

Statement of Support from the Council of International Graduate Students for the Graduate Labor Union at University of Minnesota

On February 20, 2023, the Graduate Labor Union (GLU-UE) launched its unionization campaign aimed at improving the working conditions of all graduate students, including international students. The Council of International Graduate Students endorses the efforts of the Graduate Labor Union and urges our fellow international students to sign a union card to collectively bargain for fairer working conditions.

In the United States, a labor union is a workers' organization that can legally bargain and negotiate their employment contract. In this case, GLU-UE will consist of teaching assistants, research assistants, and graduate instructors. One benefit of joining this labor union is having bargaining power to secure fairer wages and benefits. As part of the contract negotiations, GLU-UE can also advocate to eliminate unfair fees like the increasing international student fees and dependent insurance coverage, establish effective grievance procedures to address issues of harassment and discrimination, subsidize OPT and VISA processing fees, and ensure adequate, accessible legal aid, among other [issues](#) listed on GLU-UE platform.

CIGS recognizes that the existing mechanisms are not sufficient to address the needs of international students. While CIGS board members will continue to work with university administrators to advocate for international graduate students, we cannot make the substantial, tangible improvements that a unionized bargaining unit can achieve. **For this reason, we support the unionizing effort in hopes that it will more effectively improve the conditions for all graduate workers at the UMN, especially international graduate workers, and CIGS wholeheartedly endorses GLU-UE.**

Many CIGS members, and international students across the University, are [actively organizing](#) with GLU-UE to improve our conditions. We have seen [graduate student worker unions across the country led by our international student peers](#). Your employment contract as a graduate worker at the University is separate from your status as a student. The right to join a union is protected by federal law.

Our greatest protection is each other, and **now that a majority of UMN graduate workers have already signed union cards**, we know we have each others' backs.

You can find more details [here](#) about how international students can be part of GLUE-UE.

Council of International Graduate Students Board Members