

GEOC CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

The Graduate Employees' Organizing Committee, henceforth the Union, shall be a Union located in Detroit, Michigan. Its mission shall be:

- To negotiate on behalf of the graduate students employed at Wayne State University;
- To be a democratic and grassroots organization;
- To protect and enlarge the rights of graduate employees;
- To help shape the university community;
- To improve the undergraduate education, especially the introductory courses that graduate employees usually teach;
- To work with organized labor towards common goals;
- To build strong ties with Metro Detroit;
- To promote social justice.

ARTICLE I. AFT/AFT – MICHIGAN AFFILIATION

This organization shall be affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers / American Federation of Teachers – Michigan AFL-CIO.

ARTICLE II. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION

No member shall be discriminated against on the basis of race, creed, color, ethnicity, religion, national origin, ancestry, marital or parental status, age, gender, gender identity or expression, pregnancy, sexual orientation, veteran status, height, weight, disability (including HIV status), political affiliation or belief, and membership in any social or political organization. The Union shall encourage at all levels of participation of women, people of color, international students, and representatives of all major colleges.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

A. *Definition of membership*

Membership shall be open to all graduate students at Wayne State University regardless of their employment status or bargaining unit status. Any graduate student who has signed a Union membership card and paid the currently assessed level of dues shall be a member in good standing.

B. *Decisions by General membership*

Certain decisions must be reserved for the general membership:

1. Approval of negotiating positions before bargaining begins;
2. Contract ratification;
3. Authorization for the Steering Committee to call a strike;
4. Any change in the level of dues assessment, except in the case of an increase necessary to cover an increase in per capita fees as ratified by delegates to an AFT or AFT – Michigan convention;
5. Approval of an annual budget, including any change in the number of authorized paid positions;
6. Amendments to this constitution;

7. By-laws pursuant to this Constitution; and
8. Any matter which directly affects the rights or duties of the members under the laws of the United States of America;
9. Any major decision regarding the Union's policies or priorities.

C. Elections

The general membership shall elect a President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and other members of a Steering Committee to perform duties described in this constitution. The four Steering Committee officers shall serve for one-year terms, and nominations for these positions shall be made at a Winter term meeting of the general membership. Elections of the officers must be by a secret mail-in ballot, and if a vacancy occurs in one of these positions of special selection shall be held. Other members of the Steering Committee may be elected by voice vote at a general membership meeting. If there are more than two candidates for a position and neither receives a majority vote, a plurality shall rule.

The general membership meeting can remove officers or other members of the Steering Committee and call a special election to fill a vacancy, but the person or persons removed shall be permitted to seek return to office in that special election.

D. Other votes

Votes on contract ratification and strike authorization must be conducted by secret mail-in ballot, in which only those members bound by the contract or strike call shall participate. Any other matter may be decided by voice vote at the general membership meeting. A strike authorization, removal of an officer or Steering Committee member, or an amendment to this constitution requires approval by two-thirds of the members voting, but approval of by-laws or other matter can be decided by a simple majority.

E. Convention of membership meetings

A general membership meeting must be called at least once per Fall and Winter semester, at a time and place to be determined by the Steering Committee, and an announcement together with the proposed agenda shall be distributed to all members at least 6 days in advance. A general membership meeting must be convened if any petition by 5% of membership demanding such a meeting and naming a time and place is presented to the President or members of Steering Committee at least 6 days in advance of the proposed time.

F. General Practices

When a document such as a bargaining platform or constitutional amendment is to be presented for approval at a general membership meeting, this document must be distributed to all members of at least 6 days in advance of the meeting. The agenda shall include a reasonable time for discussion of such document before any vote is called. Motions from the floor for additions to the agenda must always be entertained as the first term of business at any general membership meeting.

Decisions at general membership meetings shall be conducted in accordance with procedures specified by by-law.

Article IV. STEERING COMMITTEE

A. *Composition*

The Steering Committee shall consist of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and other members elected by the membership. Members of the Steering Committee may serve as chairs of standing committees and holders of other posts, as by-laws ratified by membership shall provide. No member of the Steering Committee shall have more than one vote. The Steering Committee shall allot these posts, other than the four officer position specifically elected by the membership, and can at any time propose by-laws to revise the number or list of posts.

The number of non-officer members of the Steering Committee and other posts to be assigned to such a member shall be determined by by-law.

Any Union member who is willing may participate in meetings of the Steering Committee and the Committee may assign such provisional members to posts, which have become vacant by resignation or otherwise. However, no unelected member shall be counted as a voting member of the Committee until ratified at a general membership meeting.

B. *Organizing duties*

The Steering Committee shall be responsible for the recruitment, participation, and activism of members. Each Steering Committee member shall be responsible for a number of departments and be working with the stewards in those departments. No person shall be counted as a voting member of the Steering Committee who does not undertake organizing responsibilities.

C. *Other duties*

The Steering Committee shall implement policy directives of the membership, oversee the operation of committees, and maintain day-to-day operation of the Union.

D. *Duties of the President*

The President shall chair the Steering Committee, consult with members of the committee between meetings concerning matters, which ought to be placed on the agenda, and shall oversee all day-to-day operations of the Union.

E. *Duties of the Vice President*

The Vice President shall chair the Stewards' Council or recruit a steward to do so. The Vice President shall temporarily assume the duties of the President if the President is absent or indisposed, or until a special election can be held if the Presidency should become vacant.

F. *Duties of the Secretary*

The Secretary shall take minutes of the Steering Committee and general membership meetings, shall either take minutes of the Stewards' Council meeting or recruit a steward to do so, shall maintain roles of current membership in all official records of the Union, and shall conduct all necessary correspondence for the Union.

G. *Duties of the Treasurer*

The Treasurer shall disburse Union funds appropriated by the Steering Committee resolution or legislative action by the general membership meeting; shall deposit all dues or other income of the Union to an account in the name of the Graduate Employees' Organizing Committee; shall maintain accounts which shall be open to inspection by any member of the Union or by auditors appointed by any organization to which the Union is affiliated; and shall chair the Budget Committee.

ARTICLE V. STEWARDS' COUNCIL

A. *Designation of Stewards*

The Union shall seek to designate one steward for each ten members in a department. Each department shall designate at least one steward. Departments are encouraged to hold elections for stewards, but stewards are also appointed by the Vice President.

B. *Duties of Stewards*

The duties of a steward are: to communicate with members of departments; empower members to take ownership of the Union; to solicit the views of membership on bargaining positions; and to bring any grievances which members may have to the attention of the Grievance Committee. Each steward is encouraged to serve on at least one standing committee of the Steering Committee, and no steward who volunteers to serve on such a committee shall be refused.

C. *Members of the Stewards' Council*

The stewards shall meet together at least once per month to plan and initiate action on membership decisions, to discuss any concerns or members' grievances which any steward wishes to bring to the attention of the council, or decisions on which the Steering Committee seeks broader input. The Stewards' Council shall be responsible for communicating with members in advance of meetings and elections.

D. *Departmental meetings*

Stewards should call a meeting of their department at least once per term to discuss matters of common concern, and if necessary to elect a new steward.

BY-LAWS

By-law I – Meetings shall be conducted in accordance with Articles I, III, V, and XII of Roberts' Rules of Order, but no provision of the Rules of Order shall be construed as overriding any provision or By-laws of the Union.

By-law II – The Steering Committee is authorized to employ on full-time or up to three half-time paid Organizer(s) to organize, train, and advise the Union leadership. These Organizers shall attend meetings of the Steering Committee as nonvoting members and perform any duties as the Steering Committee may assign.

By-law III – There shall be four to nine voting members of the Steering Committee including four officers. The posts to be allotted by non-officer voting members of the Steering Committee are;

- Editor of the newsletter;
- Chair of the Bargaining Research Committee, charged research legal issues, membership settlement, and experiences of other Unions in order to draft bargaining positions, and recommending to the Steering Committee members of a Bargaining Team to conduct negotiations;
- Chair of the Grievance Committee, charged with enforcing the union contract and pursuing any other avenues redressed on behalf of an aggrieved member of the Union;
- Chair of the External Relations Committee, charged with liaison to the American Federation of Teachers or any other organization which this Union may become affiliated, to other labor organizations on campus, and to graduate student organizations at this and other colleges and universities.

By-law III – Under article III, a secret mail-in ballot or other ballot of membership may be conducted by electronic ballot to be collected via internet. This type of ballot used for any given vote shall be determined by the Steering Committee on a case-by-case basis.