



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**MINNEAPOLIS/ ST. PAUL/ DULUTH, MN** - For nearly a year, GLU-UE Local 1105 has been rebuffed at the bargaining table, with the University of Minnesota repeatedly reinforcing that our members' priorities are not the University's. The [mission](#) of the University of Minnesota is to drive groundbreaking research, provide a world-class education, and support the local community through outreach. Graduate Assistants are the employees who carry out this mission. Did you hear about the recent breakthroughs like those in [treatments for corn crop pathogens](#), [our understanding of lung failure in pneumonia & COVID-19](#), and [causes of gun violence among rural youth](#)? These studies were carried out by Graduate Research Assistants. Did you or a family member ever take courses like Calculus I, Probability & Statistics, or First Year Writing at the University of Minnesota? Those courses were taught by Graduate Instructors. Research does not happen at the University of Minnesota without Graduate Assistants. Teaching does not happen at the University of Minnesota without Graduate Assistants. The value that Graduate Student Workers create for the University far surpasses the amount we are compensated for.

The University of Minnesota is a premier research institution. Despite being in [the top 25 institutions in the country by research expenditures, spending more than \\$1.2 billion per year](#), the average graduate student worker salary is only [\\$27,000 per year](#), roughly \$3,000 per year less than the average Big 10 public university, and roughly [\\$10,000 short of a living wage](#) in Hennepin County. Graduate student workers deserve to live with dignity, and it's time for the University to treat Graduate Assistants as a priority.

Graduate Assistants are expected to pay opaque fees each semester for services that are seldom used. These fees usually cost \$500 to >\$1000, with international students bearing the highest costs. In offer letters to admitted students, these fees are seldom mentioned and come as a complete surprise when they appear in our bills, often at the same time we are responsible for security deposits, healthcare enrollment, and other moving costs. As a benefit of employment, these fees should be covered.

The University of Minnesota refuses to protect graduate workers against workplace harassment. It's clear that Graduate Assistants are viewed as second-class employees, with the University bending over backwards to protect abusive supervisors who throw chairs, disparage their workers, threaten international students with deportation, and [repeatedly sexually harass](#) their trainees. Further, the University refuses to recognize Fellows as employees, despite clear and unambiguous language in the [Public Employment Labor Relations Act \(PELRA\)](#) that states the opposite. Fellows and Graduate Assistants work side by side; their work is indistinguishable. The University encourages graduate workers to apply for fellowships for prestige, and then denies our rights to representation in return. We won't stand for this any longer.

"Fellows deserve the same rights and protections in the workplace as our colleagues recognized by the University in our Bargaining Unit," said Casey Wouters, a graduate worker in the Chemistry department.

“Clearly, the legislature agrees with us as per the amended PELRA statute. It’s time for the University to stop dragging its feet on expanding our union, and it’s time for the University to comply with the law and with what we know to be true: that fellows are workers too!”

Graduate Assistants are tired of our needs being ignored. **We are picketing on Northrop Mall (East Bank Campus), at Wilson Library (West Bank Campus), at the St. Paul Student Center (St. Paul Campus), and at the Kirby Student Center (Duluth Campus) on Friday, September 13 from 8 AM to 6 PM to make our voice heard.** Graduate assistants are not second-class workers. We are the glue that holds the University together. We urge the University to reconsider its previous positions at the bargaining table and welcome community members to [join us](#) in the fight for a living wage, the elimination of fees, and a safe & fair workplace.

We ask the University: will you recognize our importance or will we have to show you how much the University relies on our labor?

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