

## **Resolution of the Bloomington Faculty Concerning SAAs and the Administration**

Endorsed by Bloomington faculty on May 9 with a vote of 623 to 75, this resolution calls on the IU Board of Trustees and senior administration to resolve the labor dispute on the IU campus. At the heart of the dispute is a request to the administration by over 1800 student academic appointees (SAAs)—more than two thirds of the approximately 2500 campus SAAs—to have their union recognized as a collective bargaining agent to negotiate fair stipends and working conditions. To date, this request has been denied by the administration. This summer, the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition (IGWC) will charter as an official local of the United Electrical Workers (UE) called the [IGWC-UE](#). Whether or not it is recognized as a bargaining partner by the senior administration, the IGWC-UE is here to stay, joining over 30 campuses with graduate employee unions including Madison, Michigan, Berkeley, MIT, Harvard, Yale, Columbia, and Brown.

The basic question this resolution asks us to decide is, Do we want our graduate workers and our administration to bargain as partners over wages, hours, and working conditions, or do we want adversarial bargaining through strikes and protests?

Many of you may wonder how the summer strike pause announced on May 10th by the IGWC-UE affects this resolution. IGWC-UE representatives have explained that the pause is an opportunity to organize a “stronger and broader strike in the fall” if the administration fails to respond to their requests. The decision to prepare for a strike in the fall makes it *more important than ever* for the faculty to support graduate students’ right to organize and to call upon the administration to arrange free and fair elections among SAAs on union representation.

What concretely would the Board of Trustees and the Provost need to do to resolve the crisis? As in the case of the first public university to unionize, UW Madison, there is no state statute governing collective bargaining at IU Bloomington and no legal bar to it. It is up to the administration voluntarily to recognize the union through an agreement such as the one governing other unions on the IUB campus, [HR-12-20](#) (“Conditions for Cooperation Between Employee Organizations and the Administration of IU”). A revised HR-12-20 or a similar policy would authorize elections to establish the majority status of the IGWC-UE and provide the legal basis for contract negotiations between the IGWC-UE and the IU administration. Other downstream HR policies would be revised accordingly.

Importantly, even before such a policy is in place, no legal ramifications would follow from the senior campus administration talking to the IGWC-UE and agreeing to seek a structuring agreement from the Trustees. Negotiations can and must begin immediately.

But would a union be good for Bloomington? It is significant to note that the top three highest-ranked public R1 institutions in the country—Madison, Michigan, Berkeley—have graduate employee unions. For our Big Ten comparators (so Berkeley is not included), here are the [Carnegie Rankings](#) sorted by Research Activity Index:

| <b>Big Ten Athletic Conference Institutions</b> | <b>Activity Index</b> |
|---|-----------------------|
| University of Wisconsin-Madison (union)         | 1.87                  |
| University of Michigan-Ann Arbor (union)        | 1.84                  |
| University of Minnesota-Twin Cities             | 1.75                  |
| University of Maryland-College Park             | 1.73                  |
| Ohio State University-Main Campus               | 1.66                  |
| <b>Indiana University-Bloomington</b>           | <b>1.58</b>           |

|   |      |
|---|------|
| University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (union) | 1.53 |
| Michigan State University (union)               | 1.51 |
| Northwestern University                         | 1.49 |
| Purdue University-Main Campus                   | 1.46 |
| Rutgers University-New Brunswick (union)        | 1.36 |
| The Pennsylvania State University               | 1.35 |
| University of Iowa (union)                      | 1.12 |
| University of Nebraska-Lincoln                  | 1.05 |

The top-two ranked R1 institutions in the Big Ten—Madison and Michigan—are unionized. A total of 6 of the 14 are unionized (Madison, Michigan, Illinois, Michigan State, Rutgers, Iowa), and 4 of those are in right to work states.

The AAUP, moreover, responsible for developing standards for shared governance and academic freedom in the United States, [endorses graduate student collective bargaining](#).

Additionally, an [empirical study](#) of unionized campuses cited in the landmark NLRB decision ([Columbia 2016](#)) surveys PhD students across 5 disciplines at 8 public universities and concludes “unionization does not have the presumed negative effect on student outcomes, and in some cases has a positive effect. Union-represented graduate student employees report higher levels of personal and professional support, unionized graduate student employees fare better on pay, and unionized and non-unionized students report similar perceptions of academic freedom.”

If we seek to maintain or enhance our Carnegie standing, we do not want to find ourselves among the last Big Ten universities to accord our graduate employees the right to representation. We urge a yes vote on this resolution.