

Indiana University - Bloomington Graduate & Professional Student Government

Resolution on No Confidence in President Whitten's Administration

Whereas the majority of SAAs at Indiana University (IU), who have signed union cards requesting membership in the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition (IGWC), demonstrating their interest in bargaining collectively with IU over their wages, benefits, and other conditions of work¹;

Whereas, over the past decade, GPSG has submitted multiple resolutions aimed at addressing the financial strain of graduate students, along with the associated cost of living, all of which were not adequately addressed by the previous IU administration²³, specifically regarding:

- Mandatory Fees⁴⁵
- International Student Fees⁶, which increased alongside the tuition
- Unremittable Fees⁷
- Food insecurity⁸

¹ News Article: "IU Graduate Workers call on University to hold Union Election"

<https://bloomingtonian.com/2021/12/10/press-release-iu-graduate-workers-call-on-university-to-hold-union-election/>; <https://www.ueunion.org/ue-news/2022/indiana-grad-workers-strike-for-union-recognition>

² Resolution for a Campus-wide Task Force to Prioritize Improvements to Graduate and Professional Student Funding:

<https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2019-20/Resolution-for-a-Campus-wide-Task-Force-to-Prioritize-Improvements-to-Graduate-and-Professional-Student-Funding-PASSED.pdf>

³ Resolution for the University to Commit to Financial Security for Graduate Students:

<https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2022-23/Resolution%20for%20the%20University%20to%20Commit%20to%20Financial%20Security%20for%20Graduate%20Students.pdf>

⁴ Resolution for More Affordable Mandatory Fee Deferral Plans:

https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2019-20/Resolution-for-More-Affordable-Mandatory-Fee-Deferral-Plans_PASSED.pdf

⁵ Resolution To Enhance Fee Transparency & Encourage Fee Reduction:

<https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2020-21/GPSG-Resolution-to-Enhance-Fee-Transparency-and-Encourage-Fee-Reduction.pdf>

⁶ Resolution to Enhance International Students' Services and Fee Transparency:

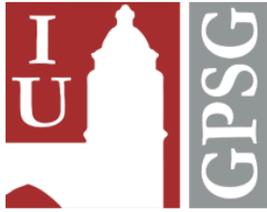
<https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2020-21/GPSG-Resolution-to-Enhance-International-Students-Services-and-Fee-Transparency.pdf>

⁷ Resolution for the Elimination of Unremittable Fees:

<https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2020-21/Resolution-for-the-Elimination-of-Unremittable-Fees.pdf>

⁸ Resolution to Address Food Insecurity on Campus:

<https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2020-21/Resolution-to-Address-Food-Insecurity-on-Campus.pdf>



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- Unaffordable housing⁹;

Whereas, given the IU administration's failure to seriously consider previously submitted resolutions and the subsequent establishment of the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition (IGWC) as a representative body advocating for the labor rights of graduate students, the GPSG has voted to acknowledge and support the efforts and representation of the IGWC¹⁰;

Whereas, despite the submission of a petition by the IGWC with over 1,200 signatures from graduate students urging a change in the dire living conditions, the IU administration opted not to address these concerns¹². Instead, the IU administration chose to focus on debating the employment and working nature of graduate students¹³, prompting graduate students to organize towards unionization and resort to a strike, the only circumstance under which the administration appears to take the concerns of graduate students seriously¹⁵;

⁹ Resolution for Affordable Housing:

<https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2022-23/Resolution%20for%20Affordable%20Housing.pdf>

¹⁰ Resolution to recognize the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition – United Electric:

<https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2022-23/Resolution%20to%20Recognize%20the%20IGWC-UE.pdf>

¹¹ Resolution in Support of Graduate Worker Unionization:

<https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2021-22/Resolution%20in%20Support%20of%20Graduate%20Worker%20Unionization.docx.pdf>

¹² Resolution to Support the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition Petition to Waive Mandatory and International Student Fees:

https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2019-20/Resolution-to-Support-the-Indiana-Graduate-Workers-Coalition-Petition-to-Waive-Mandatory-and-International-Student-Fees-with-Friendly-Amendments_PASSED.pdf

¹³ News Article “IU graduate students ask for an end to university fees paid from their stipends”

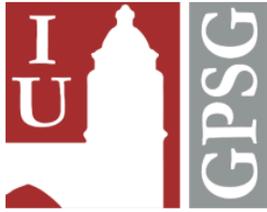
<https://www.indystar.com/story/news/education/2019/10/15/iu-graduate-students-petition-end-mandatory-university-fees/3786802002/>

¹⁴ Letter from Provost to the IGWC:

<https://provost.indiana.edu/images/one-off-pages/response-to-the-gwc.pdf>

¹⁵ News Article “IU grad workers move forward with union plans”:

<https://www.heraldtimesonline.com/story/news/local/2021/09/17/indiana-university-graduate-workers-take-steps-toward-joining-union-igwc/5753276001/>



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Whereas in 2021¹⁶, the IGWC submitted over 1,584 union cards to the Administration, demanding a union election and recognition so that graduate workers would have the opportunity to have a free and fair election regarding their union representation, and the end of the unremittable fees, which were are calculated as a certain percentage of tuition (approximately 5-10%¹⁷);

Whereas Pamela Whitten refused to recognize the IGWC, to establish a labor-oriented dialogue between graduate workers and the administration of living wages, ignoring the majority opinion of graduate students, and instead depend on the board of trustees¹⁸.

Whereas the University has existing Labor Unions and Relations¹⁹ and the regarding policies, such as non-discrimination union activity policies;

Whereas on January 16, 2023, the IGWC resubmitted 1,300 union cards to the Administration, demanding a union election so that graduate workers would have the opportunity to have a free and fair election regarding their union representation, and President Pamela Whitten has yet to respond²⁰;

Whereas the Administration of President Pamela Whitten continues to refuse appropriate labor representation of graduate students by the Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition, the latter has conducted a Vote of No Confidence with a majority of 98% in favor²¹.

¹⁶News Article "IU graduate workers submit cards, seek union election"

<https://www.heraldtimesonline.com/story/news/local/2021/12/13/iu-graduate-workers-clear-hurdle-before-union-election/6477037001/>

¹⁷ GPSG Resolution for the Elimination of Unremittable Fees:

<https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2020-21/Resolution-for-the-Elimination-of-Unremittable-Fees.pdf>

¹⁸ News article "President Whitten's first year: Focus on students, discontent over union":

<https://indianapublicmedia.org/news/president-whittens-first-year-focus-on-students.-discontent-over-union.php>

¹⁹Union Administration Relations:

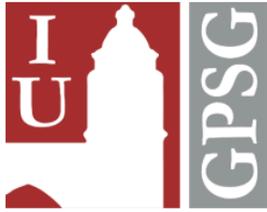
<https://policies.iu.edu/policies/hr-12-60-union-administration-relations-cwa/index.html>

²⁰ Source:

<https://www.idsnews.com/article/2024/01/iu-grad-workers-seek-wage-increase-union-recognition>

²¹ News Article "Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition issues a vote of no confidence in President Whitten":

<https://www.idsnews.com/article/2024/02/indiana-graduate-workers-coalition-vote-no-confidence-president-whitten>



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Whereas the Administration of President Pamela Whitten has bypassed the principles of shared governance such as graduate student workers having currently no effective institutional mechanism to articulate their concerns over wages, benefits, and working conditions with the IU Administration;

Whereas the COAS Student Academic Appointment Affairs Committee (SAAAC)²², was introduced as an effort to examine existing problems of SAAs and recommend improvements in policies concerning the role of SAAs, those changes and their outcomes²³ are unclear due to a lack of communication and transparency²⁴;

Whereas the May 2022 vote²⁵ of the full IU Bloomington faculty, which overwhelmingly (1404 in favor to 508 against: 73.4%) called for the IU Administration to begin the recognition process for the IGWC, was ignored and the administration effectively violated shared governance;

Whereas the Board of trustees appointed President Whitten under unconventional selection processes, including ignoring the multiple candidate options provided by due process of the hiring committee²⁶;

Whereas in the Summer of 2022, the IU administration amended SAA contracts to give the provost the right to terminate students in the eventuality of a strike, that is *"appointment is subject to termination by the department chairperson or dean or by the Provost for serious failure in assigned duties or for conduct otherwise at severe variance with that normally expected of University appointees"*²⁷;

²² Student Academic Appointment Affairs Committee:

<https://bfc.indiana.edu/committees/standing/saaac/index.html>

²³ Such as the outcome of the aforementioned housing situation and the proposal for a solution

²⁴ Last available minutes are from November 2023 as listed here:

<https://bfc.indiana.edu/committees/standing/saaac/index.html>

²⁵ News Article "Bloomington Faculty Vote Overwhelmingly in Support of Graduate Student Employee Unionization Efforts":

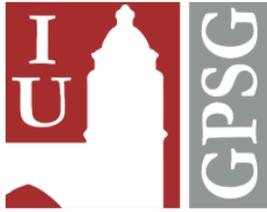
<https://bloomingtonian.com/2022/05/25/press-release-bloomington-faculty-vote-overwhelmingly-in-support-of-graduate-student-employee-unionization-efforts/>

²⁶ News Article "'You have no idea how strange this process has been': The long, difficult search for IU's 19th president":

<https://medium.com/@stevesan/you-have-no-idea-how-strange-this-process-has-been-the-difficult-search-for-iu-s-19th-president-f61b473014d4>

²⁷ Graduate Student Academic Appointee Guide:

<https://vpfaa.indiana.edu/doc/graduate-student-academic-appointees-guide.pdf>



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Whereas, officials appointed by the Whitten Administration, specifically Carrie Docherty, Vice Provost for Academic Affairs, unilaterally suspended tenured Professor Abdulkader Sinno for the minor infraction of misfiling a room reservation form. This disproportionate penalty for an insignificant technicality highlights the arbitrary imposition of sanctions by the current administration on members of their community;

Whereas considering Whitten's administration, particularly Provost Rahul Shrivastav and Vice-Provost Carrie Docherty, there is concern that they may continue to arbitrarily suspend faculty, staff, and students to advance personal agendas, including those aligned with the state's interests, especially with the enactment of Senate Bill 202²⁸ that supports Indiana University's executive branch in sorting out their tenured faculty. This would be specifically problematic in the context of protests and demonstrations typically protected by the First Amendment of the United States Constitution or striking typically protected by university policies HR 12-20 and ACA-32, despite historical resolutions from students and faculty for the administration to remain neutral²⁹³⁰;

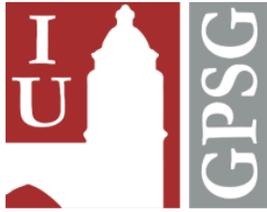
Whereas the Administration of President Pamela Whitten has actively corroded the educational mission and campus climate of Indiana University, including through their recent and blatant violations of academic freedom, such as the unilateral suspension of tenured Professor Abdulkader Sinno³¹. The suspension was conducted by newly-appointed Vice Provost for Academic Affairs (VPFAA) Carrie Docherty from

²⁸ News Article "Bill to make Indiana colleges more conservative would cause conformity, fleeing faculty": <https://www.indystar.com/story/opinion/columnists/2024/02/16/senate-bill-202-indiana-republicans-want-conservative-universities/72617947007/>; news article "College faculty overwhelmingly opposed to bill seeking to end "viewpoint discrimination": <https://indianacapitalchronicle.com/2024/02/15/indiana-college-faculty-overwhelming-opposed-to-bill-seeking-to-end-viewpoint-discrimination/>

²⁹ News Article "IU faculty representatives vote to uphold graduate students' right to strike": <https://indianapublicmedia.org/news/iu-faculty-representatives-vote-to-uphold-graduate-students-right-to-strike.php>

³⁰ Resolution to Affirm the Rights of Graduate Workers and Assure Employer Neutrality During a Union Organizing Campaign: <https://gpsg.indiana.edu/advocacy/Resolution%20PDFs/2021-22/Resolution%20to%20Affirm%20the%20Rights%20of%20Graduate%20Workers%20and%20Assure%20Employer%20Neutrality%20During%20a%20Union%20Organizing%20Campaign.pdf>

³¹ News Article "IU suspends professor after Palestine Solidarity Committee event": <https://www.idsnews.com/article/2024/01/iu-political-science-professor-sinno-suspended-psc-administratio-n-palestine>



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the Whitten administration. Carrie Docherty used inadequate sanctions for common inadvertent mistakes that are negligible technicalities and are typically beneath the Vice-Provost's range of awareness. In the over forty existing cases of VPFAA action against faculty, this inability and lack of understanding on how to apply specific powers of the position held is unprecedented. Specifically, the suspension of a tenured-faculty for the charges of incorrectly filling out a room reservation form, promoting an islamophobic culture and suppressing pro-Palestine opinion on campus. Carrie Docherty's position was also supported by the Provost by claiming that the room reservation form misfiling was a danger to the campus community and that we are all lucky that the situation did not escalate and lead to violence at the BFC³²;

Whereas President Whitten's Administration canceled the exhibition of renowned Palestinian-American abstract artist and IU alumna Samia Halaby³³, three years in planning and on the verge of opening, with no apology to the artist or the museum staff and no public explanation, in order to suppress pro-Palestine viewpoints or actions, a headline the Provost is comfortable with³⁴³⁵;

Whereas President Whitten's Administration repeatedly refused to engage in collegial dialogue on topics including the graduate workers' union or even meet with the chosen representatives of the majority of graduate employees, academic freedom, and shared governance has produced a tense campus climate, undercutting mentor-mentee relationships and cultivated a culture of strike as opposed to conversation³⁶;

Whereas, in regards to the Kinsey Institute, President Whitten's Administration has demonstrated a lack of transparency and communication concerning the possibility

³² News Article "Across IU, Palestinians feel their voices being silenced":

<https://indianapublicmedia.org/news/across-iu-palestinians-feel-their-voices-being-silenced.php>

³³ New York Times article: Indiana University Cancels Major Exhibition of Palestinian Artist.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/11/arts/design/indiana-university-samia-halaby-exhibition-canceled.html>

³⁴ BFC Meeting Minutes:

<https://bfc.indiana.edu/meetings/2023-2024/Jan162024/01.16.24%20-%20Minutes.pdf>;

https://iu.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/t/1_ooft9wd0

³⁵ News Article "When a Threat becomes an Excuse to Muzzle":

<https://www.chronicle.com/article/when-a-threat-becomes-an-excuse-to-muzzle>

³⁶ News Article: The most recent development in the IGWC-UE's over [three-years-long](#) struggle to

improve working conditions at Indiana University: <https://specials.idsnews.com/graduate-worker-strike-iu/>



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of severing the Kinsey Institute from Indiana University, affecting the workplace of graduate students and faculty;³⁷

Therefore, be it resolved, the GPSG:

1. Expresses a Vote of No Confidence in the leadership and Administration of President Pamela Whitten;
2. Encourages all other graduate student bodies (GSA) to pass resolutions of No Confidence.
3. Encourages the Bloomington Faculty Council (BFC) and the University Faculty Council (UFC), the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and any faculty representing bodies to pass resolutions of No Confidence.
4. Encourages the IU Bloomington Staff Council and the Communications Workers of America, (CWA) 4818 Union-Administration Relations and other staff representation at Indiana University to pass resolutions of No Confidence.

³⁷ News Article (Lack of Administrative Support):
<https://www.insideindianabusiness.com/articles/kinsey-faculty-students-left-confused-worried-over-institutes-future>