



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF GRADUATE-PROFESSIONAL STUDENTS

Members of NAGPS,

At the 29th NAGPS National Conference, the attending membership passed a resolution that established an advocacy platform for the National Association of Graduate Professional Students (NAGPS). NAGPS members have a wide range of distinct needs that go beyond the existing legislative platform; the advocacy platform addresses graduate student employees, international student concerns, social justice concerns, and campus concerns. The resolution that passed with overwhelming support empowers NAGPS' leadership to engage the fight against the injustices perpetrated against graduate-professional students nationwide.

Across the nation, graduate-professional students fight oppression, intolerance, and injustice. In light of the approval of our advocacy platform, there are three pressing matters that this letter/document seeks to highlight.

Graduate Student Workers Rights

At Columbia University we have seen graduate students fight for their right to unionize, through the "We Are Workers" day of action and through endless advocacy for recognition as valuable employees of their institution. "We Are Workers" is an on-going campaign that many of our member institutions strongly support. This issue was brought to the Regional Director of the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) Karen P. Fernbach, and last week she denied Columbia's petition on the grounds that she did not have jurisdiction to reverse the National Board's 2004 decision. However, the decision clearly outlines that "In many respects the duties of student assistants are the same as those of admittedly 'employee' counterparts on the Columbia University faculty". (For more information on that decision see [here](#)) The Graduate Workers of Columbia University will now bring their petition to the NLRB in Washington D.C.

NAGPS recognizes and supports that graduate students nationwide should have the right to organize and supports the efforts of graduate students to unionize at their schools. We stand with Columbia in their fight against low wages, overwork, and other labor abuses perpetrated against graduate student workers.

Sexual and Relationship Violence

At many of our member institutions we have seen the damage done by the erosion and elimination of services offered to victims of sexual assault and relationship violence. These changes limit the agency of victims/survivors and weaken the protections provided by campuses in combating a culture of rape and sexual violence. At Syracuse University, Harvard University, The University of Southern California, for example, as well as many NAGPS member institutions across the country, students stand against the dissolution of valuable services that support and advocate for survivors of sexual assault. Graduate-Professional student activists have worked to fight against administrative decisions that would make it harder to obtain data



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on campus sexual assaults and against national legislation that would make it harder to protect students.

NAGPS supports the rights of victims of sexual assault to due process, to a culture of caring and respect, and to institutional protection against perpetrators of assault. We stand with students everywhere in creating a culture and a movement against sexual assault and relationship violence.

Graduate Student Rights

On August 14, less than 2 weeks before the start of the academic school year, the University of Missouri abruptly announced the dissolution of healthcare benefits to graduate students. While this decision was later reversed by the University's Chancellor, it is indicative of a systematic national erosion of graduate student support at American universities. In response to this decision and to a growing list of threats to their livelihoods, well being, and fundamental rights the students of Missouri have since organized in an effort to fight a variety of issues, from a hostile, racist, homophobic, and misogynistic campus environment to the imposition of additional student fees.

Jonathan Butler, a graduate student at the University of Missouri, recently began a hunger strike that he has stated will not end until the UM System President, Tim Wolfe, is removed or resigns. While we regret the health implications of hunger strikes, we applaud the efforts of Mr. Butler to stand up in support of his fellow students. NAGPS supports the activism of all Missouri students and their campaign to improve the lives of their fellow graduate and undergraduate students.

We stand in solidarity with graduate students across the nation who stand up where they see injustice and inequality. In an overwhelming and united voice, the membership of NAGPS has made their message clear that we will not be silent. NAGPS, as a collective body, is committed to standing with graduate-professional students and NAGPS, as an institution, will continue to stand for its membership. Empowered with this advocacy platform, NAGPS will continue to work on campaigns that represent our diverse population of students. We are committed to working with students at all levels of government, and lending a national voice to graduate-professional students. The formation of an advocacy board and platform for NAGPS is the first step of that commitment.

For students and member institutions that are interested in joining us or have questions about the advocacy work of NAGPS, please contact Sam Leitermann, the Advocacy Chair of NAGPS, at advocacy@nagps.org or sjc@nagps.org

Sincerely,
NAGPS Advocacy Board