February 3, 2012

**Historic Michigan Campaign Under Way**

AAUP President Cary Nelson issued the following statement today:

A historic campaign is under way by University of Michigan graduate research assistants to organize for collective bargaining. A victory for this high profile group of academic employees would be a victory for every cohort of unrepresented research assistants across the country.

Wherever research assistants are organized, they enjoy the rise in standards of treatment that perhaps no other group of graduate employees need so badly. Teaching assistants often benefit from department-wide standards. An individual research assistant, on the other hand, may suffer under unfair working conditions imposed by one well-meaning but poorly informed faculty member. The benefits of having a union in such situations are immense. Not only does it help hundreds of research assistants on each campus: it also creates a climate of good workplace standards that benefits recruitment, retention, and the overall quality of campus life.

Some may fear that union contracts will mandate wage or benefit increases not built into multi-year government or industry contracts, but the university can easily set aside sufficient funds to cover such typically modest increases.

The University of Michigan Board of Regents has affirmed the right of research assistants to organize, so it is critically important that neither faculty members nor administrators seek to undermine the campaign.

The national AAUP joins our Michigan State Conference in endorsing this campaign. We are eager to offer any help to make it a success.