

Resolution to support graduate worker speech and concerted activity

WHEREAS free speech is protected under the first amendment; and

WHEREAS, under Wisconsin State Statute 111.04: “employees shall have the right ... to engage in lawful, concerted activities for the purpose of collective bargaining or other mutual aid or protection;” and

WHEREAS, the right to concerted activity includes the right to discuss wages and working conditions with coworkers, the media, and the public; and

WHEREAS, the NLRB states that “wages are a vital term and condition of employment, and discussions of wages are often preliminary to organizing or other actions for mutual aid or protection;” and

WHEREAS a majority of labor for prospective graduate student recruitment events is done by graduate worker volunteers; and

WHEREAS graduate workers, as participants in their academic program, provide valuable insights and lived experiences of their academic program which can inform and assist prospective students in decision-making regarding their academic or professional career; and

WHEREAS graduate workers may self-censor to avoid retaliation, which is a disservice to prospective students, which conceals critical issues such as bullying, harassment, and discrimination, and which fosters a culture of restricted speech on our public campus; and

RESOLVED, the TAA calls on graduate program administrations and advising faculty members to respect graduate worker rights and refrain from intimidation or retaliation for graduate worker free speech and concerted activity, including discussion of wages, benefits, and personal experiences;

RESOLVED, the TAA supports graduate workers’ rights to discuss wages, benefits, and personal experiences with each other, prospective graduate students, the public, and media, and to coordinate the distribution of this information;

RESOLVED, the TAA commits to provide legal Weingarten representation for any union member facing discipline or investigation, including for speaking about their wages or experiences with prospective students, and to pursue due-process investigations into any substantiated reports of illegal intimidation tactics against graduate workers.