

Anna Waltman
Candidate Statement
GEO-UAW co-chair position

I'm a fifth-year doctoral student in English, and a member of GEO-UAW2322 since 2009. Last June, I came into the co-chair position with a simple goal: prepare us for democratic, visible, and-- most importantly!-- successful contract negotiations by building rank-and-file participation in the union at every level. During AY2012-2013, I co-chaired the GEO-UAW Stewards' Assembly, served as a Steward for English (and won the department's first grievance from a TA!), and represented Stewards on Steering Committee. In addition to the co-chair position, I serve as an elected representative to our Bargaining Committee, Bylaws Committee, and UAW2322 Joint Council, and as an active member of the Organizing Committee. As a leader, I have consistently prioritized long-view thinking, social justice unionism, democratic processes, and coalition-and visibility- building.

I am also a vocal advocate for graduate workers in a variety of campus, regional, and national initiatives. At UMass, I represent graduate students as a GSS appointee to the Faculty Senate's Status of Diversity Council and Graduate Studies Council. I have also been active in combating the neoliberalization of our campus and fighting for a more accessible university with the Student Power Coalition, and am part of the English Graduate Organization. Since August I have been working with the North American Coalition of Graduate Employee Unions to organize a continent-wide media blitz about graduate labor on May 1st, which will coincide with rallies, grade-ins, and organizing blitzes at UMass, Rutgers, and several other universities. I have actively sought out leadership development and labor education opportunities throughout this term, attending three major conferences and two organizing-oriented trainings. I will also represent GEO-UAW alongside the UAW2322 President in a meeting of UAW Region 9A's Higher Education Council next month. My work as co-chair has been driven by a deep commitment to building the graduate labor movement into a powerful, diverse, unified front of workers that fights for economically and socially just working conditions everywhere in higher education, from the dining halls to the lecture halls and labs.

I am seeking a second term as GEO co-chair in order to fully devote the knowledge and experience accumulated over these amazing ten months to the process of bargaining our next contract, and to institutionalize and build on this year's progress toward a fully mobilized and democratized GEO. If re-elected, I will continue to empower our union through grassroots organizing tactics, coalition-building, rank-and-file leadership development, and active contract enforcement. The upcoming contract negotiations will set the stage for our relationship with the new Chancellor, and also for newly-unionized graduate workers in our region to bargain equally strong contracts. The stakes are high. I hope you'll allow me the honor of continuing to represent this body of skilled, dedicated student-workers in the struggle for socially and economically just working conditions for ourselves, our fellow UAW members and graduate workers, and all workers in our community, throughout the US, and worldwide.