

Johnny Rasnic - Candidate Statement

Position: Membership Organizer

Prior to attending UMass, I organized roughly 40% of the completely non-unionized Royal Gold Coco workforce in an attempt to join UFCW before I and two other organizers were illegally fired for our protected activity. I pursued an Unfair Labor Practice suit with UFCW against Royal Gold Coco and won. I have been active in GEO activity since I moved to the area in summer 2022, participating in bargaining both in the room with the administration and outside on campus at protests, such as the move-in day protest and Worcester Dining Hall sit-in. I have been attending organizing committee meetings since Fall 2022, helping plan out events for our membership, and learning about GEO and our new contract. I am also the Math department steward starting in Spring 2022. I am very passionate about fighting for workers' rights, power, and solidarity.

Right now, GEO has a current campaign alongside the Graduate Student Senate to help University Village residents push for lower rents and safer residences. Such a campaign relies on the solidarity of our members with our fellow graduate workers in University Village. GEO and the UMass administration is also entering a new bargaining cycle soon, and igniting our membership to make their voice heard is a crucial component to our collective power at the bargaining table. I will work effectively this semester to help organize and brighten participation of our membership in union activity, emphasizing regular interfacing between GEO and its members via social events, outreach events in convenient places on campus, learning workshops, and calls to mass actions when needed.

Chris Claypool - Candidate Statement

Position: Bargaining Committee Research & Proposal Coordinator

Greetings! My name is Chris, I'm a fourth year PhD student in Organismic and Evolutionary Biology, where I have been a GEO Steward since my 2nd semester. While my research is in biology, I am also really excited about leftist and union organizing and am really inspired by the labour movement happening right now in the US, and the greater discussion around inequality in our society.

We have been bargaining the majority of the time I've been in this union. I started right before the pandemic shutdown, which was followed by impact bargaining, where I attended many of the zoom bargaining sessions and was very interested in the dynamic between admin and GEO. The abysmal distribution of resources at the university was stark: the juxtaposition between the grad workers, thousands of us who do a huge chunk of the work that makes this a university, across from the administration's bargaining team, who make six-figure salaries and who's job is to effectively rip us off as much as they can.

I was a more active member in the successor bargaining process last year and I'm eager to get more involved this year. This past summer I served as a delegate for GEO / Local 2322 at the UAW constitutional convention in Detroit, which has given me a new perspective about the UAW and the weight that we have behind us as GEO. We are not just pesky students that the university can exploit – we are essential in the functioning of this university: we teach the classes, we write the grants, we do the research, and we publish the papers that bring wealth and prestige to the UMass. So we deserve a good cut: a substantial raise that will not only adjust for not only inflation and the cost-of-living and housing crisis in Western Mass, but also reflect the essential work that we do. I know there is currently an issues survey in the works and I am excited to see which other issues we graduate workers are passionate about and encourage discussion around them, then translate those priorities into contract proposals. We deserve for our needs to be heard and met by the administration.

Frankly, I want to support all aspects of bargaining, and so I was a bit torn between the different GEO bargaining team positions, but I feel the Research & Proposal Coordinator position best suits my affinity for the somewhat more tedious and behind-the-scenes work. If I am chosen, I look forward to helping draft the language that puts into action the will of the members. Either way, I am excited to support our priorities in this bargaining process and our negotiations with the university. Wishing you are all getting energized!

Andrew Kenneth “Chase” Randall - Candidate Statement

Position: Bargaining Committee Research & Proposal Coordinator

Greetings, I consider it an honor and privilege to introduce myself as Andre Kenneth Chase Randall (“Chase” preferred name usage). As a doctoral student in the Manning College of Information & Computer Sciences, I respectfully seek your support for me as a member of our upcoming bargaining committee. My prior background experience uniquely prepares me to serve as your voice. Here’s why:

Coming from Atlanta (arguably the cradle of the civil rights movement in the United States), I served in many civic engagement roles on the federal, state, county, city, and neighborhood levels. I volunteered under the tutelage of civil rights icon Congressman John Lewis, where I witnessed the interpersonal dynamics that create “good trouble”.

In 2012, I served as a campaign manager for State Representative [Keisha Sean Waites](#) (D-Atlanta), who ran as an open lesbian. During my work with Representative Waites, Governor Nathan Deal (Republican) held a signing ceremony for House Bill 5 that she introduced during the 2013 legislative session. As you may know, a governor retains not only the exclusive power to sign a bill into law but also the right to conduct a discretionary signing ceremony. Therefore, a Republican Governor conducting a signing ceremony for an openly lesbian Democrat in the South remains (to me) the “fine art of getting things done”.

On an academic level, I served as a master’s student [Project Rwanda Ambassador](#) where I traveled to Kigali, Rwanda. As a Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) student-led initiative from CMU Pittsburgh, CMU Qatar, and CMU Africa students, the Project Rwanda Ambassadors brainstormed on a best practice approach for teaching tech skills to primary and secondary education teachers with limited tech access. During the stay, our computer literacy outreach gained the attention of His Excellency Paul Kagame, President of Rwanda. President Kagame gave us an audience that later gained nationwide attention.

To be clear, teamwork makes the dream work. That being said, please select me as your choice for a Bargaining Committee Research and Proposal Coordinator. As you see, I possess the skills useful for researching, drafting, discussing, and advocating concerns that serve the greater community good. We accomplish much more working collectively than individually. Should you want, I welcome “personal” dialogue on social [@technicalCHASE](#). In advance, thank you for the support.

Yours in the joy of service, Chase.

Clara Higgins - Candidate Statement

Position: Bargaining Committee Research & Proposal Coordinator

My name is Clara Higgins, and I am a first-year Master's student in History with a focus in Public History. I am running for the Bargaining Research and Proposal Coordinator position. I believe I have the skills and experience to effectively represent GEO and its demands in the bargaining process in order to support and protect graduate workers. I also hope to be able to cultivate a space for graduate workers to express their concerns and needs in this bargaining process. In this position, I plan to utilize my professional experience in collaborative environments to set and accomplish goals, listen to the needs and concerns of GEO members, and be an active and attentive notetaker in order to draft proposals. In my department last semester, I participated in a collective action to address students' concerns about transparency. In this process, I assisted in reading through the graduate student handbook, crafting a letter to express our concerns, and participating in a series of conversations with departmental administration. This experience has prepared me to work on the bargaining committee.

There are myriad issues that I hope to bring to bargaining with the university in order to address the needs of graduate workers. For example, I participated in door-knocking and meetings with University Village residents in order to support their plan to bring residents' issues to the Chancellor. This is an important issue that must be addressed in bargaining. Additionally, I hope to advance Visa fee reimbursement, wage increases, and the elimination of the engineering fee as key bargaining issues. These issues directly impact graduate workers and should be pushed forward in bargaining in order to improve the experience, protection, and support of graduate workers.

Daniella Bradley - Candidate Statement

Position: Bargaining Committee Research & Proposal Coordinator

Danielle Bradley is a second year prose candidate at the MFA for Poets and Writers at UMass Amherst. Prior to returning to school to pursue her MFA, Danielle practiced as an attorney for several years and remains a member in good standing of the New York bar.

Danielle received her JD from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and worked as an associate at two big New York law firms, practicing within the compensation, benefits, and tax group. She has expertise within the areas of employment and labor law and has significant experience negotiating and drafting agreements and contracts. She has worked on dozens of multi-million and billion dollar deals (see [one](#) and [two](#), for examples) and has conducted diligence in connection with those deals, gaining a wide understanding of what constitutes “market” for various types of employment-related documents. Danielle has negotiated various types of agreements in connection with deals, including executive and severance agreements. She also has significant knowledge of and experience in employee benefits and tax matters. She has been conducting legal research for a decade and is comfortable doing so.

Danielle has also worked on various pro bono matters. She has represented pro bono clients in New York state court, including parole work resulting in the release of five formerly incarcerated people. Danielle continues to practice pro bono and is in the middle of a parole case currently.

Jordon Crawford - Candidate Statement

Position: Bargaining Committee Organizing and Mobilization Coordinator

Comrades,

My name is Jordon Crawford, a Jamaican, first-year PhD student in Afro-American Studies. I am running for the position of Bargaining Committee Organizing and Mobilization Coordinator within GEO, and I am counting on your vote to help me make our union work better for us all!

As a witness, and through conversation with others across departments, international graduate workers and folks of colour have felt underrepresented and have felt that GEO has been passive regarding the concerns and issues affecting us. Whether it be the widespread distribution of racist emails, harassment by UMass police, or sub-par working conditions and compensation, many of us rightfully feel as though the union is a stepping stone for a select few to gain political capital rather than a collective organisation which centres the interest of our most marginalised as a way to achieve sustainable and inclusive liberation.

If elected, my tenure on the bargaining committee would centre the following demands:

1. An intentional and active recruitment of Black and international graduate workers within the union so that our specific needs and grievances might be heard and attended to at all stages of bargaining.

2. Direct consultation with several of the affinity groups working on improving the experiences of graduate workers of colour together with uplifting the role and importance of the union's abolition committee, among others, to make sure that our bargaining proposal(s) prioritises the amelioration of working conditions of our marginalised workers of colour.

3. Within the upcoming bargaining session, I will bring attention to the specific needs and concerns shared by international students, particularly those of us who are from low-income and otherwise marginalised backgrounds. I will fight for nuanced steps to be taken to ensure that we are treated equitably in comparison to our US comrades to the full extent of the law in ALL areas.

4. I intend to advocate for the proliferation of housing for all graduate student workers, keeping in mind how this dilemma might disproportionately affect particular graduate workers such as international students, Black and Brown students, etc.

If elected, I will use my knowledge and expertise from having a career in law to listen to you all and fight viciously to have your needs attended to and bargained for. To my Black and brown peers, I know we are fed up with the sheer amount of indifference that we have received when we have made our needs known. As your Bargaining Committee Organizing and Mobilization Coordinator, you can count on me to work toward an anti-racist UMASS and bettering our collective experiences by advocating for our specific needs. you can count on me to work toward an anti-racist UMASS and bettering our collective experiences by advocating for our specific needs.

In Solidarity,
Jordon Crawford

Jessica Antonia Casillas Scott

Position: Bargaining Committee Organizing and Mobilization Coordinator

This is my 4th year at UMass as a graduate student. In 2022 I got my MFA from the Studio Arts department where I began my involvement in GEO organizing by recruiting all the graduate students in Studio Arts for a class grievance for overwork. After 2 rounds of grievance procedures the students elected not to proceed to arbitration. Through this process, and other non departmental organizing through the Racial Justice Coalition and UMass 4 Black Lives, I have become familiar with the tactics the University administration uses to extract labor from graduate workers while obfuscating its various strategies for doing so. I have participated in many contentious meetings with the Provost McCarthy, Vice-Provosts and various Deans to push for institution-wide changes in UMass culture and have also organized other graduate students, mostly in HFA, to also engage university leadership in these discussions. In a room of adversarial university admin who employ text-book middle management tactics I can and do maintain a constructive tone without conceding graduate negotiating points. I am now in the History department pursuing a PhD and have been using my institutional knowledge of UMass' various departments, cultures and constituents as part of the GEO Organizing Committee, acting as point person for the forthcoming Issues Survey which will be used as a tool for the Bargaining Committee and as a feedback mechanism for broader GEO membership. I understand that each graduate student's working experience is heavily influenced by unique departmental cultures and department specific obstacles within the generically exploitative corporate structure of UMass. I am committed to doing the necessary outreach and relationship building across our departments to make sure these interests are represented at the Bargaining table, not only through the Bargaining Committee itself, but by bringing existing communities, coalitions and GEO members into the bargaining room and engaging students new to this process as stakeholders in our collective power as union members.

Kasia Karolak - Candidate Statement

Position: At-Large Bargaining Committee Member

Hi my name is Kasia Karolak. I am a steward in the economics department. My studies focus on labor and feminist economics. My previous experience on the bargaining committee during the end of the last bargaining cycle makes me a good fit for a volunteer bargaining committee member. I look forward to helping negotiate a strong contract for our members in this cycle of bargaining.

Brenda Quintana - Candidate Statement

Position: At-Large Bargaining Committee Member

My name is Brenda Quintana, and I am running for a spot on the At-Large Bargaining Committee. Academically and professionally, I have been deeply invested in the labor movement and worker justice. I am a Labor Studies graduate student and prior to grad school, I was involved in organizing with immigrant worker centers in the Greater Boston area. Since joining GEO, I have looked forward to the opportunity to participate in this critical union process. I believe my experience will be supportive in engaging and mobilizing members to participate in bargaining. I also look forward to furthering my learning about our contract and negotiations. I am fully committed to showing up to all the necessary meetings, trainings, and actions and ensuring that graduate workers have their voices heard at the bargaining table.

Shady Lawendy Nashed - Candidate Statement

Position: At-Large Bargaining Committee Member

My name is Shady, and I am a first-year economics student from Egypt. As the recently elected co-chair of the international student caucus in GEO, I nominate myself to the at-large position in the bargaining committee (non-paid) with the primary goal of involving international graduate workers in the bargaining process. As the recent mobilization drive has shown, international graduate workers are underrepresented among GEO's membership. It is the caucus' wish to involve more graduate workers in GEO's affairs and I believe the struggle bargaining for a contract brings to the table is the perfect opportunity to do so. I hope to work with both branches of the bargaining committee to ensure that the next contract is not only materially fair to our contributions to upholding the institution that is UMass but is also able to grant us more direct control over our work; in other words, let us ensure that the next contract can push the furthest to make our years as graduate workers in UMass as non-alienating as they can be.