

March 29, 2016

Statement of Solidarity with SENS-UAW & GWC-UAW and Their Recognition Petitions at the NLRB

The AAUP Committee on Graduate and Professional Students commends graduate student workers at both Columbia University and the New School for their efforts to overturn the wrongfully decided 2004 National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decision taking away the existing statutory right of graduate employees to collective bargaining. The right to organize and engage in collective action for mutual aid and benefit is a fundamental guarantee that all workers should enjoy. Graduate workers at our nation's private colleges and universities must also be afforded this same right.

In a recent amicus brief to the NLRB in support of the graduate workers at Columbia University, the AAUP reaffirmed that "Graduate student assistants who teach or research for their university are statutory employees within the meaning of Section 2(3) of the National Labor Relations Act." This truth rings loud and clear for any graduate or professional student currently in the employ of their university. Our work makes the university work. Graduate workers at the New School and at Columbia University, motivated by the recognition of New York University's GSOC-UAW as the collective bargaining agent for NYU graduate employees, have taken on the partisan decision in *Brown University* and are standing up on behalf of all graduate workers to demand our basic democratic rights.

The amicus briefs submitted to the NLRB in the Columbia case underscore the debate about the future of democracy in the academy. On one side are those of us who make our universities run: faculty and their representative bodies (such as the AAUP and the AFT); academic experts who study labor relations; a majority of graduate workers at Columbia and the New School; as well as the largest affiliate body of graduate student governments across the US, the National Association of Graduate and Professional Students. All of us stand for the basic democratic right of workers to choose unionization. On the other side are those who "run" our universities and are working to block this right: administrators at nine other elite universities; the American Council on Education, the main lobbying arm of academic administrators; and the notorious corporate-funded anti-union group National Right to Work Foundation. In short, those furthest removed from the classroom—administrators and anti-union forces—have joined together to oppose faculty and graduate employees, the very groups that teach and fulfill our universities' educational missions.

This committee continues to support those championing this movement and encourages graduate workers to continue to stand up and exercise their rights to collective representation. The AAUP has consistently promoted this right for graduate workers, at private and public universities, in amicus briefs, through organizing, and in documents including the AAUP [*Statement on Graduate Students*](#) (2000) and a [resolution on graduate employee organizing rights](#) (2004). When graduate workers stand up for their rights to dignity, a voice, and collective representation, our universities become more egalitarian, just, and productive centers for higher learning and achievement.

— AAUP Committee on Graduate and Professional Students