

COGNition



UE 896 COGS

NEWS

The Campaign to Organize Graduate Students (COGS)

November 2024

Representing Teaching and Research Assistants at the University of Iowa since 1996

Cogs Wins Recertification #4!

October 22nd

COGS wins recertification again!
4 times in a row.

Since 2017, Iowa law requires public sector unions to get a majority vote from those in the bargaining unit every two years, or they will be disbanded. COGS recertified in 2018, 2020, 2022, and again in 2024. We received 598 votes on day one alone this year. In all, 1,223 people voted to preserve the union, forcing the State to officially recognize COGS, UE Local 896, as the bargaining representative for all RAs and TAs.

"...let's go show them who's bigger than the boss! ;) Thank you COGS!!!"

-COGS member who voted to recertify

Become a member in good standing by signing up for dues online: cogs.org/join

Childcare Subsidy at UI

October 23rd

Look what happens the day after we win - the university moves!

The day after we recertified, UI promoted their Childcare Subsidy Program. COGS continues to demand a more robust program. To learn more search "[Childcare Subsidy Program UIowa](#)"

Check out other services like free winter clothing and the food pantry at cogs.org/resources

General Membership Meeting

Thurs — Dec 5th

7pm — ICPL

Room A

See you there!



Wins for UE Workers

May, June, and July

UE Local 197, Johns Hopkins University, May: New contract signed with \$47,000 minimum stipend, \$1,000 signing bonus, and full coverage of dependent health insurance premiums.

UE Local 261, Dartmouth College, June: New contract with 17.5% raise, \$1,200 international student payment for visa fees, COLA or 3% minimum annual raise, and \$400,000 fund for graduate worker child care and medical expenses.

UE Local 1122, University of Minnesota, July: Minnesota law changed to include Graduate Fellows as public employees with equal protections and rights.

UE Local 1466, University of New Mexico, June: New contract signed with 30% raise for project assistants. \$2,000,000 line item created for graduate worker raises by New Mexico legislature.

Get in touch to join the UE National GWOC (Graduate Worker Organizing Committee) and talk to the folks running these organizing efforts. You can read more about our UE family at ueunion.org. In December, we'll have a chance to speak with members of UE 1466 in New Mexico.

Western Region Council

September 28th & 29th

In September, COGS Western Region delegates, Jacob Payne and I, Cary Stough, traversed the length between Iowa City and Covington, KY (just across the river from Cincinnati) to attend the annual UE Western Regional Council. We arrived at our hotel amidst a crowd of our UE extended family. Representatives from locals in Ohio, Kentucky, California, New Mexico, and many other states shared their victories and offered testimonials of hope and trepidation at the outlook for public sector unions in America. On the second day, we met with the other graduate worker unions in the region to talk strategy: organizing higher education, expanding our legal rights for bargaining, and continuing cross-local solidarity. Of course, we also had a little fun (watch us dance to "[HOT TO GO](#)"). The work some of the more recent UE grad unions are doing is truly inspirational. Organizers at UGW-UNM (United Grad Workers of University of New Mexico), for example, successfully lobbied their state government to include graduate fellows under the bargaining unit definition. Look forward to some collaborative Zoom meetings with members from these other schools as we navigate the shifting state of national politics in the coming months.

Bargaining on the Horizon

Spring 2025

End the Fees Campaign

By John Tappen, UE Local 896-COGS

Labor Solidarity Chair

UE Local 896, also known as the Campaign to Organize Graduate Students (COGS), is in the midst of a fight to win concessions from the boss. Since October 2023, COGS — which represents close to 2,000 graduate teaching and research assistants at the University of Iowa (UI) — has been organizing a campaign to end the University's practice of charging graduate workers hundreds of dollars in fees every year to work. Graduate teaching and research assistants are the only UI workers charged such fees, despite being critical to the university's mission of teaching and research.

“No one should have to pay to work,” said Hannah Zadeh. “Teaching assistants log the majority of educational contact hours with undergraduate students in classes, labs, and office hours. The UI could not function without the work of graduate research and teaching assistants.”

... continued in UE News, April 13, 2024, “Local 896 'End the Fees' Campaign Builds Membership and Organizing Capacity”

Stewards' Corner

Featuring the Social Science (Yellow Area)

Steward: Mahdi Feyz Karimlou!

What is your program? Sociology

What do you focus on in your program? I try to focus on research which contains a

lot of reading and writing and dealing with uncertainties.



What does it mean to be a steward? It

involves a lot of organizing, spreading the word about events, door to door visits during membership drives (Blitz), and helping graduate workers with their grievances.

Why is COGS important to you? COGS is important to me because its purpose is to improve the conditions of all graduate workers, something very tangible and concrete, something that we all know is not the greatest.

What do you hope to see for COGS and graduate workers in the future? I hope to see more involvement from all the bargaining unit both by becoming members and taking initiatives in organizing actions that benefit all of us.

Poem: Shrug Forward

This submission comes from our very own Blue Area Steward, Regina Napolitano. Do you want to share your writing or other 2D art with fellow COGS members? Send it in for the Spring 2025 COGnition!

we sweat through mid-september, though
I never lived a television autumn. my day,
consumed by my slick back.

once the answers were automatic: glamour, love,
the idea of love, & love's delusion, who left me shorn,
hacking up mint leaves in a toilet bowl

onto my long walk away from madness' subway platform
now I often want the computer to save me
because we keep squabbling in our union meetings

& doesn't it feel like bullshit, saving yourself? Better to be
saved
by Love or God or limited edition purses or especially crispy
chicken tenders. Still, sometimes change comes

burning through the Chase Banks



When in Doubt, Reach Out

I teach rhetoric, a class all entering first-year students are required to complete at the University of Iowa. Of course we talk about politics. Politics is professional rhetoric—the applied art of persuasion.

The day after the election, I prepared a slideshow that spoke to U.S. current events. I sat for many hours, contemplating how I would provide a lesson that addressed the variety of interests, feelings, and questions I knew would arise that day.

During my lesson planning, I was careful to stick to facts and to not infuse my teaching with my personal political beliefs, but I did include pieces of the president-elect's rhetoric that are worth analyzing and interrogating.

Two days later, I received an email that shot goosebumps up my arms: "This is to discuss a concern that was raised regarding class. [The Dean] is inviting you to a scheduled Zoom meeting." It was sent at 2:04pm. The Zoom was scheduled for 3:30pm.

A professor I was meeting with suggested I call my Union Rep, reminding me of my Weingarten rights: “The legal right of employees to have a union representative present during investigatory interviews.”

I called my Union Rep, they calmed me down and assured me they’d be with me through the process, every step of the way. We made a plan, and they immediately began to work on gathering advice on the matter.

My Union Rep sat beside me as the meeting started. Eventually, the Dean noted that a complaint had been received and we needed to discuss that instructors using their positions to present personal political beliefs in class is inappropriate. I said I was well aware of this, and that is why I worked to cultivate and maintain a fact-based, respectful, and comfortable classroom learning environment. My Union Rep took notes.

At the end of the meeting, at the prompting of my Union Rep, the Dean stated that a letter would be sent as a follow-up, and no disciplinary actions would be taken at this time.

My case still isn’t resolved, but the relief I feel in not having to wade alone through the bureaucracy or stress of accusations is monumental. Our Union is a collective run on integrity and teamwork, where anyone can find advice, support, and solidarity in the pursuit of fairness and appropriate treatment. So when in doubt, reach out.

linktr.ee/cogs

@cogsunion

COGS **UEA**
THE UNION FOR EVERYONE
MEMBERS RUN THIS UNION

STEPS TO THE CONTRACT WE DESERVE

NEW CONTRACT JULY 1, 2025

MEMBERS VOTE ON CONTRACT

END OF NEGOTIATIONS MARCH 15, 2025

BEGIN CLOSED-SESSION BARGAINING

BOARD OF REGENTS PRESENTS COUNTER-PROPOSALS

COGS PRESENTS INITIAL DEMANDS

COLLECT DATA FOR BARGAINING

SEND OUT BARGAINING PRIORITIES SURVEY ✓

MEDIATION REQUEST FORM TO EMPLOYEE APPEAL BOARD ✓

SUBMIT PRE-BARGAINING INFORMATION REQUEST TO THE BOARD OF REGENTS ✓

FROM CONTRACT ACTION TEAM (We meet every other Sunday) ✓

WIN UNION RECERTIFICATION ✓

STRONGER TOGETHER
TOGETHER WE ASCEND

cogs.org/cognition