

A resolution calling on the University of Washington to swiftly arrive at a fair and equitable contract with its academic student employees

WHEREAS, the 4,500 research assistants, teaching assistants, graders, and tutors on the University of Washington's (UW) campuses in Seattle, Tacoma, and Bothell are represented by UAW 4121; and

WHEREAS, the University of Washington is a premiere, dynamic, world-class public institution and the second largest employer in Seattle; and

WHEREAS, academic student employees (ASEs) perform much of the instructional and research work at UW that advances scientific and humanistic knowledge, study and support many communities in Seattle and the region, further the long struggle of the oppressed and disadvantaged for social mobility and economic opportunity, contribute to the intellectual and cultural life of Seattle and the region, and attract investment from the federal government and industries that can contribute to the growth of ecologically-sustainable and widely-shared prosperity in Seattle and the region; and

WHEREAS, the rising cost of living in the Puget Sound area, along with low ASE pay and mandatory annual payments of \$951 in fees as a condition of employment, make it hard for ASEs to survive economically at UW; and

WHEREAS, according to the UW salary schedule, the base income for an academic student employee is [\\$20,655 for a 9-month appointment](#), out of which they must pay \$951 back to the UW Administration as a condition of having their job, and this is an insufficient amount in today's Seattle housing market; and

WHEREAS, it is unusual for workers to have to pay fees as a condition of having a job; and

WHEREAS, according to the UAW's membership survey last fall, the average UW graduate student pays 44% of their income on housing, 82% of the members are rent-burdened, and the vast majority of the UW's academic student employees are having to skimp on food, clothing, child care, and other basic necessities; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle City Council also recognizes the urgent need to build more affordable housing for workers including the UW academic student employees, and in fact has taken steps....[note housing levy, last week's EHT vote...]

WHEREAS, the [UW core values statement](#) emphasizes the university's commitment to "recruit the best, most diverse and innovative faculty and staff from around the world, encouraging a vibrant intellectual community for our students. We link academic excellence to cutting-edge research through scholarly exploration and intellectual rigor....As a public university we are deeply committed to serving all our citizens;" and

WHEREAS, [UW proclaims](#) a desire to be a more equitable institution, because it recognizes that "social and economic inequity has lasting effects on societies and the health of populations;" and

WHEREAS, academic student employees have repeatedly stated that fair pay and fee waivers are necessary to prevent the further gentrification of graduate education in this country, so that people from low-income and working families, women, people of color, queer and trans people, immigrants, and working parents can have a sustainable chance to earn advanced degrees, contribute to their communities, and lead our society in a more humane direction; and

WHEREAS, after four months of contract negotiations, on Tuesday, May 15, UAW 4121 members struck for a day to demand better pay and fee waivers so that they could keep pace with the region's rising cost of living; and

WHEREAS, [according to news reports](#), the one-day strike caused widespread interruption of campus activities, including cancellation of classes, disruption of research, and shutdown of construction sites; and

WHEREAS, while both parties to the negotiations have pledged to continue negotiations, there is the very real possibility that an agreement won't be reached and there will be another strike this spring, according to UAW 4121, potentially disrupting classes and even final exams; and

WHEREAS, this would have a major disruptive impact on tens of thousands of UW students, research projects and other ongoing work at UW,

NOW, THEREFORE, be it proclaimed that the Seattle City Council recognizes the world-class status of the University of Washington, and urges UW leadership to work steadfastly to reach a fair and equitable agreement with the members of UAW 4121 that improves pay, waives fees, and in general provides greater affordability for all academic student employees at the University of Washington.