April 2019

Panel: Organizing Outside the Law

Hailey Huget
Georgetown Alliance of Graduate Employees

Follow this and additional works at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba

Part of the Collective Bargaining Commons, and the Higher Education Commons

Recommended Citation
DOI: https://doi.org/10.58188/1941-8043.1854
Available at: https://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol0/iss14/60
CIRCUMVENTING THE NLRB IN GRAD ORGANIZING: GEORGETOWN AND GAGE

Hailey Huget
April 9, 2019

“Organizing Outside the Law” Panel at Collective Bargaining After Janus
New York, NY
NATIONAL CONTEXT

• NLRB has gone back and forth over the years on the question of whether graduate employees at private universities have rights to unionize.
  
  ▪ **NYU decision (2000):** granted grad employees union rights
  ▪ **Brown decision (2004):** took them away
  ▪ **Columbia decision (2016):** gave them back

  ▪ Even though the *Columbia* decision still stands, many grad unions are worried that, because Trump’s appointees sit on the NLRB, they will likely use the next opportunity they have to overturn *Columbia*
GAGE: WHO WE ARE & CURRENT STATUS

- We are a union of about 1000 graduate Research Assistants, Teaching Assistants, and Teaching Associates at Georgetown University, who are enrolled in MA and PhD programs
  - We are affiliated with American Federation of Teachers as of March 2017
  - We won our election on 11/9/18, with 83.7% of grads and an absolute majority of the bargaining unit voting yes (555-108)
  - We began bargaining our first contract with Georgetown on 3/12/19
  - The election and the bargaining process was & will be overseen by AAA rather than the NLRB
THE ROAD WE TOOK TO GET HERE

• We achieved majority support and asked for voluntary recognition from Georgetown in November 2017

  ▪ Georgetown’s response (December 2017):
    ▪ “a graduate student’s relationship with the University is fundamentally an educational one”
    ▪ Said that they would ‘challenge jurisdiction’ if we tried to hold an election through the NLRB; this means that they would seek to overturn *Columbia*

  ▪ We responded with a pressure campaign focused on getting Georgetown to agree to a private election and bargaining process that would be overseen by AAA rather than NLRB, to remove the possibility that they would be able to overturn *Columbia*
We utilized Georgetown’s image as a ‘progressive, Jesuit, pro-labor university’ to demonstrate their hypocrisy in responding to our union campaign.

Tactics:
- Rally and flag day
- Leafleting at:
  - Basketball games
  - Events where Georgetown sought to advertise itself as pro-labor and progressive (e.g. MLK celebration)
  - Jesuit Heritage Week
  - Prospective student tours
  - Alumni giving events
  - The homes of President DeGioia’s neighbors
  - Graduate employee work-ins and grade-ins
  - Engaging community allies and soliciting their support through petition signatures
  - Securing sympathetic media coverage of our activities
Risky Management at Georgetown University?

Under President Jack DeGioia’s leadership of Georgetown University, town-gown relations have dramatically improved. But now, Dr. DeGioia is putting that progress in jeopardy by mismanaging the university’s response to a new union of graduate employees.

Graduate employees want a seat at the table with Dr. DeGioia so they can negotiate for better, more stable jobs — making it possible for them to put more dollars into the Georgetown community and raising their investment in the neighborhood.

But instead of productively engaging with his graduate employees, Dr. DeGioia’s administration has antagonized them by slow-walking critical negotiations.

Tell Dr. DeGioia to reach an agreement that allows graduate employees to have a fair and timely election. Acting in accordance with the university’s professed Jesuit values means recognizing the hard work of graduate employees. Anything else is a risk Georgetown can’t afford.

Tell Dr. DeGioia at presidentsoffice@georgetown.edu:
Let Graduate Employees Vote!
THE ELECTION AGREEMENT

VICTORIES:

• Georgetown agreed to recognize our union upon winning a representation election with a simple majority;

• GU agreed to bargain in good faith over wages, benefits, and working conditions upon our winning the election;

• GU committed to doing these things even if Columbia were overturned.

CONCESSIONS:

• GAGE cannot call, authorize, or condone a strike; however

• The rights of individual grads to strike are explicitly protected by the agreement and

• This clause will be re-negotiated in bargaining the contract.
NEXT STEPS:
BARGAINING OUR FIRST CONTRACT

• In alignment with Georgetown’s Jesuit value of ‘care for the whole person’ or cura personalis, we are fighting for a ‘contract for the whole person’ #ContractPersonalis

• This includes: protections against harassment and discrimination; living wages; health care for adults; dental & vision care; child care support and parental leave; and much more

• We are hopeful that our landslide victory in our election gives us a good deal of leverage with Georgetown in bargaining

• GAGE is prepared to continue putting pressure on Georgetown through demonstrations, flyering, rallies, community engagement, etc.
Follow our progress:

- Twitter: @WeAreGAGE
- Facebook.com/WeAreGAGE
- wearegage.org

How to contact me:

- haileyhuget@gmail.com