

We, the faculty in the Department of African American Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, express our full support for and solidarity with the Graduate Employees' Organization (GEO) in their just effort to bargain a fair contract with the University. Graduate employees at UIUC have been without a contract since August 2017, with negotiations for a new contract having stalled. We urge the University administration to accept the GEO's proposals for a new collective bargaining agreement, preserving graduate employees' tuition waivers, paying them a living wage, and providing them with adequate healthcare.

The Department of African American Studies supports our graduate students and employees, as they support us with their labor, knowledge, and passion for teaching. We urge Provost Cangelaris and the University bargaining team to work with GEO to provide graduate employees with a fair contract. If the Graduate Employees' Organization is forced to strike, we recognize that striking graduate employees are protecting themselves, undergraduates, and the integrity and quality of education at the University of Illinois. Moreover, we see GEO's demand for a fair contract as inextricably connected to a broader struggle for economic and racial justice on campus and beyond. Given our commitment to the Black Studies motto of "academic excellence and social responsibility," the Department of African American Studies, therefore, supports this and all efforts by GEO to secure economic stability for its members.