



## GSWOC-UAW Tentative Agreement - Bargaining Team Recommendation November 27th, 2023

Dear fellow Graduate Student Workers,

After nearly eight months of bargaining, the bargaining team is proud to **unanimously endorse a YES vote on this Tentative Agreement**, and to ratify USC Graduate Student Workers' first-ever union contract. We want to provide our thoughts on the Tentative Agreement in advance of the ratification vote.

Throughout years of organizing and at the beginning of negotiations, thousands of Graduate Student Workers identified several priority improvements that we wanted to see in a first contract. During the course of negotiations, Graduate Student Workers faced an uphill battle. USC admin was highly resistant to giving into our demands, which included major wage increases, real recourse for GSWs facing harassment and discrimination, protections and support for international GSWs, a robust financial support system for parent GSWs, and strong union rights and security provisions.

Graduate Student Workers overcame USC admin's tactics to win a historic contract that enshrines industry-setting gains and labor standards. We didn't win by making persuasive arguments at the bargaining table. We sure as hell didn't win by asking USC administration politely. We won because we [rallied](#), [voted](#), [campaigned](#), and [picketed](#) together. **We the workers won because we organized together, demanded better together, took action together, and prepared to go on strike together.**

Because GSWs demonstrated that we were ready to pull off a massively disruptive strike, USC administration came to the table with major last-minute concessions that averted a strike and secured an incredibly pro-worker agreement.

As you'll see in the full text of the TA included [here](#), this agreement, which we hope will soon become Graduate Student Workers' first-ever union contract, is incredibly well-rounded. Here are *some*, but not even close to all, of the gains secured by the Tentative Agreement:

- Significant wage increases** that meaningfully address the cost of living crisis:
  - USC Graduate School Minimum stipend increases from **\$35,700 to \$40,000** effective Fall 2024
  - \$400 lump sum** for every GSW, to be paid out within 90 days of ratification
  - On top of the 5% 2023-24 Academic Year raise announced by USC administration on the eve of Graduate Student Workers filing for union recognition – a **total raise of up to 24.8% over four years**
  - Consistent, guaranteed wage increases — **no more wage freezes**
  - Timely pay guarantee**, so GSWs aren't paid late without recourse
- Real, arbitrable protections from harassment and discrimination**, including
  - The right to **file a grievance** when we face workplace harassment or discrimination

- ☑ The right to **enforceable interim measures** on a specific timeline
- ☑ **Industry-leading transparency** around timelines and interim measures
- ☑ The right to **independent arbitration after Title IX process** — or if Title IX rejects taking up a GSW's case
- ☑ The right to adequate **lactation support** and **gender-inclusive bathroom facilities**
- ☑ Commitments to **peer-led trainings** to prevent discrimination
- ☑ **Childcare benefits** as part of a \$400,000 annual fund, which will provide up to \$1,800 in childcare funding, per semester, per child, to parent GSWs
- ☑ A **dependent healthcare fund** of \$250,000 annually, which will provide up to \$2,500 in dependent healthcare funding per semester per parent GSW
- ☑ A grievance process that enshrines the right to **clear timelines and independent arbitration** — a process independent of USC that GSWs can use when our rights are violated
- ☑ An **agency shop**, which will ensure that GSWs can pool our resources together and build a strong union
- ☑ A **legal fund** to provide financial support to international GSWs who lose visa status
- ☑ **New protections for international GSWs**, including paid time off for visa proceedings and re-hiring protections for workers who lose and then regain visa status
- ☑ **Industry-leading parental leave and medical leave** guarantees (one semester each), five bereavement days, five sick days
- ☑ **Guaranteed no-cost access to the LA Metro U-PASS program**
- ☑ A holiday schedule that follows the academic calendar, guaranteeing **6+ weeks of Paid Time Off**
- ☑ **Just Cause protections**, which guarantee that Graduate Student Workers cannot be disciplined or terminated without just cause
- ☑ A **waiver of all mandatory University fees**, including the new Transportation fee
- ☑ **Reasonable accommodations** for disabled GSWs, which ensure timely accommodations and a clear process
- ☑ Union rights that allow GSWs to hold **union orientations on campus** so that every GSW knows their rights under the contract
- ☑ **Workplace protections** that include the right to a healthy and safe workplace, sufficient workspace materials, and adequate training and orientation

We on the bargaining team understand that some GSWs would have wanted to see more progress in certain elements of the first contract. We endorse this agreement because of the **enormous amount of progress that this contract makes despite intense resistance from USC administration**, and the strong precedent this contract sets for years to come.

We on the Bargaining Team are incredibly proud to send this agreement back to all of our fellow Graduate Student Workers for ratification. This agreement is an industry-leading contract in the private sector, and it improves compensation and working conditions for GSWs across the board. **After years of organizing and months of bargaining and collective action, it's time to ratify our historic first union contract.**

We look forward to seeing the results of the ratification vote and beginning the process of building a strong and vibrant union local that can effectively enforce our first contract — and begin building toward an even better second contract.

In solidarity,

Stepp Mayes, Environmental Engineering

Piril Nergis, Electrical and Computer Engineering

Maggie Davis, Sociology

Megan Cassingham, Chemistry

Wes Wise, Mathematics

Jackie Johnson, Cinema and Media Studies

Maile McCann, Civil Engineering

Yongqin Wang, Electrical and Computer Engineering

Bryan Byrdlong, English

Meg Tiller, Religion

Sayan Ghosh, Computer Science

Anna Weiss, Marine and Environmental Biology

Ashley Lehr, Programs in Biomedical and Biological Sciences

Sulyab Thottungal Valapu, Computer Science

Anna Haynie, Physics