



When Grad Student Rights Are Under Attack, What Do We Do? Stand up, Push Back

Cary Stough

On July 11-13, the Iowa Board of Regents and University of Iowa admin held their annual board meeting regarding the management of the University's finances. By "finances," they always mean 1) the systematic devaluing of grad student labor, through raising semester fees, 2) the wiping away of basic amenities and safety resources, such as the shuttering of RVAP (UIowa's Rape Victim Advocacy Program), and 3) the general sequestering of funds from the lowest to the highest at the University (President Barbara Wilson was given *another* raise this year, far exceeding the raise we negotiated for graduate workers). This year, however, they also planned to vote on new University policy regarding DEI, adding the following language:

"A student shall not be required to take a course that has substantial content that conveys DEI or CRT to satisfy the requirements of a major, minor or certificate unless the Board has approved it as an exception."

DEI, in the stated case, was broadly defined and includes such concepts as *implicit bias, allyship, antiracism, social justice, and gender theory*. Any course that teaches these or related concepts must be specially approved by the Board of Regents as an exception and, furthermore, must renew that exception every 2 years. (Continued on p.2)



COGs and Iowa Federation of Labor members at the Iowa City Pride Parade

International Student Food Drive

Ashley Maempa

This summer, COGS held a food drive and distribution for international students. Due to the actions of this administration, many international students found themselves unexpectedly staying in Iowa City over the summer. With no guarantees of being able to re-enter the country, and often without the ability to legally work in the country, many international graduate students were in an even-tighter financial spot than the University normally leaves its grad workers!

After getting feedback from international students, COGS decided to hold a food distribution event in July. Every Saturday this summer, COGS members tabled at the Iowa City Farmer's Market to talk to community members and grad students. Over just three weekends, we raised several hundred dollars for international grad students.

These generous donations from graduate students and other members of the Iowa City community were used to purchase food for distribution. sacred collective, an awesome space in Iowa City graciously allowed us to store and distribute donations at no cost. We were able to provide food for several grad students and their families. We are truly privileged to have such a strong surrounding community!

If you are interested in tabling at the Iowa City Farmers Market on Saturday mornings, reach out to cogs@cogs.org. And as always, if you need anything, your union is here for you.



Olivia Jones, President, shopping for Food Drive

Upcoming Events...

Pay Day Beers
7pm first Friday of the month @ Joes Place

Homecoming Parade
Friday, September 26th

Next GMM:
Tuesday, September 30th
@ICPL

COGS pushes back on Anti-DEI policies

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If it sounds Trumpian, looks Trumpian, even smells Trumpian—well, then, god damn it, it's *Trumpian*. [COGS acknowledged this as yet another attack on our rights to teach, and to speak truthfully to the lives of our students and colleagues.](#) Grad students and faculty from all over Iowa saw it as yet another fascist attack on research, expertise, our livelihoods, even our lives. They were right!

So, as we've done every year, we packed the public comment on June 11, shoving the bleak vision of our futures under these delimitative policies back into the Board of Regents' faces. We were joined by organizers from the UIowa nurses and health professionals union, SEIU, as well as groups within which we are in undying solidarity, like Iowa Students for Justice in Palestine. Folks from the humanities cited the well-documented biases this country already incurs on so many of the most vulnerable among us. We have the RIGHT to speak out against injustice in the classroom! Folks from the medical school spoke to the absolute necessity of DEI initiatives in medicine to ensure equitable care to patients. We deserve to receive ADEQUATE TRAINING in fields that depend on the existence of all human beings!

After the public comment, we held a rally attended by nearly a hundred members of the Iowa faculty, staff, graduate school, community organizers, and community. We shared testimonies of the role that DEI plays in our lives and professions, and voiced our condemnations of the Board of Regents' actions, as they cowered inside their boardroom.



Protest sign at the June rally against the Board of Regents

Through our efforts and our *NOISE*, the Board of Regents agreed to table their vote on the DEI provision until later in the summer. When it came time to vote on it again, they barely changed anything about the original policy language. It now reads:

“Faculty may teach controversial subjects when they are relevant to the course content. Instruction should be presented in a manner that fosters critical thinking and avoids indoctrination of one perspective...”

This is a huge win, and shows us that the Board of Regents is not an unstoppable opponent when we exert force.

If they didn't know before, they know now: we will go wherever they go; we will fill up the space we've been denied; and we *will* be heard. The leadership of COGS knows as much as anyone that *diversity is strength*, and, rather than indoctrinating with one perspective, diversity allows for *everyone's voice to be heard*. This isn't the end of our fight, but it's a great lesson for grad students like us, for faculty, and for the community.

When we organize, we win. With each win, we gain another foothold. No matter how swiftly these fat-cats pull up the ladder, we're still holding on. THE UNIVERSITY WORKS BECAUSE WE DO!



“Board of Nations”

GOP Killing Iowa History

Greg Wickencamp

Conservative legislators in this state are attempting to kill Iowa history. This is not hyperbole. There is currently one peer-reviewed academic state history journal and one historical archive in Iowa City. Iowa's GOP has arbitrarily decided to discontinue both. Why?

For 163 years the *Iowa Annals* has catalogued crucially important lessons from Iowa history. The journal survived the end of Reconstruction. It reminds us that Iowans served the Union Army in numbers rivaling any northern state. The journal survived the economic depressions of the 1890s and 1930s, when Iowans demanded that politicians work for the public good more than private robber barons or markets. The journal documented the Civil Rights Movement when Iowans like Edna Griffin demanded an end to segregation and apartheid conditions. Until a few weeks ago, it survived to remind us that we might all be historical actors, capable of creating new futures. (Continued on p. 3)

GOP Killing Iowa History

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COGS band, Labor Notes, at the SHSI rally in August

Today, though the journal pays for itself, the Reynolds administration decided it's not a worthwhile investment for the state. History depends not just on journals but on accurate records. These too are being threatened. The State Historical Society of Iowa's (SHSI) archives in Iowa City are being scrapped. Like a cash-strapped fiend stripping the copper out of an old house, the Reynolds administration is chopping up these archives and throwing most of the records out. These archives hold 8,000 feet of manuscripts, 3,500 oral history interviews, 10,000 reels of newspapers and census records, 160,000 volumes of often unique books and pamphlets, and countless other one-of-a-kind records. Care for these invaluable artifacts doesn't require much: climate controlled storage space and a few expert archivists is sufficient. This is too much for Iowa's GOP. Rather than honor the sacred promises to hold these collections for future generations, legislators have given the reigns to an unqualified Yes Man, Tony Jahn.

Before state archivist Tony Jahn was appointed to his current position, he had neither library nor teaching experience. The only advanced "degree" he holds is a 5-day crash course misleadingly called a "mini-MBA." Before our tax dollars began paying his six-figure salary, he worked at Target and Marshalls – hardly qualifying experiences for becoming a state archivist.

In dismantling these valuable archives and state history journal, the GOP of Iowa is following a long pattern of authoritarians: erasing access to history.

History is valuable because it helps us avoid the mistakes of the past, and it emphasizes new possibilities for the future. It teaches us that a handful of organized people can make dramatic changes. Were it not for a few dozen graduate workers in the 1990s, for example, graduate

workers at UI would have no labor union, health benefits, or stipend today.

While the closure of SHSI and the state journal may seem inevitable, history also teaches us that nothing is foreclosed and the future is unwritten. Our future, in fact, depends on us.

Please consider signing the [petition](#) to save Iowa history.



"Funeral" for Iowa history at the August SHSI rally

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To contribute to the next edition of COGnition, email Cogs@cogs.org or afrancesmoore@gmail.com.

The University works because WE do!