



Bill: Senate Bill 658 (HB 214)
Title: Graduate Assistant Collective
Bargaining Fairness Act
Date: February 21, 2020
Committee: Senate Finance
Position: SUPPORT

A. The problems have persisted across generations of graduate students, legislators, and administrators (p. 2).

- Over the last 20 years there have been numerous attempts to reverse the 2001 ban.
- Minimum stipends have hardly increased during that time.
- UMCP data shows pervasiveness of issues facing graduate employees.

B. The meet and confer process is not working (p. 5).

- Despite the best efforts of graduate employee leaders, university administration has been largely unresponsive to graduate employee concerns and issues.

C. On employment measures, University of Maryland does not stack up well against our peer schools (p. 7).

- UMCP's minimum graduate stipend is below many Big Ten and peer schools'.
- UMCP has one of the highest discrepancies between cost-of-living and stipend amongst our peer institutions.
- More than 50% of Big Ten schools are unionized.

D. Collective bargaining does not harm, and instead benefits, the educational atmosphere (p. 8).

- Peer-reviewed research suggests graduate student unionization actually improves the educational atmosphere.

E. There is broad, continuously expressed support among graduate employees (p. 10).

- Thousands of graduate employees, faculty, and campus groups across USM institutions have advocated for the legalization of collective bargaining rights for the last several years.

Testimony from Fearless Student Employees in support of HB214/SB658. Inquiries for further data or questions can be directed to fearlessstudentemployees@gmail.com.

The problems have persisted across generations of graduate students, legislators, and administrators.

Numerous bills have dealt with graduate employee collective bargaining over the last twenty years:

2000: HB 1361
 2001: HB 300 / SB 207 — Ban on grad employees collective bargaining enters statute
 2002: HB 604
 2008: HB 538 / SB 617
 2012: HB 972 / SB 859
 2017: HB 1250
 2018: HB 199 / SB 560
 2019: HB 270 / SB 491
 2020: HB 214

The minimum annual stipend a department might pay its graduate employees for a standard position has increased, but barely—and after stagnating for four years:

2013: \$15,067.00	<u>2016: \$16,144.00</u>	2019: \$17,455.00
2014: \$15,675.00	<u>2017: \$16,144.00</u>	2020: \$18,791.00
<u>2015: \$16,144.00</u>	<u>2018: \$16,144.00</u>	

University committees, surveys, and other data consistently demonstrate the pervasiveness of issues facing graduate employees:

Unlivable Wages...

In 2010, the workgroup “on the status of graduate assistants and adjunct faculty in Maryland's state higher education institutions” concluded “Graduate students addressing the Workgroup expressed the concern that stipends are low, relative to the cost of living in Maryland. They also cited economic concerns, the financial uncertainty that arises without multi-year assistantship commitments, and the dearth of affordable graduate student housing.” (9)

In 2016, UMCP GAAC surveyed and found 69% of respondents said their salary is not enough to support themselves.

In 2016, the Graduate School Review Committee determined, “Our data indicate that graduate students often feel overworked and undercompensated, and that the University does not provide enough mechanisms to address their concerns (though the new Statement of Mutual Expectations for Graduate Assistants and Faculty Supervisors is a step in the right direction). Appropriate financial support and expectations are crucial for allowing graduate students to focus on their

academics, and can enhance recruitment, particularly for the highest quality students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In 2017, the Graduate School's Quality of Life Survey showed that the top reason why graduate students would NOT recommend UMCP to prospective students was financial issues/concerns. Financial issues were the top reason why graduate students and employees felt unsupported by the university.

Unregulated hours...

In 2006, a survey at UMCP found that 36% of respondent teaching assistants asserted that they worked more than the maximum allowed by Graduate School policies (20). (10 of Workgroup report)

In 2010, UMCP told the workgroup it "believes that it has solved this significant workload inequity." (10)

In 2016, UMCP GAAC found 20% of respondents said they could not complete the requirements of their assistantship within the policy-limited time, and that the *average* number of hours worked (22.56) exceeded the maximum allowed by Graduate School policies (20).

In 2017, UMCP GAAC surveyed and found that the *average* number of hours worked (27.11) exceeded the maximum allowed by Graduate School policies (20).

In 2017, the Graduate School's Quality of Life Survey found significant dissatisfaction with overwhelming assistantship workloads, particularly given the comparatively low stipends.

In 2020, the Graduate School facilitated a study by Dr. Liana Sayer that suggested a vast range between colleges, with some colleges' graduate employees working nearly twice as many hours as other colleges employees doing similar work.

Issues with supervisors...

In 2010, graduate employees expressed concern that grievance procedures "leave the complaining student vulnerable to retaliation from the student's supervisor or mentor." (11)

In 2016, UMCP surveyed and found 22.8% of respondents would not be comfortable approaching their advisor/supervisor about a problem.

In 2017, the Graduate School's Quality of Life Survey found that many graduate students felt unsupported by program faculty and their advisors. Some even reported issues with faculty engaging in sexism, harassment, and exploitation. Issues with faculty were frequently reported as a reason why graduate students would not recommend UMCP to prospective students.

In 2019, the graduate school policies make us "first attempt to resolve the difficulty by discussing the situation with [our] faculty advisor/supervisor as expeditiously as possible."

Inadequate policies...

In 2010, graduate students complained that "informal, department-based processes are inadequate" to resolve issues. (11)

In 2016, UMCP surveyed and found a full 41.1% of respondents were either neutral, or felt insufficiently protected by Graduate School policies.

In 2017, the Graduate School's Quality of Life survey showed that respondents felt that graduate students and employees were devalued by their programs and the university, citing a lack of policies, programs, and resources that support graduate student life.

In 2019, our current grievance policies states, "the GA should attempt to resolve these matters locally, collegially, and informally."

In 2019, the Graduate School found that 27% of graduate employees did not have their required expectations setting meeting and Dean Steve Fetter said, "the[se] results were positive" in an email to stakeholders.

Lack of communication...

In 2010, the workgroup advised that, "Strong channels of communication must exist on every campus to encourage the open exchange of information and discussion of concerns between graduate assistants, faculty and administrators." (14)

In 2016, the Graduate School Review Committee determined the Graduate School needed to "improve communication about policies and services to faculty, staff and students."

In 2017, the Graduate School's Quality of Life Survey showed widespread dissatisfaction with communication between the university and the graduate community, and individual programs and their students. The survey showed concern about the consistent "lack of transparency" in decision-making.

In 2018, UMCP GAAC asked Dean Steve Fetter to communicate better and he responded, "students and faculty share responsibility for being informed, and helping to inform others."

Failure of shared governance...

In 2010, the workgroup was unsure "whether campus shared governance policies, processes, and practices...are adequate to resolve concerns of graduate assistants." (13)

In 2016, the Graduate School Review Committee determined the Graduate School had failed to "engage graduate faculty, students, DGSs and Coordinators, and other core constituencies on an ongoing basis in discussions of major issues in graduate education (e.g., time to degree)."

In 2017, findings from the Graduate School's Quality of Life Survey showed that "lack of voice" was a significant concern for graduate students and employees. Many felt that they had no way of addressing issues in their academic programs, workplaces, or at the university in general.

References:

Health & Time Use of UMD Graduate Students - Dr. Liana Sayer (initial findings)

[Graduate School Policies](#) - Graduate School, UMCP

[Graduate Student Quality of Life Survey \(2017\)](#) - Graduate School, UMCP

Graduate School Review Committee (2016) - UMCP

Graduate Assistant Advisory Council Survey (2016) - GAAC, UMCP

The meet and confer process is not working.

Dean	GAAC MEETING	Economic livability (salary, housing)	Parental resources for GA's (childcare, leave issues)	Training / preparation / expectations	IP Rights	Issues with international student employment / training	Sick and Bereavement Leave	Issues with GAAC processes	Information Gathering	Grievance Policy Issues
Dean Charles Caramello	2/4/2013	x	x	x	x	x				
	5/28/2013	x	x	x	x		x			
	12/11/2013		x	x	x	x				
	04/07/2014		x		x	x				
	12/04/2014	x	x	x		x		x		
	04/28/2015	x	x	x				x		
	11/30/2015			x	x			x		
	04/28/2016	x		x	x	x		x	x	
Dean Jeff Franke	11/30/2016	x	x	x	x		x		x	x
	4/17/2017	x		x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Dean Steve Fetter	12/14/2017	x		x	x		x	x	x	x
	5/3/2018	x		x			x	x	x	x
	11/28/2018	x		x			x	x	x	x

Illustrative exchanges from two GAAC meetings:

Issues with the offer letters admitted students receive

GAAC asked: can the Graduate School “audit offer letters to ensure they aren’t making promises that violate Grad School policies?”

They responded: “The Graduate School does not have the resources to review individual offer letters for 4,400 graduate assistants. Moreover, offers are often done via email or verbally, without formal documentation. We rely on departments to comply with Graduate School policies.”

Lack of progress on gathering background data

GAAC said: “The Grad School lacks a comprehensive, quantitative and qualitative, understanding of the condition of graduate employees. GAAC has attempted to gather this data, the grad school has generally not, and GAAC’s numbers and qualitative data are often called into question.” (5/3/18)

They responded: “I invite GAAC to request data from the Graduate School, rather than attempt to collect it independently.” (5/3/18)

But then, regarding specific requests for information, “the Graduate School does not have the resources to develop, purchase, maintain, or support a replacement system [that tracks comprehensive graduate student information].” (5/3/18)

GAAC said: “We are concerned that you do not really know what grad employees workload is, nor how that is changing.” (11/28/18)

They responded: “We will provide information on trends on the number of graduate assistants and GA stipends when a research analyst is available to do the analysis... With current student information systems, the Graduate School does not have the ability or capacity to require, collect, monitor, or store offer letters or contracts.” No commitment when a research analyst will be available. (11/28/18)

Regarding Statements of Mutual Expectations

GAAC asked: “What are you doing to make sure that the new policy language is followed, and initiated by supervisors rather than graduate employees?”

They responded: “Departments are responsible for implementing the policy. Graduate assistants share responsibility, with their supervisors, for knowing the policy and ensuring it is implemented properly.”

Regarding poor salaries

GAAC asked: “What are your next steps to bringing grad salaries in line with cost of living?”

They responded: “The average academic-year stipend is currently \$20,023; this will increase to over \$21,000 next year—equivalent to about \$30 per hour. Graduate assistants also receive tuition worth up to \$30,000 per year and the same health benefits that faculty and staff receive. In addition, many graduate assistants also receive supplementary fellowship funding—an average of roughly \$2,000 per doctoral student. Total compensation exceeds \$60,000 for a half-time, 9.5-month appointment.”

**The University of Maryland does not stack up
well against peer institutions.**

Institution	Unionized?	Required Annual Income For One Adult	Minimum annual GA Salary (20 hrs/wk.)	Maximum Hours Per Week, per policy
Northwestern University	In process	\$27,739	\$32,844	20
University of California, Berkeley	Yes - UAW	\$36,331	\$27,218 (9-month)	21.25 per week* (340 hrs/semester)
University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)	Yes (UAW)	\$29,864	\$27,726	~21.25 per week* (340 hrs/semester)
University of Wisconsin	Yes (TAA)	\$25,873	\$20,500	~22.5 per week (360 hrs/semester)
Rutgers University	Yes (AFT)	\$29,281	\$28,569	15
University of Michigan	Yes (AFT)	\$27,536	\$32,668.50	20*
Penn State University	No	\$25,675	\$17,280	
University of Iowa	Yes (UE)	\$23,872	\$23,982	20*
University of Washington	Yes (UAW)	\$31,295	\$28,656	~21.25 per week* (220 hrs/quarter)
Ohio State University	No	\$23,334	\$16,515	
University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign	Yes (AFT)	\$24,548	\$23,717.28	20*
UMD, College Park	No	\$36,492	\$23,736	20
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill	No	\$25,272	\$15,700	15-20 (recommended)
University of Minnesota	No	\$25,669	\$20,456.50	
Purdue University	No	\$23,708	\$20,358	20*
Michigan State University	Yes (AFT)	\$23,543	\$15,408	20*
University of Nebraska	No	\$23,330	\$10,000	20*
University of Indiana	No	\$24,453	\$9,914 (10 month)	No information

(Numbers from MIT Cost of Living Calculator, and each school's website / contract)

*Varies by appointment (1/4, 1/2, 3/4, full).

Collective bargaining does not harm, and actually benefits, the educational atmosphere.

Selected scholarship:

Rogers, S. E., Eaton, A. E., & Voos, P. B. (2013). Effects of unionization on graduate student employees: Faculty-student relations, academic freedom, and pay. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 66, 487–510.

The authors use survey data collected from unionized and non-unions PhD students across five academic disciplines and eight public US universities to study whether unionization harms faculty-student relations and academic freedom. The authors found that unionization either has no impact or a positive impact on faculty–student mentoring relations, with unionized graduate employees reporting higher levels of personal and professional support than non-unionized graduate employees. The study also suggests that unionization could have a positive impact on academic freedom.

Hewitt, G. J. (2000). Graduate student employee collective bargaining and the educational relationship between faculty and graduate students. *Journal of Collective Negotiations in the Public Sector*, 29, 153–166.

This study surveyed faculty and found substantial support for unionization in higher education, as well as a strong belief that graduate assistants should be considered employees with the right to bargain to protect themselves from mistreatment. More than 90% of the respondents indicated that student bargaining did not interfere with their ability to teach or advise graduate students, and 87.9% indicated that it did not inhibit mentoring relationships.

Julius, D. J., & Gumport, P. J. (2002). Graduate student unionization: Catalysts and consequences. *Review of Higher Education*, 26, 187–216.

Using interviews, archival sources and existing scholarship, this study found no evidence that unionization negatively affects student-faculty, or mentor-mentee relationships. Rather it suggests that the clarification of roles and employment policies through collective bargaining labor agreements can enhance mentoring relationships between faculty and graduate students by clearly delineating expectations and responsibilities.

Ehrenberg, R. G., Klaff, D. B., Kezsbom, A. T., & Nagowski, M. P. (2004). Collective bargaining in American higher education. In R. G. Ehrenberg (Ed.), *Governing academia* (pp. 209–295). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

This study used an anonymized data exchange of 29 major universities from 1996–1997 through 2000–2001. Comparing non-unionized graduate employees with graduate employees who were unionized before 1995, graduate employees who were unionized by the end of 1996, and graduate employees who were beginning in 1999. While the last group had on average the highest salaries, the authors argue that this could be explained by the fact that this group was generally located in areas with the highest cost of living. Overall, the authors concluded, “The findings suggest that the impact of graduate assistant unions on economic outcomes does not appear to be very large and that concern over graduate student unions may be overstated” (p. 230).

Schenk, T. (2010, January 17). The effects of graduate-student unionization on stipends (Working Paper Series 1831975). Cambridge, MA: National Bureau of Economic Research. Retrieved from <http://tomschenkjr.net/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/eegsu.pdf>

The author used data published in the *Chronicles of Higher Education* from 2000-2001, 2001-2002, and 2003-2004, to examine the effects of unionization on graduate employee compensation. He found that unionized teaching assistants generally have higher salaries, but not overall compensation, suggesting that higher wages might be offset by an increase in fees and a decrease in other benefits. The author also found that unionization did not increase the likelihood of health benefits, decrease inequality between departments, or improve salaries for research assistants.

There is broad, continuously expressed support among graduate employees.

Hundreds of graduate employees have submitted written testimony to you, thousands have signed our petitions asking for collective bargaining rights, and dozens of campus groups and leaders have urged your support.

USM Graduate Student Governments:

Graduate Student Government (UMCP) (2018-2020)
 Graduate Student Association (Bowie) (2018-2020)
 Graduate Student Government (UMES) (2018-2020)
 University of Maryland Center for Environmental Science (2018-2020)

USM Student Groups:

The Diamondback (2018, 2020)
 Graduate Assistant Advisory Council (UMCP) (2017-2020)
 Fearless Student Employees (UMCP) (2017-2020)
 Mechanical Engineering Graduate Students (UMCP)
 MaryPIRG (UMCP)
 College Democrats (UMCP)
 Science for the People (UMD)
 Human Resource Development Evolve Society (Bowie)

USM Campus Leaders:

Annie Rappeport - Graduate Student Government President - UMCP (2019-2020)
 Diamond Bracey - Graduate Student Government President - Bowie (2018-2019)
 Christina Goethel - Graduate Student Council President - UMCES (2020)
 Blake Clark - Graduate Student Council President - UMCES (2018-2019)
 Zoe Johnson - Graduate Student Government President - UMES (2018-2019)
 Jocelyn Simmons - Graduate Student Government President - UMES (2020)
 Jonathan Allen - Student Government President - UMCP (2019)
 Adelaida Shelley - Graduate Assistant Advisory Council Co-President - UMCP (2020)
 Alexander Dunphy - Graduate Assistant Advisory Council Co-President - UMCP (2020)
 Caden Fabbi - USM Student Council President (2018)
 Michael Goodman - Graduate Student Government President - UMCP (2018)
 Nicholas Myers - Graduate Student Association President - Towson (2018)

Number of graduate employees petitioning for collective bargaining rights:

2017-2018: 1029

2018-2019: 808

Since Jan. 17, 2020: 806