

GRADUATE STUDENTS UNITED

CONSTITUTION

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

[updated February 1, 2018]

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Preamble

We, the members of Graduate Students United at the University of Chicago, establish this Constitution as the governing document of GSU. GSU operates according to the principles of fairness; democracy; economic equity; and high-quality education, healthcare, and public services for our members, their families, and our communities. We will advance these principles through the work of our members, including community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism.

Article I. Name & Purpose

Section 1. The name of this organization shall be Graduate Students United at the University of Chicago (GSU), local ###, American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT), the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), and the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

Section 2. Objectives

(a) Organizing: To promote the organizing of graduate employees and students at the University through advocacy and member-driven collective action.

(b) Collective Bargaining: To promote and represent the interests and rights of the University's graduate employees through the bargaining and maintenance of a fair working contract that align with the interests of the graduate student body.

(c) Community: Foster a sense of community among graduate employees and students from all departments and backgrounds.

(d) Education: Promote quality graduate and undergraduate education at the University and work to protect and promote the role of graduate employees and higher education workers in the delivery of quality education and research for the public.

(e) Equity and Justice: Fighting all forms of bias and systemic oppression through fostering equity and justice in education employment and delivery.

(f) Solidarity: Promote the mutual interests of all working people through collaboration and cooperation with other people and groups on campus and beyond.

Article II. Anti-Discrimination

Section 1. No person shall be discriminated against on any basis, such as and not limited to race, creed, color, ethnicity, religion, economic status, national origin, ancestry, marital or parental status, age, sex, gender, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, veteran status, physical appearance, disability or medical condition, political affiliation or belief, and membership in any social or political organization.

Article III. Membership

Section 1. Any person who is pursuing a Master's degree or Doctorate degree ("graduate student") at the University of Chicago can be a member of the Union.

Section 2. Regular Members: Graduate students at the University who pay required membership dues and fulfill one of the following conditions:

(a) Be currently employed in a bargaining unit position for which the Union is the recognized bargaining agent, or

(b) Have been employed in a bargaining unit position for which the Union is the recognized bargaining agent in at least one of the previous four quarters.

Section 3. Associate Members: Graduate students at the University who are not part of the collective bargaining unit but who choose to pay associate membership dues as set by the Union. Associate Members shall have all the same rights as regular members except they shall be barred from voting on contracts and work actions, and from running or voting in officer and steward elections.

Section 4. Rights: No eligible person shall be denied membership. All members will have equal rights and privileges, except where otherwise noted in this constitution.

Section 5. General Members' Meeting (GMM)

(a) A general members' meeting must be called at least once during each fall, winter and spring quarter. The time and place of this meeting shall be determined by the Steering Committee, and an announcement together with a proposed agenda shall be distributed to all members at least one week in advance.

(b) A general members' meeting shall be open to all members. All members shall have the right to place an agenda item, propose a motion and vote at general members' meeting.

Section 6. Good Standing: A member in good standing is defined as a member who is current in payment of dues to the organization. A member who is more than 30 days delinquent in dues payment shall be considered to be a

member in bad standing, and shall be promptly notified of such status. A member shall be removed from membership in this organization, with notice, following three months of dues nonpayment, unless a plan to pay back dues is made and approved by both the Steering Committee and the member.

Article IV. Organizational Structure

Section 1. The Union is a representative body, and its structure shall reflect the democratic values on which it is based. Members shall suffer no impairment of freedom of speech concerning the operations of the Union. Active discussion of Union affairs shall be encouraged and protected within the Union.

Section 2. Subject to this Constitution and the Bylaws pursuant to it, the general membership shall be the Union's supreme decision-making body. All powers of the Union shall be vested in the general membership. Except as otherwise provided herein, these powers shall include: election of all office holders, temporary and permanent; contract ratification and strike authorization; approval of the annual budget and dues assessments; amendment of the Constitution and the Bylaws; and, direction of Union policies and priorities.

Section 3. The Steering Committee is the executive body of the Union. Between meetings of the Steering Committee, its officers shall exercise such powers as are granted to them by this constitution or by the Steering Committee.

Section 4. The Stewards Council shall exercise oversight of the Steering Committee, shall advise the Steering Committee, and may refer any action (or lack of action) or decision by the Steering Committee or an officer to a membership meeting.

Section 5. Subject to the Union's Constitution, Bylaws, and other decisions approved by ballot as laid out in Article IX, General Members Meetings, as regulated by Article IV, Section 6, shall be the supreme decision making body of the Union.

Section 6. The enumeration in this constitution of certain roles or powers for a body or officer shall not prevent that body or officer from holding other roles or powers not so enumerated.

Article V. Officers

Section 1. Officer Positions: The Union officers, comprising the Steering Committee, shall consist of: two co-Presidents, a General Secretary, a Financial Secretary, a Communications Officer, and one representative for each division in the bargaining unit for which the Union is the recognized bargaining agent.

Section 2. Officer Elections

(a) All regular members in good standing shall be eligible to run for office.

(b) All officers must be elected by a plurality vote of membership.

(c) The term of office for all officers shall be one year, to commence on the conclusion of Winter quarter.

Section 3. Officer Vacancies

(a) If an officer becomes unable to fulfill the duties of the office, the Steering Committee shall appoint an acting Officer. The acting officer shall retain this appointment until such time that an election is held at a membership meeting.

(b) Officers appointed or elected to fill a vacancy shall complete the term of office filled

Section 4. Officer Duties

(a) Two Co-Presidents

(1) One Co-President shall be responsible for Chairing the Grievance Committee.

(2) One Co-President shall be responsible for Chairing the Bargaining and Contract Committee.

(3) During the election process, it shall be specified on the ballot which candidates are running for Co-President and Chair of the Grievance Committee and which are running for Co-President and Chair of the Bargaining and Contract Committee.

(4) Shall liaise with the employer representatives when required and address University policy and procedures that impact the membership.

(5) Shall prepare a written report of the Steering Committee to be circulated to membership at least one week prior to each General Members Meeting.

(6) Shall attend conventions of organizations that Union affiliates with or has membership in, or appoint a designate to attend such conventions.

(7) Shall share full responsibility for execution of the membership's goals and desires.

(8) Shall attend and preside over all General Members Meetings, either together or in alternation.

(b) The General Secretary

(1) Shall work with Stewards to distribute information and materials.

(2) Shall be a signing officer (along with the Financial Secretary) of any checks issued by the Union.

(3) Shall work together with the Communications Secretary to maintain institutional archives.

(c) The Financial Secretary

(1) Shall maintain all financial records pertaining to the Union, including transactions, accounts, and budgets.

(2) Shall collect or cause to be collected the members' dues and other sources of revenue of the Union.

(3) Shall be a signing officer (with the General Secretary) of any checks issued by the Union.

(4) Shall prepare a budget in coordination with the Finances Committee to be voted on at a Spring GMM.

(5) Shall arrange for an independent audit as required by law or the organizations with which the Union is affiliated.

(d) The Communications Secretary

(1) Shall be responsible for creating and soliciting any content to be circulated via the Union's newsletter, to be distributed regularly to the membership.

(2) Shall maintain an up-to-date and functional website that reflects the current activities of the Union.

(e) Divisional Representatives

(1) Shall represent and advocate for the concerns of their respective divisions on the Steering Committee.

(2) Shall work with the Stewards from their respective division to foster a culture of organizing and engaged membership.

(3) Shall identify and develop leaders and foster participation in union activities by members of their division.

Article VI. Stewards

Section 1. Stewards

(a) Any regular member shall be eligible to be a Steward.

(b) Any department or non-department work site (hereinafter referred to as a 'work site,') that has Union members is entitled to elect at least one Steward to serve on the Stewards Council.

(c) The number of Stewards allotted for each worksite shall be the number of members in that work site divided by 25, rounding up any fraction, at the time of general election.

(d) In the event of a vacancy, the Divisional Representative shall nominate a Steward with the advice of the Stewards Council, with the approval of the Co-Presidents, to serve until the next Steward election.

Section 2. Duties of Stewards

(a) Serving as a liaison between their department, committee, cluster, or non-department work site and the union as a whole and its elected leadership.

(b) Facilitating departmental meetings for members.

(c) Encourage participation in Union meetings and events among members in the department.

(d) Grievance duties:

(1) Stewards shall uphold a grievance procedure and inform members of the proper channels for submitting grievances.

(2) Shall receive grievances and initiate such a procedure.

(3) Shall communicate any progress regarding grievances to the members affected.

(4) Shall ensure that the relevant information regarding state and national labor law and the Collective Bargaining Agreement is available to the membership. Accompany a member in their department to attend disciplinary meetings and hearings, if requested by that member.

Section 3. The Stewards

(a) Shall include all Stewards;

(b) Shall develop and promote organizing and education programs for stewards and the membership;

(c) Shall elect two of its members as Co-Chairs, who will be responsible for ensuring smooth operation of the council;

(d) And may write its own Bylaws to govern its internal operations.

Article VII. Committees

Section 1. Standing Committees

(a) Standing committees shall be created by a written resolution created by a majority of the Stewards for the purpose of implementing the policy of the Union. The resolution shall delineate the role of the committee and the responsibilities of the chair.

(b) Standing committees shall include, but are not limited to, the Steering Committee, the Bargaining and Contract Committee, Communications Committee, Grievance Committee, Solidarity Committee, Organizing Committee, and Finance Committee.

(c) The chairs of all standing committees shall be elected by a majority vote of the Stewards.

(d) Chairs of all standing committees shall regularly report on the activities of their committee to the Stewards and the membership.

(e) A standing committee may be dissolved by a written resolution approved by a majority vote of the Stewards.

All standing committees are open to all members.

Section 2. Ad Hoc Committees

(a) Ad hoc committees may be created to advise the membership or the Stewards.

(b) Ad hoc committees shall be created by any Union member either by:

(1) A majority vote of the membership at a membership meeting; or

(2) A majority vote of the Stewards Council.

(c) All ad hoc committees are open to all members.

(d) Ad Hoc committees can include, but are not limited to: the Election Committees, The Student Parents Committee, The International Students Committee, The Students of Color Committee, the Women and Gender/Sexual Minorities Committee, the Students with Disabilities Committee, the Poor and Working-Class Students Committee.

Section 3. The Steering Committee

(a) Shall guide the Union by serving as an executive decision-making body.

(b) Shall be composed of the officers enumerated in Article VI, Section 4.

(c) Shall have meetings that are open to all Union members. The Stewards Council shall be notified of the time and place of meetings and

shall have the responsibility of communicating that information to interested members.

(d) Shall administer the policies of the Union.

(e) Shall be empowered to make all decisions regarding organizing, the planning and execution of actions, the endorsement of other organizations, coalition work, literature production and distribution, publicity, social functions, hiring recommendations to the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT), and day-to-day operations of the organization.

(f) Shall be empowered to create ad hoc committees.

(g) Shall be empowered to name alternates to elected standing or ad-hoc committees.

(h) Shall be empowered to take emergency actions when policy cannot be set by the Membership.

(i) Shall regularly report its progress and activities to the Membership.

(j) Shall be empowered to call Membership Meetings and Special Membership Meetings.

(k) Shall determine the agenda for all Membership Meetings.

(l) Shall employ all professional, technical, clerical and support staff of the organization.

(m) Shall be empowered to make contracts and incur liabilities to the extent permitted by applicable law or statute, and the Union budget.

(n) Shall approve the chairperson and membership of all standing and special committees of the organization, except the Elections Committee, and receive regular reports from such committees.

(o) Shall be responsible for adherence to and enforcement of the Constitution and Bylaws of the organization.

(p) Shall issue regular reports, including an annual report, to the membership.

(q) And shall meet regularly, as enumerated in the Bylaws.

Article VIII. Ballots, Elections, and Referenda

Section 1. Elections: Officer and steward elections, and votes on contracts or to authorize industrial action shall be by secret ballot, and shall be called by the Steering Committee.

Section 2. Referenda: Membership may also vote to have any issue put to a referendum by a two-thirds majority of those present and voting at a membership meeting.

Section 3. Voting Process: Ballots shall be free, fair, and democratic, and shall be operated by the elections committee. The Elections Committee, in setting procedure, shall adhere to any directions from the Stewards Council, and to the following provisions:

(a) In the event of officer elections, written notice will be mailed to all regular members at their home addresses no less than 15 days before that election.

(b) The Union will comply with all reasonable requests of any election candidate to distribute by mail or otherwise, at the candidate's expense, campaign literature in aid of such person's candidacy to all regular members.

(c) The Union will not promote the candidacy of any particular candidate in an election.

(d) Each member shall be entitled to an equal number of votes.

(e) Provision will be made for candidates to have observers at the polling place and the counting of ballots.

(f) Voting will take place for at least eight hours on each of two consecutive days.

(g) Ballots and all other records pertaining to officer elections shall be preserved for one year.

(h) The conduct of elections shall be consistent with all relevant laws, including, in particular, the standards for such elections developed under Title IV of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA).

(i) The bylaws will specify the voting system to be used.

Section 4. Officer Recall: All elected officials of the Union may be recalled, subject to the conditions and procedures listed below.

(a) Any member in good standing may circulate a petition requesting recall of a particular officer. Anyone desiring to recall more than one officer must circulate a petition for each officer they seek to recall.

(b) A petition that has received official endorsement from at least 10% of all regular members may then be submitted directly to any member of the Steering Committee or to one of the Stewards' Chairs.

(1) All action pertaining to a petition to recall and all action regarding sustaining recall shall be conducted at a special meeting of the membership called for that purpose. This meeting shall occur no more than two weeks after receipt of a petition to recall and membership shall receive due notice of the meeting.

(2) Voting shall be in secret. Two-thirds of members present and voting are required to

support the motion to recall in order for it to succeed.

Section 5. Election Committee

(a) The Stewards Council shall appoint and convene, as and when necessary, an Election Committee to conduct elections and secret ballots.

(b) The Election Committee shall be responsible for publicizing elections, taking nominations, and overseeing voting and vote counting.

(c) Officers and candidates may not sit on the Election Committee in the case of Officer elections.

Article IX. Dues

Section 1. The Union will collect dues in order to advance the interests of our membership and the objectives outlined in Article II.

Section 2. Dues Structure: Dues for regular members of the Organization shall be the sum of two parts.

(a) The first part shall be a percentage of the member's salary designated to pay per capita fees to the organizations with which the Organization is affiliated (hereinafter, "Affiliates").

(b) The second part shall be a percentage of the member's salary designated to pay the remainder of the Organization's financial obligations.

Dues for associate members of the Organization shall be set by the process described in Section 3, and shall not exceed dues paid by regular members.

Section 3. Establishment of Dues

(a) The membership may establish a dues bylaw by a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote of the membership provided that one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the membership votes.

(b) No vote for dues bylaws shall take place during the Summer quarter.

(c) Dues bylaws shall set dues in accordance with the Dues Structure defined in Section 2 of this article.

Section 4. Dues Pass Through: In the event that the Affiliates raise the per capita fees assessed, and such increase has not been accounted for in the bylaws, then that part of member dues designated to pay per capita fees shall be increased by the amount necessary to accommodate the increased fees.

Section 5. Notification of Dues Obligations: The Union shall make known to the membership the amount of regular and associate dues at the beginning of each term.

Article X. Amendments to the Constitution

Section 1. Any member or members seeking to amend the constitution shall present in writing a copy of the proposed amendment to the General Secretary. The Secretary shall notify the Steering Committee and Stewards' Council, respectively, immediately of such proposed amendment and its consideration shall be placed on the agenda for the next membership meeting.

Section 2. A copy of the proposed amendment shall be published and distributed prior to the meeting.

Section 3. If a majority of those members attending and voting at the membership meeting vote in favor of the proposed amendment, or if ten (10) percent of the membership petition for

the proposed amendment, a referendum vote for the proposed amendment shall commence within ten days of the membership meeting passing the proposed amendment or receipt of the petition requesting the proposed amendment.

Section 4. A positive vote of two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) of those voting, provided that one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the membership votes, shall be required to pass the proposed amendment.

Section 5. Upon such passage, the General Secretary shall amend the constitution as required.

Section 6. All amendments shall be published on the Union website.

Article XI. Bylaws

Section 1. Except where otherwise specified herein, the Stewards' Council shall be empowered to establish written bylaws of the Organization in order to facilitate the implementation of policy as directed by the membership. These bylaws shall include, at a minimum:

(a) The voting procedures of the Organization; and

(b) Determination of departments for the purposes of representation in Article IV.

Section 2. Bylaws shall be proposed, passed or amended by a majority vote of the Stewards' Council, or a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote of the general membership.

Section 3. Bylaws regarding voting procedures may not be amended while the Organization is in the process of voting.

Section 4. The Bylaws shall be published on the Union website.

