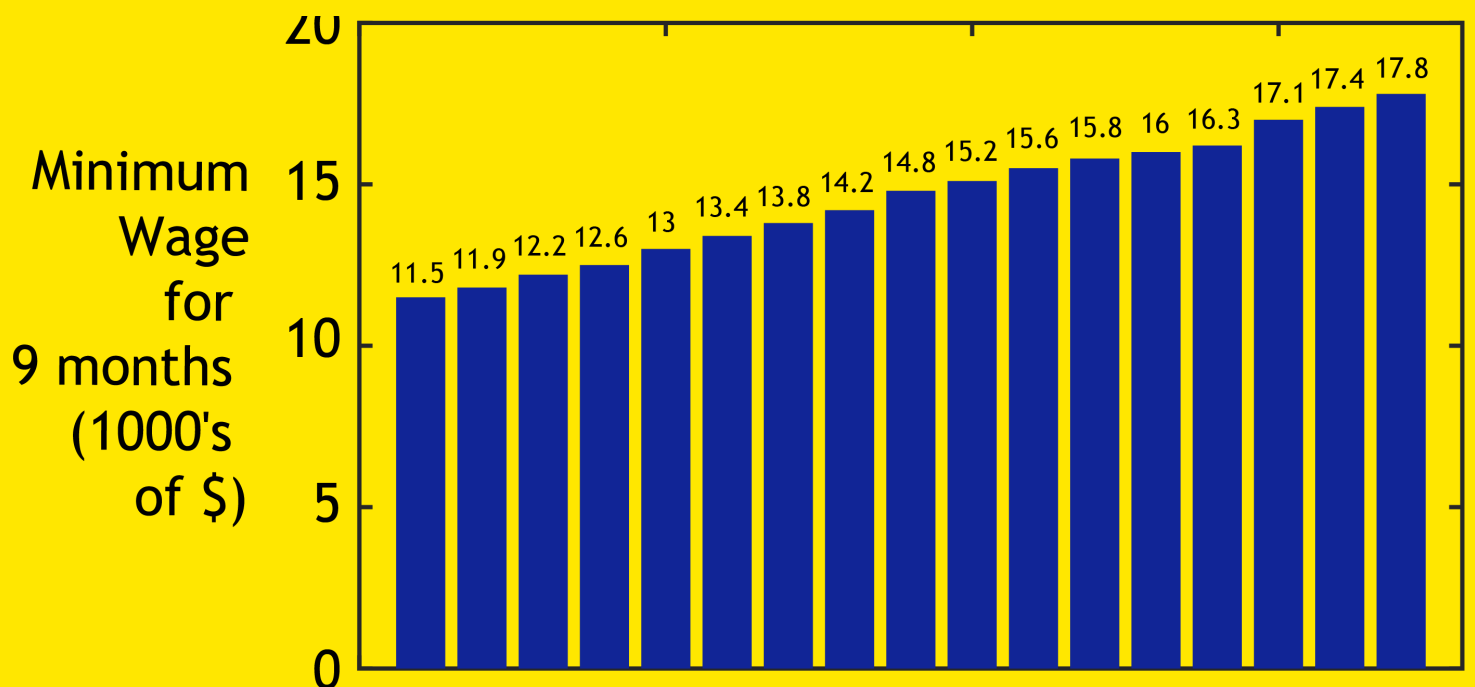
**Guaranteed**

**Better working  
conditions: powered  
by union dues!**

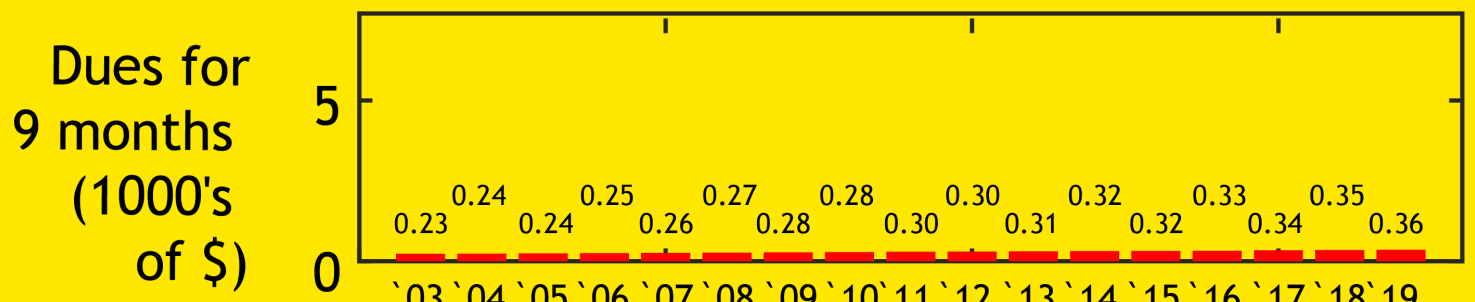
**Become a  
member to keep  
this work going!**

# YOUR GEO MAKES A DIFFERENCE

Grad wages continue to rise  
because we bargain as a union



DUES HELP RUN THE UNION & BEAR THE COST OF CONTRACT BARGAINING & ENFORCEMENT



Sign a card.  
Support your union.  
[uiucgeo.org/become-a-member/](http://uiucgeo.org/become-a-member/)

✉ [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org)

📶 [uiucgeo.org](http://uiucgeo.org)

📘 [/uigeo, /geosolcomm](#)

🐦 [@geo\\_uiuc](#)



# Healthcare

## What does our health insurance cover?

As graduate students, we have access to **McKinley Health Center**, which covers basic medical needs, medications, and appointments at little or no out-of-pocket cost. We also receive subsidized coverage through **United Healthcare**, which can be used for more serious or specialized issues.

## Prescriptions Coverage

Most prescriptions from McKinley have a co-pay, but some prescriptions are discounted and certain over-the-counter medications can be obtained free of charge. If you need to be reimbursed for a prescription, you must take your prescription paperwork that identifies the medication and cost to the Health Insurance Office (217-333-0165). You can find more information about the McKinley pharmacy here: <https://mckinley.illinois.edu/pharmacy/about-pharmacy>. Keep in mind that McKinley may not be the cheapest place to purchase medications. Check <http://www.goodrx.com/> to compare local prices and find coupons.

## Specialized Care, Dental, Vision and ER Visits

McKinley also provides certain forms of specialized care, including health education, physical therapy, women's health, and counseling. In-depth information on all of these services can be found on McKinley's website. Women's care and trans healthcare can also be obtained through Planned Parenthood. In addition, some private mental health care providers in the community offer income-based sliding fee scales or accept our United Healthcare insurance.

Our insurance also includes dental and vision. Our dental insurance covers 2 oral exams, 2 teeth cleanings, and 2 x-rays per year. To make a dentist appointment you will need your group number (5436) and your University Identification Number (UIN). You can find a provider at: <https://www.deltadentalil.com/find-a-provider/dental/>. Make sure to select Delta Dental PPO or Delta Dental Premier network. Information about our coverage for eyecare and glasses can be found at: <https://grad.illinois.edu/current/vision>. For optical care, try Illini EyeCare on Green St.

If you have an emergency, you should go to one of the two major hospitals are in-network for our health insurance: Carle Hospital or OSF Heart of Mary. Avicenna Healthcare Clinic and Frances Nelson Health Center both provide care for the uninsured and underinsured. For more information on where to receive care, see below.

## How much does it cost?

The Health Service Fee covers medical services at McKinley health center, while the Health Insurance Fee covers the cost of healthcare needs not available at McKinley. **GEO has secured a full waiver of the Health Service Fee, and in our most recent contract cycle, 87% coverage of the Health Insurance Fee (currently \$927/semester).**

**If you do not have a summer waiver-generating appointment you must pay the summer fee, which in Summer 2020 amounted to \$696.** An email will go out in mid-spring notifying us about the summer coverage deadline. If you do have a waiver-generating appointment in the summer, healthcare is covered just like in spring and fall.

For health services not covered by McKinley, treatment can get quite expensive. Carle Hospital is a non-profit organization which has a great program to help low income individuals get a discount on their healthcare. It can even be applied retroactively. See here for more: <https://carle.org/billing/financial-assistance>. OSF Heart of Mary also provides financial assistance; information can be found at <https://www.osfhealthcare.org/billing/financial-assistance/>. **You do not need to be a citizen to apply!**

## Where can I receive care?

### **McKinley Health Center**

1109 S. Lincoln Ave,  
Urbana, IL. 217-333-2701.  
Services: General  
Healthcare, Immunizations,  
Prescriptions

### **University Counseling Center**

610 E. John St, Champaign, IL.  
(217) 333-3704.  
Services: Short term counseling.  
Referrals for medication & long  
term counseling.

### **Planned Parenthood**

302 E Stoughton St, Champaign, IL.  
(217) 359-8022.  
Services: Pregnancy Testing,  
Contraception, Medical termination,  
Trans healthcare.

### **Carle Hospital**

602 W. University Ave, Urbana,  
IL. 217-383-3311.  
Services: General Healthcare,  
Immunizations, Emergency care

### **Champaign County Health Care Consumers**

Services: Provides health care  
information, can answer many  
questions about navigating the  
health system

### **Francis Nelson Health Center**

819 Bloomington Rd, Champaign,  
IL. (217) 356-1558.  
Services: Women's and prenatal  
health care. Services for the  
uninsured and underinsured.

## Have question? Want to get involved?

Contact us at [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org)



# YOUR GEO MAKES A DIFFERENCE



HEALTH CARE BENEFITS CONTINUE TO IMPROVE BECAUSE WE BARGAIN AS A UNION  
HEALTH CARE PREMIUM COVERAGE (IN \$ OR % COVERAGE)



ADMINISTRATION  
AGREES TO BARGAIN



NEW  
CONTRACT

\$50

\$100

\$140

65%  
or

\$150

\$150



NEW  
CONTRACT



NEW  
CONTRACT  
DEPENDENT  
COVERAGE 25%

1995

2002

2003

2004

2005

2006

2007

2009

2010

2012

2017



VISION &  
DENTAL

NEW CONTRACT  
MCKINLEY FEE  
WAIVER



or  
50%



or  
75%



NEW  
CONTRACT



80%

or

\$260

87%

GEO

Become  
a member.

Support Your Union.

<http://uiucgeo.org/become-a-member>



# International Student Employee Rights



## WILL JOINING GEO AFFECT MY VISA?

**No!**

**Regardless of immigration status, you have the same rights as US citizens to:**

- Join a labor union
- Participate in your union
- Talk about working conditions
- Take action to improve working conditions

## WHAT IF I HAVE VISA AND TRAVEL ISSUES?

**The GEO Contract has a new immigration leave article covering:**

- Short term immigration leave (for example: Arriving late in the semester)
- Help finding employment if gone for an extended period of time

**If you need disability accommodation for immigration leave:**

The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has resources for requesting disability accommodation

## WHAT WORKPLACE PROTECTIONS DO I HAVE?

**Regardless of immigration status, you have workplace rights through your union GEO**

As a member of the union, if you find yourself discussing workplace issues with a supervisor,  
you can invoke your **Weingarten Rights** by reading the following:

"If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions,  
I respectfully request that my union representative, officer, or steward be present at this meeting. Until my  
representative arrives I choose not to participate in this discussion."

## WHAT POLITICAL RIGHTS DO I HAVE?

**You are protected by some of the same  
legal protections as citizens including:**

- Freedom of religion, speech, assembly and petition (1st Amendment)
- Protection from Warrant-less Search & Seizure (4th Amendment)
- Right to not self incriminate (5th Amendment)
- Right to due process (14th Amendment)

**One key limitation:**

- Foreign nationals are not allowed to monetarily contri

**However, you can:**

- Volunteer for campaigns and electoral committees
- Participate in political activity

## SOURCES

-"Immigrant Employee Rights Under the National Labor Relations Act" [https://www.nlrb.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/basic-page/node-3024/immigrant\\_employee\\_rights\\_one\\_pager\\_english\\_pdf\\_21860.pdf](https://www.nlrb.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/basic-page/node-3024/immigrant_employee_rights_one_pager_english_pdf_21860.pdf)  
"Know Your Rights Pamphlet" by the Department of State  
<https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/LegalRightsandProtections/Wilberforce/Wilberforce-ENG-100116.pdf>

GEO Contract from 2017 to 2022, Article XX Section K  
<https://uiucgeo.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/GEOContract2017-2022.pdf#page=22>  
Requesting Accommodations for Disabilities  
<https://www.uscis.gov/tools/requesting-accommodations-disabilities>  
The Statute: Section 7114. Representation Rights and Duties  
<https://www.flra.gov/resources-training/resources/statute-and-regulations/statute/statute-subchapter-ii-rights-and-3>

[The Bill of Rights: A Transcription  
<https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/bill-of-rights-transcript>  
.US. Congressional Documents and Debates  
<https://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llsl&fileName=014/llsl014.db&recNum=38>  
FEC RECORD  
<https://www.fec.gov/updates/foreign-nationals/>



# Parental Rights and Information for Graduate Students

## Prenatal Care

McKinley Health Center does not provide prenatal care. Student health insurance covers 80% of your costs at any local center. Many graduate students may qualify for Medicaid coverage of their pregnancy through the Illinois Moms and Babies program. It covers all prenatal care, including the cost of prenatal vitamins, medications, dental care, delivery, and more and continues coverage for 60 days after delivery.

**You do not have to be a citizen or documented immigrant to get Medicaid for pregnancy. You do not need a social security number to get Medicaid for pregnancy.**

## Free Prenatal Care Classes

Carle Hospital offers a range of free prenatal classes through their All About Baby program. These include Newborn Care, Breastfeeding, Breast pumping, Child and Pet Safety, Infant Massage, Big Sibling class, Infant CPR & Safety, Car Seat Safety, and a Dads class. There is a \$10 fee for their Prepared Childbirth Class.

## Parental Leave from Work

The GEO contract allows for a parental leave period of 6 weeks after the birth or adoption of a child. The first two weeks are paid leave and must be taken immediately after the birth or adoption. The next 4 weeks (in a block) are a combination of sick leave and unpaid leave and can be taken anytime during the appointment period. If both parents are covered by the GEO contract they can take the first 2 weeks immediately and then stagger the rest of their leave.

## Breastfeeding

Under the Affordable Care Act, all health insurance must provide breastfeeding support, counseling, and equipment for the duration of breastfeeding. This includes coverage of a breast pump, although coverage may vary. Contact United Healthcare 1-800-224-4883 to ask about what types of breast pumps they cover.

Champaign-Urbana has many breastfeeding resources. Many graduate students may qualify for the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) program through the Department of Public Health. WIC offers free individual appointment with lactation consultants, access to breast pumps, free breastfeeding classes, and a support group.

## **Your Breastfeeding Rights at Work**

The GEO contract protects your right to breastfeed or pump at work. The University "shall make reasonable efforts to provide a [private] room or other location, in close proximity to the work area, other than a toilet stall" for employees who are nursing mothers.

**If you are denied breastfeeding or pumping accommodations at work, contact your department steward or [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org).**

## **Breastfeeding Support Groups**

- Breastfeeding Friends (BFFs) meets every Friday morning at the CU Public Health Department, 201 W. Kenyon Rd, Champaign. Older children are welcome.
- Carle Breastfeeding Clinic is free and open to everyone, even if you did not deliver at their hospital. Help is available by phone 24 hours a day/7 days a week. Call 217-326-2610, press 2 and leave a message. A lactation consultant will call you back. To schedule an in-person appointment with a lactation consultant call 217-326-2610, press 1 and leave a message. Services are free of charge.
- Carle also offers a breastfeeding support group on the 1st Thursday of each month, 10am - noon at the Carle Heart & Vascular Institute in Urbana.
- La Leche League of Champaign-Urbana has 2 monthly meetings. They meet on the 2nd Monday at 6pm at the Urbana Free Library and the 3rd Wednesday at 10am at the Windsor Road Christian Church. Follow them on Facebook for meeting reminders!

## **International Board Certified Lactation Consultants (IBCLCs)**

- Theresa Hardy, MSN, CPNP, IBCLC - Nurtured Beginnings. Theresa holds free breastfeeding classes once a month on Tuesday evenings. Call 217-366-8000 to register. After birth, Theresa offers fee-based hospital and home visits to analyze and problem solve feeding issues. Some insurance plans will pay for her services. She can prescribe medications or pumps for babies or the breastfeeding parent. She specializes in complicated feeding situations (e.g., multiples) and diagnosing and assessing tongue and lip ties. See [www.nurturedbeginnings.net](http://www.nurturedbeginnings.net) for more information.
- Jodi Fan, IBCLC is also an accredited La Leche League leader providing fee-based breastfeeding support in collaboration with Tree of Life Doulas. You can contact her at [fanwoman68@yahoo.com](mailto:fanwoman68@yahoo.com) or 217-725-8060. Some insurance plans may reimburse for her services.

## **Other Postnatal Support**

- Sistering CU is an organization whose mission is to support families in the "4th trimester" (the first 12 weeks after birth). Once you request their services they will pair you with a volunteer who will come to your house once a week for 2 hours. The volunteer can do light housework (fold laundry, do dishes), cook, run errands, play with older siblings, or watch the baby so the parent can shower, exercise, read, nap, etc. Visit [www.sisteringcu.org](http://www.sisteringcu.org) to request services or volunteer.
- Students with Families is a self-organized group of students on campus. Follow their Facebook page for resources and events!

## **Childcare**

- The Child Care Resources Center can help parents apply for state subsidies and get referrals to child care providers. Visit [www.ccrs.illinois.edu](http://www.ccrs.illinois.edu).
- Consider checking the Facebook group "CU Childcare Connection" for local caregivers.
- The on-campus childcare center (Child Development Lab) is a research-based lab as well as fairly expensive childcare, making it inaccessible to many graduate students. GEO is committed to continuing to work towards a contractual subsidy for childcare.

## **Healthcare for Dependents**

The GEO contract requires the university to pay 25% of the premium for 1 dependent added to the student health insurance for TAs and GAs.

Coverage for children may also be available through All Kids, the state-sponsored health insurance for children. All Kids offers comprehensive healthcare that covers doctors visits, vision care, dental care, and medical equipment like eye glasses and asthma inhalers.

## **Other Resources**

Chambanamoms.com maintains a number of guides to Champaign-Urbana as well as a pretty comprehensive and up-to-date events calendar.

## **Have more questions?**

If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact us at [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org). The GEO has a new group called the Family Working Group, which seeks to support the unique needs of families and to magnify the voices of parents and guardians associated with the university. If you would like to join this listserv, please let us know or contact them at [FamiliesWorkingGrouplist@uigeo.org](mailto:FamiliesWorkingGrouplist@uigeo.org).

# **GEO in 2020: Wage Reopener**

## **What we're doing:**

- **We're negotiating with the administration over the wages for our final two years of our contract (2020-2022)**



## **Why?**

- **Student fees (~\$600) at the beginning of the semester are a hard financial hit**
- **We're trying to offset for increased health insurance costs and lack of insurance during summer months**
- **International students incur higher fees**



**Bargain with us for a Living Wage!**

## **Support GEO by:**

- **Coming to bargaining sessions**
- **Sending testimonials to us about why you need higher wages at [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org)**
- **Talking with your students, peers, co-workers, and supervisors about what's happening in bargaining**

# GEO Contract Summary

from the agreement between the GEO and U of I Board of Trustees

**WAGES SUBJECT TO CHANGE - CURRENTLY IN BARGAINING**

## Coverage

The contract is in effect from August 16, 2017 through August 15, 2022.

**The contract covers all members of the Bargaining Unit (BU) of the Graduate Employees' Organization (GEO). This includes most people appointed as Teaching Assistants (TAs) and Graduate Assistants (GAs).**

Members appointed as Fellows, Research Assistants (RAs), Pre-Professional Graduate Assistants (PGAs), or with hourly employment are not covered by the GEO contract. It is common for members to move in and out of the Bargaining Unit as they are reassigned each semester.

## Salary

The minimum salary for 2020 and beyond will be subject to collective bargaining between the GEO and university administrators. Sign a GEO membership card to make sure you are part of the bargaining process and remain informed!

## Parental Rights

TAs and GAs covered by the contract are entitled to up to 6 weeks of parental accommodation period following the birth, placement, or legal adoption of a child.

The University "shall make reasonable efforts to provide a [private] room or other location, in close proximity to the work location, other than a toilet stall" for employees who are nursing mothers. Failure to provide these accommodations can be pursued through the GEO grievance process.

## Healthcare

The University will cover 87% of the cost of Student Health Insurance each semester.

The University will cover 25% of the health insurance cost for 1 dependent.

Dental and Vision insurance are provided free of cost to all TAs and GAs.

100% of the Student Health Service fee is covered.

## Paid Sick Leave

TAs and GAs are entitled to 13 paid days of sick leave per appointment year. Employees appointed for one semester earn 6.5 days at the percentage of their appointment. Sick days are only charged for days on which an employee has work obligations.

## Immigration Leave

The University will strive to accommodate requests for paid time off to attend required meetings or proceedings for immigration-related matters.

## Fee Waivers

The University will waive the Academic Facility Maintenance Fund Assessment (AFMFA) Fee, Library/Information Technology Fee, and Service Fee, in addition to the coverage of healthcare fees as enumerated above.

## Tuition Waiver

"Tuition waivers will be guaranteed to teaching assistants and graduate assistants holding a 25% to 67% full-time equivalent (FTE) appointment."

## Notice of Appointment

Appointment letters should be issued at least 30 days before the beginning of the appointment. If an appointment letter is late an assistant may request an explanation. The assistant may receive \$50 as a remedy to the late appointment letter. Contact GEO if your letter is late!

## Non-discrimination

The GEO contract offers expanded non-discrimination protections compared to UIUC general policies. Protected categories include but are not limited to race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, national origin, ancestry, age, order of protection status, genetic information, marital status, status as a party to or member of a civil union, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, citizenship or immigration status, arrest record status, unfavorable discharge from the military, or veteran status.

## Grievance Procedure

The GEO contract provides a process for litigating contract violations. The grievance procedure begins with an informal meeting to attempt a resolution and can escalate through 3 levels and then arbitration with a neutral, federal arbiter. If you feel your contract has been violated please contact the GEO at [grievance@uigeo.org](mailto:grievance@uigeo.org)

## Protection from Overwork

Graduate employees should be working on average the number of hours per week as indicated by their appointment percentage (e.g., 50% should average 20 hours/week). Academic work tends to fluctuate but heavier weeks (e.g., midterms) should even out with lighter weeks. **We encourage all graduate employees to track their hours.** If you are consistently working more than your appointment percentage you **must raise the matter with your supervisor with 5 calendar days.** GEO can help walk you through the process.

## Health & Safety

You have a right to a safe work environment. This includes a workplace free from harassment, and unsafe and hazardous materials and conditions.

Use the QR code or visit  
<<https://www.uiucgeo.org/contract>> to read  
the entire contract on our website



# BARGAINING FOR OUR LIVES



***GEO is fighting with you to  
#PutPeopleFirst this fall!***

In this unprecedented global pandemic, we're negotiating with the administration to get the support graduate employees need to work safely this fall. We're fighting for a tech subsidy, clear guidelines on cleaning classrooms, health & safety guides, union representatives on university COVID-19 task forces, and the option for graduate workers to choose for themselves whether they want to take the risks of returning to campus for work. **Want to get involved? Write to us at [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org)**

**GEO**

**Read the latest  
bargaining updates**





# Grievances

## A Guide to Your Contractual Rights and How to Protect Them

### **What are my rights?**

The GEO contract guarantees a set of rights to graduate employees and establishes a procedure for protecting those rights. The first step is to become familiar with your contract.

### **What is a grievance?**

A grievance is the process by which the union resolves contract violations. The grievance procedure is outlined in the contract and agreed to by both the GEO and the UIUC administration. It aims to make the grievant (the person bringing the grievance) "whole," by providing lost wages or other benefits provided by the contract. Grievable issues include overwork, harassment, discrimination, and more. The process can resolve quickly and informally or it can require a full legal hearing and several years of litigation. The union provides free legal representation for grievants. It is illegal for an employer to retaliate against an employee who files a grievance.

### **How does the grievance procedure work?**

Resolving grievances requires following the procedure in the GEO contract. Grievance Committee members are trained to understand the contract. Many grievances are resolved informally through organizing; occasionally, informal negotiations are not enough and a formal grievance is filed.

Filing a grievance involves meeting with supervisors to discuss and resolve workplace issues. GEO members have the right to be accompanied by a GEO representative at any such meetings (see section on Weingarten Rights, next page). The initial "Level 0" meeting takes place with the employee's immediate supervisor, and, if the grievance is not resolved, the meetings move through the following hierarchy:

- Level 0: Immediate Supervisor
- Level 1: Unit Executive Officer (often a department head)
- Level 2: Dean of the College in which employee is appointed
- Level 3: Associate Provost for Human Resources
- Level 4: An outside, third-party arbitrator

### **What should I do if I have a grievance?**

Within 20 business days of the grievance you should contact the Grievance Committee. A committee member will meet with you to find out about your situation and recommend how you could proceed. To consult on your situation or begin a grievance process email the Grievance Officer: [grievance@uigeo.org](mailto:grievance@uigeo.org)

## What are Weingarten rights?

Similar to Miranda rights when you've been arrested, a worker who thinks they are or will be disciplined can invoke Weingarten Rights and then contact their steward or [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org). To invoke your Weingarten Rights simply read the following:

*"If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working conditions, I respectfully request that my union representative, officer, or steward be present at this meeting. Until my representative arrives, I choose not to participate in this discussion."*

## How can I help protect myself?

Save notices about department policies, letters of appointment, and all paper and email correspondence about job responsibilities and performance. Regularly check your pay records online at <http://apps.uillinois.edu>.

Inform the Grievance Committee of any possible problems. They can help members in many ways to resolve conflicts and document problems to help prepare for future contract negotiations.

And as always, know your rights! To know your rights, the first step is to become familiar with your contract; to talk it over, contact your department steward or [sc@uigeo.org](mailto:sc@uigeo.org).

## Does my appointment letter meet the requirements?

Every TA and GA appointment letter must include the following:

1. Appointment title (TA / GA)
2. Major job duties
3. Wages
4. Dates of appointment
5. Supervisor
6. Appointment Percentage (e.g., 50% FTE)
7. Child care information
8. Statement that the position is subject to the GEO contract

# GEO Committees

All GEO meetings, including the meetings of the Coordinating Committee are open to members. Check GEO's public events calendar for committee meeting times.

## Coordinating Committee

The Coordinating Committee is the steering committee for the union, and is made up of all the elected officers and committee chairs. For more information email our Co-Presidents, and Coordinating Committee Chairs at [cc@uigeo.org](mailto:cc@uigeo.org)

## Stewards Council

The Stewards' Council is the primary organizing and planning body of GEO. This is where representatives from across campus come together to discuss the needs of membership. Stewards do office visits to sign up new members and organize events such as department meetings and the annual Reading Day Tutor-in. If you are interested in becoming a Steward, email [sc@uigeo.org](mailto:sc@uigeo.org)

## Solidarity Committee

The Solidarity Committee (SolComm) builds connections between the GEO and other movements and local social justice projects through financial endorsements, statements of support, collaborations, and more. SolComm supports several local organizations and movements that work towards economic, racial, gender, disability, prison, and environmental justice. In addition to graduate employees, we welcome undergraduate students and C-U community members to participate. If you are interested in joining the Solidarity Committee, email [solcomm@uigeo.org](mailto:solcomm@uigeo.org)

## Grievance Committee

Whether it's late wages, a missing tuition waiver, or retaliation in the workplace, the Grievance Committee helps GEO members defend the contract. They are working hard defending members who are already experiencing violations of the contract. As one of our smallest committees, they could use your help doing this essential work! If you are interested in joining the Grievance Committee, email [grievance@uigeo.org](mailto:grievance@uigeo.org)

## Communications Committee

The Communications Committee produces GEO-Ls and flyers, manages GEO's social media, responds to interview requests, sends out press releases, designs and orders swag, and more. They need people with a variety of skills, for one-off and ongoing projects. For info on joining the Communications Committee, email [commcomm@uigeo.org](mailto:commcomm@uigeo.org) or just come to a meeting!



# GEO Committees

## Finance Committee

The newly formed Finance Committee is tasked with accounting, reporting to members on how dues are spent, fundraising, and connecting members to emergency financial support. Email [treasurer@uigeo.org](mailto:treasurer@uigeo.org) if you would like to pitch in!

## Bargaining Team

The GEO contract "reopened" in early 2020 to negotiate wages, and the Bargaining Team is the elected committee which represents members in these negotiations with University HR. Members are central to this process: the BT relies on members' presence in bargaining sessions both to demonstrate that people depend on the contracts we bargain, and to voice their opinion and vote on bargaining strategy in caucuses. Email [barg@uigeo.org](mailto:barg@uigeo.org) for details.

## COVID-19 Impact Bargaining Team

The GEO has the right to bargain any changes to members' working conditions: UIUC's response to COVID-19 continues to bring many such changes. The Impact Bargaining Team is in negotiation with the University over aspects of the move to online teaching and learning. For details: [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org)

## International Student Working Group

International graduate student workers are important members of our union, and face different experiences and challenges than domestic workers. The ISWG allows international graduate workers to organize around issues they are concerned about. International grads serve on all committees and working groups, but the ISWG specifically advocates for the interests of international grad employees. To learn more or join email [officer1@uigeo.org](mailto:officer1@uigeo.org)!

## Work Action Group

The Work Action Group pursues GEO bargaining and campaign objectives through creative work actions and public-facing events. During bargaining and crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, WAG plays a crucial role in making the needs of grad employees clear and visible to University stakeholders and the broader public. Email [uiucgeowat@gmail.com](mailto:uiucgeowat@gmail.com) to get involved in WAG.



# GEO Committees

## Family Working Group

The Family Working Group is committed to the families of our union members as well as students and faculty, who carry parent/guardianship responsibilities. We seek to support the unique needs of families and to magnify the voices of parents and guardians associated with the university. This includes; advocating, addressing, and seeking support for additional expenses and family responsibilities. In addition, we're striving to create an environment which values our members, as well as a physical and digital space to further provide support & enrich our member's & their families' experiences. If you are interested contact [FamiliesWorkingGrouplist@uigeo.org](mailto:FamiliesWorkingGrouplist@uigeo.org)

## Mutual Aid Working Group

The Mutual Aid Working Group was formed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and exists to support members and other workers at UIUC weather the joint challenges of the health and financial crisis. For info on receiving and/or providing aid, email [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org)

## RA/PGA Working Group

In 2019 the Illinois state legislature signed HB253 into law, reclassifying Research and Pre-Professional Graduate Assistants as "employees" rather than "students." Having "employee" status means that graduate employees in these categories can unionize. The RA/PGA Working Group addresses issues pertinent to grads employed as RAs and PGAs. If you are interested contact [geo@uigeo.org](mailto:geo@uigeo.org)

## The People First, Cancel Debt Committee

"The People First, Cancel Debt Committee" was organized by the GEO to address the need of increasing community participation in the fiscal decisions that impact our lives. Debt plays an important role in austerity measures, particularly in Higher Education that has seen a huge increase in both student and institutional debt. We deserve to live in a society where the rich assume their responsibility with debt in order to live a happy life that is debt free. Check out the GEO calendar for our next meeting via JitsiMeet. If you're interested in attending, please reach out to Karla at [karla.veaz@pm.me](mailto:karla.veaz@pm.me)



# GEO MUTUAL AID

In April 2020, the GEO and Campus Labor Coalition sent out an in-depth Mutual Aid and COVID-19 Impact Survey about UIUC campus workers' needs and resources. From this survey, we identified the top four needs of graduate workers as: information about community resources, mental health resources, financial assistance and PPE (personal protective equipment, such as masks).

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If you are looking for resources, check out out GEO's Mutual Aid Resource Guide: [bit.ly/GEOMutualAidResourceList](https://bit.ly/GEOMutualAidResourceList)! If you need immediate financial assistance, we are working on ideas such as developing a solidarity fund, and we will let you know once that is available. We are also engaged in wage bargaining to improve our economic conditions in the longer-term.

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Some of us are being asked to go back to work and still haven't received the masks we were promised. Others have been at work doing jobs deemed essential since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis and have had to provide our own PPE. UIUC's administration has the money to provide for all of its workers; so why were we left without basic essentials in the midst of a pandemic?

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We also recognize that even if you have been working from home, you may still need PPE to complete essential tasks like grocery shopping. Given the lack of the responsiveness from the university, the GEO Mutual Aid Working Group wants to make sure you and your loved ones get the PPE you need to stay safe and healthy. If you need PPE—masks, gloves, or hand sanitizer—please fill out the brief, two-minute form linked below, and we will do our best to meet your needs. We also need help with providing PPE—please fill out a different, two-minute form linked below if you can help with making, donating, or distributing masks, gloves, or hand sanitizer. The form link to both forms is at [linktr.ee/UIUCMutualAid](https://linktr.ee/UIUCMutualAid).

**INTERESTED IN GETTING INVOLVED IN THE MUTUAL AID WORKING GROUP?  
EMAIL [GEO@UIGEO.ORG](mailto:GEO@UIGEO.ORG) TO LEARN MORE!**



# Accessing your Earnings Statement

How to read your paycheck.

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## Step by Step Guide

1. Either go directly to the website: <https://www.hr.uillinois.edu/pay/earnstmt> or search for "earnings statement uiuc" and visit the site named: "Earnings Statement - University of Illinois System."
2. Once on the website, click on the green "Access Earnings Statement" button on the right hand side of the page. Note: If you have not set up two factor authentication, there is a link right below the "Access Earnings Statement" button to set it up. Click that and follow the appropriate steps.
3. Enter your NetID and password.
4. You will then be asked to verify your identity. There are two ways to do this. You can select the "Call Me" option or the "Enter a Passcode" option. For either one, follow the appropriate steps to verify your identity.
5. Next you might need to enter your pin. If you don't have one, click the link below the space to enter the pin to create one. If you do have one, enter it and click "Submit".
6. This should take you straight to your earnings statement.
7. To view past earnings statements, click the "View Past Statements" button on the upper right corner.



# Financial Assistance Guide

## Note on Public Charge Rules

Rule changes to Public Charge may negatively affect green card applications

- Read more here: <https://www.uscis.gov/news/public-charge-fact-sheet>

## State Financial Assistance Application Website

Governor's office has promoted this assistance application website due to covid

- <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/CommunityServices/HomeWeatherization/CommunityActionAgencies/Pages/helpIllinoisFamilies.aspx>

## Assistance to Supplement Monthly Household Income

Illinois Application for Benefits Eligibility: <https://tinyurl.com/illinois-eligibility>

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled (AABD)
- Illinois Affordable Care Act (IL ACA)

Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)

- Eligibility and Application Guide: <https://tinyurl.com/illinois-liheap>

## Assistance to Supplement Annual Household Income

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)

- Eligibility Calculator: <https://tinyurl.com/illinois-ccap>
- Citizenship or immigration status of the child's parent cannot be considered and will not impact the child's eligibility determination
- Eligibility will not be denied based on a child's citizenship status
- Illinois will continue to authorize services to non-citizen children and will pay for these services with State dollars
- The application for CCAP is nuanced, and we recommend coming to the GEO Office at 809 S. 5th St, Champaign for help filling out your application

Women, Infants and Children (WIC): <https://tinyurl.com/illinois-wic>

- Income limits include annual household income: <https://tinyurl.com/wic-limits>

Call Ameren Illinois to ask about their bill payment assistance fund eligibility.

## Local Assistance

Food Assistance

- Paid by Cultural Programming Fee: <https://tinyurl.com/campus-meals-oirr>
- Food pantries: <https://tinyurl.com/champaign-county-pantries>

Emergency Financial Assistance

- Cunningham Township (Urbana): 205 W Green St, Urbana, IL 61801
- Champaign Township: 5139, 53 East Logan St, Champaign, IL 61820



**uiucgeo.org**



**geo@uigeo.org**

**Graduate Employees' Organization  
809 S. 5th St., Geneva Room  
Champaign, IL 61820**



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## **UNOFFICIAL GUIDE TO LIFE IN CHAMBANA**

**Fun Bars, Good Coffee, Great Food,  
Getting to the Airport & More**



**Advice and  
Recommendations  
from your fellow  
Grad Employees**