

COGNITION: FAIR CONTRACT NOW!



The newsletter of Union Teaching and Research Assistants at the University of Iowa
The Campaign to Organize Graduate Students (COGS) UE Local 896 @cogsunion



February 2023

This month, our union goes into contract negotiations with the Iowa Board of Regents (BOR), the governing body that oversees public universities in our state. We will negotiate over the contracts for the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years. Currently, Teaching and Research Assistants at the University of Iowa receive some of the lowest TA salaries in the Big 10. Some TAs at the university already depend on food banks to supplement our income, while approximately 93% qualify as “rent burdened,” meaning on average over 30% of our monthly wages go toward housing costs. **Bread is 12% more expensive. We have some of the lowest wages in the Big Ten. Grad workers have no parental leave. And if we can’t afford to live here, Ulowa doesn’t work!** In December, over 100 TA/RAs, Campus Workers, Students, and community supporters came out to the Pentacrest to demonstrate our power and support for a fairer contract and a **Real Raise**.

During our last negotiations, in 2020, we were offered a 1.3% raise. This year—particularly considering the nearly 9% increase in inflation in the last year—a similar salary increase would be devastating. Fair pay is necessary to allow us to do good work and to do right by our students and the educational mission of this University. This academic year, the BOR increased our raises from 1.3% to 2% only after constant pressure from COGS members who marched on the boss during their summer meeting to demand fairer wages. We learned that the UI and the BOR have the resources to compensate its workers, they simply chose not to — and will not, unless grad workers take action. To achieve a **Real Raise**, grad workers must act in an organized fashion. Last month, UE-896 members approved our contract proposal. It includes a 10% base-wage increase each academic year of the two-year contract.



UE 896/COGS proposal for wages:

Below are highlights of the main additions made to COGS’ 2021-23 proposal:

- Remote work (Article VII, Sec 4)**
Demands an allowance of remote work for a minimum of 20 and 25 working days for academic-year and fiscal year appointments respectively.
- Parental leave (Article XII, Sec 5)**
Demands 12 weeks of paid parental leave per guardianship event.
- Parking and bus passes (Article XIV, Sec 2)**
Demands access to free parking and/or reimbursements for parking and bus fees.
- Accessibility (Article XVI, Sec 1)**
Demands access needs of TAs & RAs be met.

	Academic yr	Fiscal yr
2022-23	20708	25300
2023-24	\$22,778.9	\$27,830
2024-25	\$25,056.7	\$30,613

5. **Safe working conditions and PPE (Article XVI, Sec 2 & 3)**

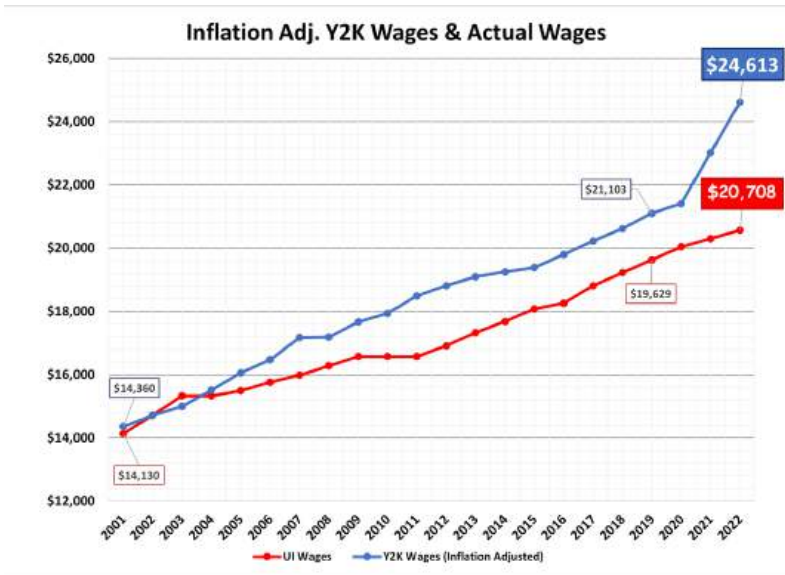
Demands access to safe working conditions and PPE.

What's Next? What Can You Do?

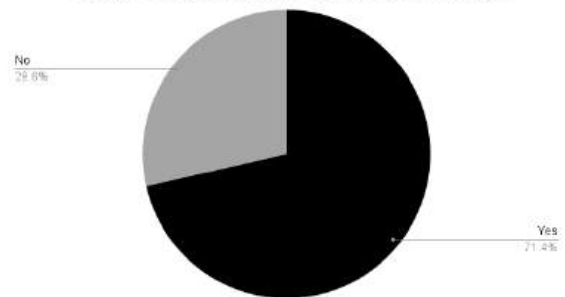
The BOR has delayed establishing a date for our first session of open bargaining due to problems of “scheduling.” It is imperative that members continue to pressure the BOR to come to the negotiating table in a timely manner and bargain in good-faith. As soon as bargaining dates are established **it is imperative that Grad Workers come out to the open session of bargaining to show the BOR that we deserve better than 1.3%**

In the meantime:

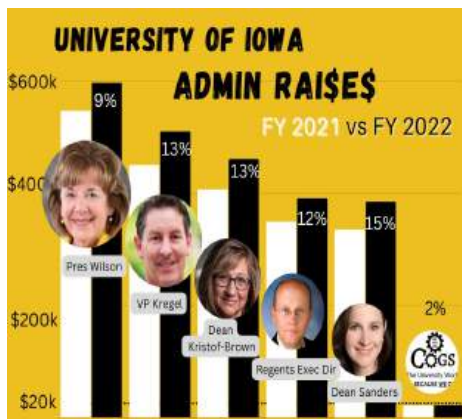
- Reach out to your co-workers and keep them updated about our contract campaign. Establish a time for a COGS update in your department graduate meetings. Circulate this newsletter!
- Come out to our informational pickets happening on Mondays and Fridays and bring friends & coworkers! It is vital to keep the pressure up and to be out in public and make our campaign visible on campus.
- Sign a postcard to add to our collection of Grad Workers who support our contract demands.
- Check your emails and follow @cogsunion on socials for updates. At informational pickets we will have planned phone/email/social media actions.



Guarantee Paid Parental Leave to Grad Students



71% of B10 Institutions Provide Paid Parental Leave



UI has the resources to pay its campus workers better wages and provide paid parental leave. By continually underfunding the labor that makes the university work, the UI & the BOR are systematically undercutting the educational mission of the University. Our union must act to defend public education in Iowa.

Solidarity!