

March 30, 2015

## **“A Seat at the Table”: Graduate Assistant Union to Hold Tabling Event during UF Board of Trustees Meeting**

**Gainesville, FL** – Members of Graduate Assistants United (GAU), the labor union which represents around 4,000 graduate, teaching, and research assistants at the University of Florida (UF), will invite the UF’s Board of Trustees (BOT) to join them in discussing fee relief for Graduate Assistants (GAs) during the BOT’s regular meeting on Friday, April 3. The union will set up a table outside of Emerson Hall, where the BOT meeting will be held, and include empty chairs for BOT members to sit and hear testimony from Graduate Assistants. The meeting begins at 10:00 a.m. and will conclude late afternoon or early evening.

GAU has repeatedly requested meetings with the BOT to discuss the reduction or elimination of Graduate Assistant fees, which total around \$1,400 annually. On average, that amount constitutes nearly 12% of Assistants’ annual income earned, exacerbating their already difficult financial situation. The Board has agreed to meet with GAU during its “education policy and strategy committee” meeting on Thursday, April 2 at 3:30 pm. To continue making the case for fee relief, GAU members will still set up a table on Friday, April 3 so that trustees can engage in an open conversation with Graduate Assistants and their families about how to continue improving working conditions at UF.

“Graduate Assistants teach almost half of UF’s classes, run most of the labs, conduct much of the research, and serve as advisors and mentors to undergrads,” says Sebastian Sclofsky, GAU organizing chair. “In short, they keep UF running. GAU is constantly working to improve the working conditions of GAs as a way to improve the overall quality of UF’s education. We ask the Board of Trustees to join us in a dialogue about fee relief, so GAs can continue doing their work and making UF a better place for all.”

GAU supports UF’s “Rise to Preeminence” campaign and hopes to partner with administrators in helping to make the university a Top-10 public research university. However, unlike current Top 10 schools like the University of Michigan and UC Berkeley—which require their Assistants to pay only 2% of annual fees—UF requires GAs to pay nearly 100% of their total fees. If UF hopes to rank among such institutions, GAU believes it must address this issue.

This tabling event follows GAU’s successful March 13 “Spring Broke” rally and is just one of several union efforts to reduce Assistants’ fee burden and improve their overall standard of living while employed at the University of Florida.

### **About Graduate Assistants United (GAU)**

UF Graduate Assistants United (GAU) is the official labor union that represents all Graduate Assistants at the University of Florida. Founded in 1972, GAU has been fighting to improve working conditions for GAs for over a generation. The organization negotiates a Collective Bargaining Agreement with the University of Florida that guarantees GA stipends, access to health care, personal leave days, due process, intellectual property rights, and more. UF-GAU is affiliated with the United Faculty of Florida, the Florida Education Association, the National Education Association, the American Federation of Teachers, and the AFL-CIO.

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