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Greg Hall

Salient information gathered concerning a TA/RA union at WSU.

Reasons to unionize: wages, health benefits, a job description, a grievance procedure, collective bargaining, a legally binding contract for workers, solidarity

Currently out of 2000 graduate students at WSU 1300 are TAs or RAs. Pay scales and work loads for the graduate employees are based on the caprice of the employer.

According to the Ombudsmen, TAs and RAs are faculty. Although we have the right to organize into a union, as faculty we would not necessarily be recognized by the university administration. There is no legislative mandate in the state of Washington which requires university or college administrations to recognize a faculty union. Voluntary recognition or a strike to demand recognition of a TA/RA union are options. We can talk union in the workplace and circulate union information, but only in non-work areas and during non-working hours.

Over twenty TA/RA unions exist in the United States. Approximately twelve are legally recognized as bargaining units for graduate employees at their respective universities. These recognized unions are affiliated with either the American Federation of Teachers which is part of the AFL-CIO or with the United Auto Workers.

I have a complete directory of all the above unions and graduate employee organizations (GEO). The directory has a detailed profile and history of each organization. I also have copies of a GEO handbook, newsletters, and flyers, and a copy of the current contract negotiated by the GEO at the University of Michigan.

Several GEOs are working on a "How to" manual for TA/RA unionizing. An annual conference is held every August by a coalition of GEOs.

If you are interested in a unionizing effort please contact me in the coming weeks. I would like to establish a core group committed to this effort.