



GLU-UE Executive Board Statement on the Closing of Boynton Dental

Yesterday afternoon the University of Minnesota suddenly, and without warning, chose to close the Boynton Dental Clinic. This closure represents an egregious and unjustifiable erosion of grad workers' access to dental care, and it must be remedied. Grad workers need to access the services that the Boynton Dental Clinic has provided to the university community for years, and it must remain open. During our first contract fight, access to dental care was something that the GLU bargaining team extensively pushed for. When the prospect of allowing grad workers access to the UMN dental plan was brought up in the bargaining room, GLU organizers were scoffed at by administrators, and a bargaining team member for the University became so belligerently angry at our audacity to ask for dental insurance, the University had to call a caucus and momentarily pause the bargaining session to calm him down.

As it stands right now, grad workers do not have access to dental insurance. The University pays precious few dentists to work on campus, and allows grad workers to see them. The University just closed the clinic where most of these dentists work. Grad workers do not have reasonable access to a dental care plan that allows us to see anyone other than the dentists that work on our campuses. Because of this system, grad workers routinely have to wait upwards of 8 months to get dental cleanings, 2 months longer than recommended, and now, with the closing of Boynton, these delays and wait times are going to get much worse. This closure further highlights the precarity of grad workers' access to care. This unacceptable change to our working conditions will harm our members ability to access the care they need to stay healthy and do the research and teaching work they are so passionate about.

Closing Boynton's dental clinic also represents a significant violation of the GLU-UE CBA. Our contract explicitly prevents the University from unilaterally reducing the quality of dental care. While the University argues that students and workers on campus can continue to utilize the Faculty Dental Clinic, this does not solve the issue. Taking away the primary dental clinic for graduate workers on the Twin Cities campuses will lead to delays at other clinics and loss of care for grad workers. Already we are seeing members having to cancel appointments they have waited months for and this is patently unacceptable. GLU-UE has already filed an emergency Step 3 grievance in order to address this, and get answers for how the university intends to maintain or improve graduate access to dental care.

The timing of this announcement is also not lost on us. This closure comes just days after a new Vice Provost position was created at the university to further AI initiatives at UMN, laying bare the fact that the university will continue to prioritize expanding the ranks of its administration over maintaining baseline care for its students and workers. Again, this is another instance of UMN administrators looking out for themselves while selling students and workers down the river. We are tired of this behavior from administration and demand that it stop. We are formally calling on the University to reverse the decision to close the Boynton Dental Clinic so grad workers can continue to access the care they need.

Signed,

The Executive Board of GLU-UE 1105