

March 2023

The Current Status of Graduate Student Unions: An Employer's Perspective

Daniel J. Julius

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



Part of the [Collective Bargaining Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Julius, Daniel J. (2023) "The Current Status of Graduate Student Unions: An Employer's Perspective," *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy*: Vol. 14, Article 15.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.58188/1941-8043.1905>

Available at: <https://thekeep.eiu.edu/jcba/vol14/iss1/15>

This Proceedings Material is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at The Keep. It has been accepted for inclusion in *Journal of Collective Bargaining in the Academy* by an authorized editor of The Keep. For more information, please contact tabruns@eiu.edu.

GRADUATE STUDENT UNIONIZATION

B. THE CURRENT STATUS OF GRADUATE STUDENT UNIONS: AN EMPLOYER'S PERSPECTIVE

Daniel J. Julius

**Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, University of San Francisco
Senior Lecturer, Graduate Schools of Business and Education
Stanford University**

This article will explore the following issues; organizational and institutional factors that have spawned a unionization movement among graduate students¹; how graduate student unions differ from those of full-time faculty; a brief analysis of the demographic and institutional variables associated with graduate student unionization; major organizational challenges, from two perspectives: the university and graduate student unions²; followed by a brief discussion of the long term implications of this phenomenon.

ORGANIZATIONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND

The marriage of graduate student unions to the labor movement involved a long courtship. As in countless other situations in academe, the failure or inability of institutional leaders to address employment related concerns of graduate students resulted in fertile fields for union organizers. The courtship was structured and solidified in an environment of tremendous growth in graduate education and research productivity in American higher education.

Consider the following data which comes from ongoing research by scholars affiliated with the National Center for Postsecondary Improvement at Stanford University:

- between 1950 and 1990, the number of institutions of higher education increased from 1800 to approximately 3800;
- during this time period, enrollment in postsecondary education jumped from 2.7 million to approximately 14 million;

- between 1960 and 1990, the number of full-time faculty grew from 230,000 to approximately 700,000;
- during this time period, the number of part-time and adjunct faculty tripled to 300,000;
- between 1965 and 1990, federal research support to higher education grew from 8 million per year to approximately 16 million;
- during this same time period, the number of doctorates conferred in American research institutions grew from 6100 to approximately 40,000 per year;
- between 1976 and 1991, enrollment of individuals over the age of 30 has doubled, the enrollment of women has gone from 750,000 to approximately 7 million;
- during this same time period, the number of “executives” and administrators grew 50%, from 100,000 to 150,000, the number of non-faculty professionals doubled to approximately 400,000, and the number of instructors and research assistants tripled to approximately 100,000.
- This growth (in enrollment, institutions, diversity, et al.) of the higher education sector has come with massive increases in the number of adult and part-time students, tuition has increased by approximately 100% in many locations, large research universities have become mega-universities (often the largest employers in their respective locals).
- The evolution of graduate education has been predicated on the assumption of an ever expanding funding base for a select group of universities. By the mid-1990’s, approximately 3% of all institutions of higher education awarded 80% of all doctorates and 50% of all master degrees.²

The institutional and demographic growth described above would not have, in and of itself, given rise to graduate student unions. Other, less robust and problematic factors intruded. Consider the following:

- The cost of attending a private college or university (for a four-year degree) has jumped to \$33,000 per year. We are witnessing consumer resistance to the high cost of education, coupled with calls for accountability, skepticism toward the value of postsecondary degrees, increased public scrutiny of institutional operations, and legislative attempts to mandate efficiency in workload, budgets, etc.
- Many institutions are devoting larger and larger portions of their operating budgets to student aid and scholarships.

- State legislatures in Florida and Ohio have endeavored to enact legislation mandating increased workload and classroom contact hours for faculty in public college and university systems.
- Government funding, as a percent of all higher education funding, has declined by approximately 38% in the last few years.
- Market pressures have resulted in the growth of non-traditional institutions, now competing for student dollars (e.g., Walden University, the University of Phoenix, virtual universities, and the like). This competitive environment has generated pressures to “vocalize” professional degrees.
- The time needed to complete an advanced degree has elongated, in some cases, to six or seven years.
- By 1995, approximately 40% of full-time faculty in American higher education, primarily but not exclusively in the public sector, were represented by labor unions for purposes of collective bargaining. It is estimated that upwards of 60-70% of the laborers, clerical, engineering, technical, and related non-faculty personnel are unionized in the U.S., but definitive numbers are elusive.³

At present, many universities, particularly those in the research sector, have implemented schemes to “restructure” and reengineer workforces, downsize full-time staff and hire an increasing number of adjunct faculty. The era of “low cost and high return” for a graduate degree is over, as universities seek to continue doing what they have always done even with declining resource bases. In many institutions, there has been a change in the academic climate and culture, from one of deliberative consultation to negotiation and politicization between competing interest groups with well articulated and vested interests. A general increase in the tension between faculty, non-faculty and the administration (collective bargaining being one manifestation) coupled with the collapse of the job market for new Ph.D.’s has also encouraged graduate student unionization. Through all the trials and tribulations, the continued growth in postsecondary systems, the number of doctorates being conferred keeps going up! Those on all sides of the graduate student unionization debate lament much of what as occurred in graduate education in the last twenty-five years.

MORE IMMEDIATE REASONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENT UNIONIZATION

Graduate students have been organizing for the purposes of collective bargaining for thirty years. The causes of organized activity among graduate students are varied. While it is possible to view the broad landscape, the lens blurs when focusing on one set of topographical factors. The unionization movement in higher education in general is now a river fed by hundreds of smaller tributaries, many from a variety of sources. To the extent we are able, it is of value to view

Figure I
Status of Graduate Student Unions in U.S. Institutions***

INSTITUTION/SYSTEM	AGENT	STATUS
City University of New York †	AFT/AAUP	Contract
Cornell University**†††	UAW	No Recognition
Eastern Michigan University *	AAUP	No Recognition
Florida State University *	IND	No Recognition
Indiana University	CWA	No Recognition
Michigan State University	IND	No Recognition
New York University†††	UAW	No Recognition
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey †	AAUP	Contract
State University of New York††	CWA	Contract
Syracuse University**†††	IND	No Recognition
Temple University *	AFT	No Recognition
Wayne State University *	AFT	No Recognition
University of California** (Eight Campus Units)	UAW	Negotiations Ongoing
University of Connecticut††	UE	No Recognition
University of Florida *	NEA	Contract
University of Illinois	IND	No Recognition
University of Iowa	UE	Contract
University of Kansas	AFT	Contract
University of Massachusetts††	UAW	Contract
University of Michigan	AFT	Contract
University of Minnesota	AFT	No Recognition
University of Notre Dame	IND	No Recognition
University of Oregon**	AFT	Contract
University of South Florida *	NEA	Contract
University of Wisconsin	AFT	Contract
Yale University†††	HREU	No Recognition

* Full-time faculty are unionized and represented by the same bargaining agent.

** Faculty in one or more schools or divisions are organized. Counted as one (1) institution for purposes of this chart.

*** The entire universe; e.g., all graduate student locals are, to the best of my knowledge, listed.

† Graduate students are in the same bargaining unit with faculty.

†† Full-time faculty are unionized and represented by a different bargaining agent.

††† Private institution

the major reasons graduate students seek formal union representation. This is so for two reasons; first, to understand the consequences of graduate student unionization, we must be certain to have a firm grasp of the underlying causes. Secondly, in devising organizational and institutional solutions (or assessing blame -- which we are, unfortunately, so quick to do in academe), it behooves us to understand the causes so as not to invent solutions which may cause further deterioration of faculty-administration-graduate student relations or long term damage to graduate education and research productivity.

Although it may not seem the case from reading much of the literature, in my opinion, many faculty and administrators (and graduate students themselves) have a relatively clear understanding of the catalysts for unionization (and attendant problems), but have lacked the resources and political skills necessary to respond. That being said, let us review (not in any priority order) the causes of unionization among this constituency in postsecondary institutions.

- An elongation of the time needed to complete a graduate degree, coupled with; a) little, if any, job mobility in academe for a great majority of individuals who complete advanced graduate work and, b) increasing reluctance on the part of those completing advanced degrees to live in what they perceive as academic ghettos. Many older graduate students desire to start families, need health care coverage and job security, and perceive the faculty with whom they work to be living in comparative luxury. The words, “dignity and respect” fly off the pages of much of the literature published by graduate student organizers and graduate students themselves.
- Full-time faculty are increasingly reluctant to do the kinds of work and tasks presently being performed by many graduate students and research assistants (e.g., grading papers, teaching large freshman seminars, etc.). Unfortunately, one’s prestige in large research universities seems to increase the further one gets from teaching undergraduates. Given the nature and type of work many graduate students are performing, they are undoubtedly a much cheaper form of labor. While cogent arguments can be made, based on models of economic efficiency and sound academic pedagogy, to utilize the services of readers, tutors, graduate assistants, adjunct and part-time faculty, and the like (rather than full-time senior professors), the “cheap and exploited labor” argument has been used with success by union advocates.
- Institutional and demographic variables associated with the emergence of faculty unionization in higher education have facilitated unionization efforts on the part of graduate students. For example, in many locals, enabling public sector labor legislation, public employment relations boards (willing to structure elections and hear cases with a sympathetic ear), evolving labor laws, and high percentages of unionized government and state employees (in addition to faculty and staff) have all facilitated unionization. It is not accidental that most graduate student union activity is associated with institutions and systems where faculty and other staff are unionized, or where enabling state labor legislation protects the process, where high percentages of

the public and private sectors external to the academy are organized, where organized labor has “clout” in state legislatures, or where administrative structures, in place to manage faculty or staff unions, can be utilized to address negotiations with graduate students.

- Labor unions in both the public and private sectors, particularly unions in declining industries, are diversifying, looking for new dues paying clientele. Just as universities have sought new revenue streams, so have labor unions. Traditional “industrial type” unions have agreed to represent graduate students, most often in cases where full-time faculty are not organized. At such institutions (New York University, Indiana University, Cornell, Iowa, or Yale), the traditional higher education bargaining agents (AAUP, NEA, AFT) have studiously avoided representing graduate students for fear of alienating the full-time faculty who are ambivalent or opposed to such unions. For example, graduate students are represented by the United Auto Workers at the University of Massachusetts, University of California, New York University, and Cornell University; the Hotel and Restaurant Workers Union at Yale, the Communication Workers of America at Indiana University and the State University of New York; and United Electrical Workers at the Universities of Iowa and Connecticut. On many campuses, graduate and research personnel are represented by independent or non-affiliated unions (see Figure I).

- In institutions where the professoriate is also organized by the AAUP, AFT, or NEA, the situation is more complex. Even when higher education union organizers and full-time faculty are ambivalent about (or may not fully comprehend the implications of) union drives by graduate students, they may be reluctant to stand by and witness the arrival of competing bargaining agents on campus. It is also the case that in larger unionized systems, full-time faculty union leaders may correctly surmise that representing graduate students will give the professoriate even greater leverage at the bargaining table. By and large, however, the primary constituencies of faculty unions are often interested in protecting the status quo and craft-like prerogatives and soon realize that gains made by organized unions of graduate students may come at their expense. Where graduate students are represented by the NEA, AFT, or AAUP, it is sometimes the result of bargaining unit composition. For example, the AAUP represents graduate students in three locations; Rutgers University and the City University of New York (where the AAUP eventually affiliated with the AFT). In these two institutions/systems graduate students were placed in the full-time faculty bargaining unit. At Eastern Michigan University, the AAUP also represents full-time faculty. Although the overwhelming majority of the organized professoriate is affiliated with the AFT, AAUP, and NEA, only 42% of graduate student locals are represented by these bargaining agents (see Figure II).

- The growth of organized activity among graduate students underscores two additional points. First, many graduate students are no longer sure who their “employer” is. For example, is it the University, the academic department, the school, a state funding agency, or federal contracting office? The confusion

generated by diffuse funding authorities, coupled with departmental autonomy in huge research institutions has led to situations, on some campuses, where graduate student organizing is not seen as deleterious to the department, school, or institution. Second, as graduate students pressure the university to treat them in a uniform manner, the implications for departmental and disciplinary autonomy may be profound. This is certainly the case at institutions where graduate students believe their work is not related to their graduate education, and they are, in fact, doing work full-time faculty shun (at a much lower cost).

THE ORGANIZED PROFESSORIATE Vs. ORGANIZED GRADUATE STUDENTS

Differences between the unionization movement of graduate and research personnel and full-time faculty are interesting and may provide insight into the long term consequences of graduate student unions. Major differences are summarized below:

- An inverse relationship between institutional prestige and organizing activity. At prestigious institutions which have not witnessed faculty unionization, organizing drives by graduate and research personnel are frequent. This is true at Yale, Michigan, Iowa, Berkeley, UCLA, Kansas, and other comparable institutions.
- Graduate and research personnel have, by and large, had more difficulty (beyond sympathetic rhetoric) gaining the interest of the major higher education faculty bargaining representatives in their organizing efforts. Approximately 42% of represented graduate students are affiliated with the NEA, AFT, or AAUP (see Figure II) whereas nearly all of the organized professoriate are represented by a combination of these agents.⁴
- The major points of negotiation for graduate student unions are recognition, compensation, and job security, followed by workload and grievance mechanisms. Traditional faculty unions are more often concerned with craft type prerogatives; e.g., control over governance processes, promotion, tenure, and reappointment processes, and the like. In general, faculty unions have sought to protect professional prerogatives and autonomy, while graduate student unions have focused on gaining acceptance, higher salaries, and job security.
- The responses of universities to organizing drives of graduate and research personnel, particularly where the full-time faculty have not been organized (e.g., Yale), are reminiscent of companies fighting industrial type unions. A high number of these graduate student locals remain “unrecognized” and only a small percentage have successfully negotiated labor agreements.⁵ By and large, when the faculty unionizes, senior administrators and trustees are reluctant or constrained from engaging in organizational conflict which could generate negative publicity or animus from the state capitol. The anti-union

tactics employed against graduate student unions have rarely been used when the full-time faculty vote for representation. Where they have, it has been in the private sector; e.g., Boston University, where employers are generally less constrained than in the public sector.

- Graduate student unions have much less clout on campus than do faculty unions. The former have few “traditional levers” to compel settlement in the union-management arena. For example, strikes are less effective and less organized, there is high turnover in leadership positions, there is less sophistication in organizational communication, negotiation tactics and strategies. Despite the rhetoric, negotiations often drag on for years.

OBSERVATIONS ON INSTITUTIONAL AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

The following comments may be of interest:

- While traditional faculty union representatives may be somewhat ambivalent about negotiating on behalf of graduate students, when they do engage in the process, the chances of completing negotiations is greatly enhanced. Of the contracts in existence, 73% were negotiated with the support of traditional faculty union representatives. One explanation may be that in locals where faculty unions are not found, particularly the elite private sector, institutions have successfully engaged in concerted no-union campaigns. The presence of another faculty union, particularly in the public sector, enhances the likelihood that graduate students will eventually obtain a labor agreement.
- Unions of graduate students are most effective in larger public institutions/systems and least effective in the private sector where the full-time faculty are not represented. In the latter institutions, they are far more likely to be represented by an independent or industrial type union.
- Unions of graduate students have made inroads in the highly prestigious research sector which was originally thought to be immune to academic collective bargaining. However, this is where the bulk of the graduate students work. In the long run, the much heralded dichotomy between professionalism vs. unionism may be called into question. It is conceivable therefore that faculty working in these institutions may someday be more receptive to collective bargaining than has previously been the case.
- Graduate students received the most favorable treatment vis-à-vis collective bargaining when initially placed in the same bargaining unit as full-time faculty. This caveat is also true for librarians, coaches, and other non-teaching professionals who are similarly situated. Structural factors inherent in the external labor relations environment (e.g., enabling legislation, the presence of other unions at the state capital, etc.) have a spill over effect on the ability of graduate students to organize and negotiate effectively.

Figure II
Graduate Student Unions: Institutional and Demographic Characteristics†

† These data represent, to the best of my knowledge, the entire universe of graduate student locals as of 11/99.

AFFILIATION	
Public	86%
Private	14%
REGION	
Midwest	34%
West	31%
Northeast	25%
South	10%
BARGAINING AGENT	
Represented by NEA, AFT, AAUP, or a merger thereof	42%
Represented by other bargaining agent	58%
ARE THE FULL-TIME FACULTY UNIONIZED?	
Yes	46%
No	54%
ARE THE FULL-TIME FACULTY IN SOME SCHOOLS OR DIVISIONS (OR INSTITUTIONS WITHIN THE SYSTEM) UNIONIZED?	
Yes	58%
No	42%
INSTITUTIONS/SYSTEMS WHERE GRADUATE STUDENTS HAVE NEGOTIATED A LABOR AGREEMENT	
42% of locals have a labor contract, all are in the public sector. Graduate students have not gained recognition at any private institution.	
WHERE AGREEMENTS HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATED, WHO IS THE BARGAINING AGENT?	
NEA, AFT, AAUP, Mergers	73%
Others	27%
WHERE LABOR AGREEMENTS HAVE BEEN NEGOTIATED AND RATIFIED, ARE THE FULL-TIME FACULTY UNIONIZED?	
Yes	73%
No	27%

Source Documents: *Directory of Graduate Student Employee Bargaining Agents and Organizations*, National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, Baruch College, City University of New York, 1995; *Directory of Faculty Contracts and Bargaining Agents in Institutions of Higher Education*, National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, Baruch College, City University of New York, 1997; *Academe*, Bulletin of the AAUP, 84(6), November-December 1998; During the Fall 1998, Spring 1999 follow-up phone calls were made to all graduate student locals.

MAJOR INSTITUTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS

Although graduate students have received press coverage and have engaged in several highly visible job actions, the road to recognition and organizational stability, from an industrial labor relations perspective, has been bumpy. A majority of locals have failed to obtain either a labor agreement or recognition. While several graduate student unions have gained a foothold in a number of public systems and land grant institutions, unions have not yet been successful in most institutions where organizing activities have occurred and remain shut out in the private sector.

The reasons for this are varied and situational, but probably revolve around the following set of factors:

- Unions of graduate students lack sophistication in labor-management relations. They are far more ideologically bound than the organized professoriate in general, and certainly more ideologically driven than many in the American labor movement. The lack of sophistication is manifested in many ways; organizing rhetoric, perceptions toward the nature of power and influence in academe, naiveté about decision making processes (both academic and administrative) in large research universities, etc. During the recent strike at the University of California at Berkeley, for example, the union was unable to obtain the support of the Alameda Central Labor Council to endorse its job action. (Organized labor has bigger fish to fry.) Perhaps the entry of industrial type bargaining representatives will alter the status quo. This remains to be seen.
- Graduate student unions have significant organizational hurdles to overcome. Communication within the unit is difficult. Also, they have less clout than most groups on campus and depend heavily on the good will given student employees by faculty and university officials. In addition, there are high turnover rates on bargaining teams and team members have little, if any, collective bargaining training or experience.
- Graduate student unions may have unrealistic expectations (they may believe their own rhetoric) in regard to what faculty, administrators, or legislators will do to address their demands. They also risk being coopted by traditional faculty unions who may give lip service to their demands and then compromise when larger issues are at stake. It is also the case that graduate students are making demands for increased compensation and job security during a period when research institutions are faced with declining revenues, and health care costs are skyrocketing. It may be more economically feasible for a university to hire temporary or part-time faculty as readers, tutors, exam graders, etc., than pay for scholarships and related health benefits of graduate students and research assistants. To this extent, success at the bargaining table may come at a very high price as universities decrease overall use of full-time graduate students to pay for increased compensation for those who remain.

- Other costs associated with organized activities may become evident. The job market for new Ph.D.'s is tight; mobility depends on recommendations and good will from senior faculty. Engaging in strike activity and labor-management rhetoric is not the way to endear oneself to faculty in the department or school. Obtaining certain collective bargaining prerogatives may result in the development of a permanent class of unionized graduate students, unable to find full-time positions (or assume risk to do so) because of their dependence on compensation and benefits set forth in their labor agreements.
- While graduate students have been adroit in getting some major intellectual and disciplinary associations to consider their plight, they have generally not been successful in obtaining the support of the professoriate (beyond verbal support). Until this is accomplished, until graduate students can make the case that what is beneficial for them in a unionized context is also of value to graduate education, research productivity, the university, and full-time faculty in general, their movement will remain essentially where it is now; on the margins of influence and power.

FOR THE UNIVERSITY (EMPLOYER)

Collective bargaining with graduate students has been anything but easy for senior administrators and faculty at schools where organizing activities have occurred. Indeed, there are only a handful of instances where the process has not resulted in serious organizational conflict and a deterioration of consultative governance. The perception that what is good for research and graduate education is also good for the advanced student is being called into question. Long range implications will be profound. Labor management relations have been difficult for a variety of reasons:

- There are few administrators (at institutions where graduate students organize) who have much, if any, experience with collective bargaining. Those who do are normally on the "staff" or "non-faculty" side of the house. Non-academic administrators are often unfamiliar or uncomfortable in the deliberative forums where academic policies are set. At some institutions, non-academic administrators with expertise may not be consulted, even when they have broad based knowledge and experience; simply because they lack academic credentials! Productive relations with unions demand certain skills, administrative structures, knowledge of industrial labor relations practices. Senior executives in elite institutions may not be conversant with these processes and may lack faith in those who are. In some cases, in the private sector, legal counsel are brought to campus who may have extensive experience fighting unions in the local lumber mill, machine factory, perhaps a national airline, but have not dealt with craft-type unions in academic environments. Collective bargaining demands a certain degree of hierarchy, control mechanisms, and efficient decision-making processes which are largely absent in the upper echelons of large research institutions.

- The demands of organized graduate student unions go to the very core of conditions attendant to graduate education in academic departments and divisions; e.g., departmental autonomy. Funds to meet increased calls for salaries, stipends, health care supplements, and the like, normally come from academic budget lines. The deliberative processes to react to graduate student needs are often incompatible with collective bargaining practices and procedures. Institutions (and individuals) have a difficult time developing even fundamental objectives; e.g., negotiation parameters. The unionization process breaks down due to many factors but leading the list are the following:
 - Many senior administrators and faculty of good will and high ethical standards believe that unionization is incompatible with graduate education and that those organizing are students first, employees second. The individuals to whom I am referring are not necessarily anti-union but believe unions of graduate students are fundamentally incompatible with the faculty-student mentoring relationship. While the important issue of whether or not graduate students do, in fact, meet definitions for employees under state or federal labor relations statutes, is beyond the scope of this paper, the fact remains that in many jurisdictions, graduate students have succeeded in gaining the right to vote (as employees) for union representation. Often, these votes have come years after the university has engaged in a variety of legal maneuvers to deny collective bargaining rights to graduate students. The resulting situation has been to create a more militant and sophisticated group of students willing to affiliate with the UAW or related industrial-type union and who now have little faith in traditional governance processes.
 - Those in senior positions have less and less decision making authority (power and influence) to respond to graduate student unionization drives. Decision making in large research universities is inherently political, power is highly diffused. Many competing interest groups cancel out the effective recommendations of select groups or individuals. While a discussion of the organizational characteristics which inhibit effective decision-making strategies is also beyond the scope of this paper, senior executives often find themselves besieged with consultative “processes” and have few tools (and little inclination) to wield the type of decision making authority necessary to respond quickly and effectively to unionization drives. If graduate student unions are beset by a lack of sophistication, it is mirrored in the inability of large systems with competing interest groups to respond effectively to their demands.
 - Graduate student unionization is still a relatively new phenomenon. Senior executives and faculty at elite institutions may look over their shoulders at similarly situated colleges and universities. “If it isn’t being done at Harvard, Stanford, Chicago, Columbia, or Princeton, it probably shouldn’t be done here!” is a common refrain. The evolution of graduate student unionization at the University of California may have an impact, but it is too early to tell.

- Legitimate questions exist regarding the separation of tuition benefits from “wages, hours, and working conditions”, the stuff of collective bargaining. Not only are these issues complex, time consuming, and potentially expensive, the “right” committees are often not empowered to finalize policies in these areas. Increasingly the result has been the entrance of third parties, usually from state government, who are influencing the outcome of unionization in the face of institutional inactivity. In the private sector, the protections afforded employers under the NLRA are still sufficient to fend off union drives, rather than forcing anyone to engage in the complex and difficult tasks of separating student and “employee” matters.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS

In my estimation, there are several long term implications of the presence of graduate student unions:

- There appears to be increasing disdain for the shared governance approach, particularly in large research institutions, and a definite desire, on the part of graduate students, to reduce the ambiguity in their employment relationship with the institution. At present, there are many who believe graduate students are used as resources to safeguard the competitive advantage of large research institutions. Said less delicately, organized graduate students may perceive themselves as substitutes for more costly human resources in order to leverage faculty time. There has been overproduction and underemployment of Ph.D.’s in areas that new Ph.D.’s themselves to want to work. This being said, it is difficult to isolate the effects of graduate student unionism from the consequences of other intellectual, political, economic, and social forces that have transformed the academy. For example, institutional transition, falling enrollments, a decline of federal and state funding, increased government regulation, the loss of public confidence in the value of a college degree, the economy, and the continuing influence of state governments and coordinating boards, like collective bargaining, have all impacted the collegiate environment.
- The implications for departmental autonomy (the shining feature of research organizations) associated with scholarly productivity and the general well being of the academic profession, may be profound. If what graduate student unions obtain constitutes a degree of standardization of work expectations, more input into working conditions, uniformity across academic departments, economic security, and campus wide conflict resolution mechanisms (with binding arbitration), then departmental and disciplinary autonomy as it is known now will change significantly. Whether or not this change will effect how research is conducted, scholarly productivity, working conditions of full-time faculty, authority over academic matters and the like, remains to be seen. At the very minimum, the negative press associated with the plight of graduate students at Yale or Michigan may discourage the young scholars from attending those institutions.

- The movement of graduate students to seek representation of organized labor heralds yet another breakdown in the internal organizational fabric of higher education. As the academy becomes more fractionalized and vulnerable to external pressures, internal governance processes breakdown. At many of the institutions where graduate students are unionizing, the full-time faculty (and exempt senior managers) remain the only groups on campus who are not represented for the purpose of collective bargaining. Ultimately, the authority of institutions to react to external pressures and govern themselves will be circumscribed.
- It remains a complex task to discern what administrative strategies and behavior are most appropriate in unionized institutions. Decision makers, from both union and management, have been innovative as they have adopted and adapted collective bargaining to existing institutional structures and processes. Unionization serves as a catalyst for continued organizational change. These changes, in turn, demand new management strategies. For example, structuring the collective bargaining process in order to anticipate varied outcomes appears to be a crucial measure for success. Understanding the technical aspect of negotiations and grasping the essential components and rules of contract administration are important. Simply putting a vice president, dean, or other “experienced” administrator in charge of collective bargaining (none of whom have extensive prior labor experience) or hiring outside labor counsel (who profess great experience with unions, unfortunately never with faculty unions) has been problematic in countless academic organizations. Unfortunately, mistakes made in the initial phases of unionization may not be evident for decades.
- The course of collective bargaining is often determined by institutional conditions in existence before bargaining. Highly adversarial relationships predate the vote for collective bargaining. Once negotiations commence, unions endeavor to incorporate policies and procedures into collective bargaining agreements which reflect each party’s understanding of how particular policies or procedures should have operated in more tranquil times.
- Collective bargaining for graduate students will inevitably serve to focus attention on, and in some cases, stimulate action by other non-represented groups of employees. For example, mid-level managers, who remain largely unorganized, may question whether they are also receiving a fair share of economic benefits. Other employee groups may discern that “organized” blocs have greater opportunities to address “employee” needs. The question of the impact of collective bargaining on salaries and promotional opportunities for represented and non-represented employees defies easier answers. Unionization may freeze an institution’s capability to address critical human resources issues.
- The individuals responsible for managing the collective bargaining process will continue to shape the process and, as well, the attitudes of others toward

unionization. In this respect, the skills and styles of those assigned to perform this function are important. Leadership in this arena includes factors and variables such as: the ability to legitimize and institutionalize the labor relations process, the ability to articulate labor relations goals to reflect desires and needs of key organizational constituencies (trustees, President, faculty), the ability to take initiative and to respond to unexpected situations, the ability to understand power in organizations and to initiate strategic actions which neutralize administrative opponents and, lastly, the technical and experiential skills to select one course of action over another (when to take a strike, when to come to agreement, etc.).

What we can say with certainty is that the research university in 2050 will look and act differently than the one we know in 2000. However, the University will not be as different as the naysayers predict, nor look as similar to the contemporary university as those who simply dismiss this “latest organizational fad” suggest. The truth lies somewhere in between.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Agreement between the State of New York and the Graduate Student Employees Union/Communication Workers of America, Local 1188, 1995-1999.*
- Altbach, P. G., Berdahl, O., and P. J. Gumport (eds.), *American Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century*. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- Annunziato, F., et al., *Directory of Graduate Student Employee Bargaining Agents and Organization*. New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, City University of New York, 1995.
- Baldrige, J. Victor, *Power and Conflict in the University*. New York: John Wiley, 1971.
- Clark, B. R., "The Role of Faculty in College Administration," in L. Wilson and others (ed.), *Studies of College Faculty*. Western Interstate Commission of Higher Education, 1961.
- Cohen, M. D., and J. G. March, *Leadership and Ambiguity: The American College President*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1974.
- Curtiss, J., "Roles, Rewards, and Responsibilities: Graduate Student Unionization at the University of Michigan," *Higher Education Collective Bargaining During a Period of Change, Proceedings, Twenty-second Annual Conference*. New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, Baruch College, City University of New York, 1994.
- Gabarino, J. W., *Faculty Bargaining: Change and Conflict*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1975.
- , "Faculty Bargaining: A Status Report," in S. M. Lipset (ed.), *Unions in Transition*. San Francisco: Institute for Contemporary Studies, 1986.
- Gross, E., and P. V. Grambsch, *University Goals and Academic Power*. Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1968.
- Gumport, P. J., "Graduate Education and Research: Interdependence and Strain," in Altbach, P. G., Berdahl, O., and P. J. Gumport (eds.), *American Higher Education in the Twenty-first Century*. Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998.
- , "Public Universities as Academic Workplaces," *Daedalus: Journal of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences*, 126(4): 113-136, Fall 1997.

- et al., "Trends in United States Higher Education from Massification to Post-Massification," National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, Stanford University, 1997.
- , "The Contested Terrain of Academic Program Reduction," *Journal of Higher Education*, 64(3): 293-311, June 1993.
- and J. Jennings, "Graduate Student Employees: Unresolved Challenges," *Journal of the College and University Personnel Association*, (48)3-4: 35-37, Winter 1998.
- and B. Pusser, "A Case of Bureaucratic Accreditation: Context and Consequences," *Journal of Higher Education*, (66)5: 493-520, October 1995.
- Hurd, R., et al., *Directory of Faculty Contracts and Bargaining Agents in Institutions of Higher Education*, Vol. 23, National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, City University of New York, 1997.
- Julia, J., and D. Gamble, *The University of Michigan and Graduate Employees Organization: 1975-1996*. University of Michigan, 1996.
- Julius, D. J. (ed.), *Managing the Industrial Labor Relations Process in Higher Education*. Washington, D.C.: College and University Personnel Association, 1995.
- , "Assessing Outcomes of Unionization on Employee Behavior," in D. Julius and A. Hoffman (eds.), *Community and Junior College Management: Theory and Practice*. Washington, D.C.: College and University Personnel Association, 1995.
- (ed.), *Collective Bargaining in Higher Education: The State of the Art*. Washington, D.C.: College and University Personnel Association, 1985.
- , "Collective Bargaining in Higher Education: The First Decade," *Research Currents*. Washington, D.C.: American Association for Higher Education, 1977.
- and M. K. Chandler, "Academic Bargaining Agents in Higher Education: Do Their Achievements Differ?," *Journal of Collective Negotiations*, (18)1: 9-58, 1989.
- and M. K. Chandler, "Analysis of Variables Associated with Collective Bargaining," *Community/Junior College Quarterly of Research and Practice*, (11)4: 203-225, 1987, and (12)1: 1-21, 1988.

- and M. K. Chandler, "Management Rights and Governance in Unionized Institutions," *Proceedings, Thirteenth Annual Conference*. New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, Baruch College, City University of New York, 1985.
- , J. V. Baldrige, and J. Pfeffer, "Determinants of Administrative Effectiveness: Why Some Academic Leaders are More Influential and Effective than Others," *Canadian Journal of Higher Education*, Forthcoming 1999.
- , J. V. Baldrige, and J. Pfeffer, "A Memo from Machiavelli," *Journal of Higher Education*, (70)2: 113-133, April 1999.
- , M. K. Chandler, and T. Mannix, "Prestige, Size, Region, and Affiliation as Determinants of Collective Bargaining," *Higher Education Review*, (1)1: 11-32, November 1977.
- Kelley, M. R., W. Pannacker, and E. Wiltse, "Scholarly Associations Must Face the True Causes of the Academic Job Crisis," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 18, 1998, pp. B4-5.
- Kerr, C., "Patterns of Faculty Unionization in Higher Education," Speech delivered at the 19th Annual Conference of the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, University of San Francisco, 1991.
- Leatherman, C., "University of California Opens Door to Recognition of Teaching Assistants' Union," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, March 26, 1999, p. A18.
- and A. Schneider, "Teaching Assistants Strike at University of California Campuses," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 11, 1998, pp. 19-20.
- and R. Wilson, "Embittered by a Bleak Job Market: Graduate Students Take on the MLA," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, December 18, 1998, pp. A10-11.
- Lombardi, J. V., "Colleges Shouldn't be Employment Agencies," *Chronicle of Higher Education*, April 16, 1999, p. A64.
- Millett, J., *The Academic Community*, McGraw-Hill, 1962.
- Peterson, M. W., "Improvement to Emergence: An Organization-Environment Research Agenda for a Postsecondary Knowledge Industry," National Center for Postsecondary Improvement, Stanford University, 1998.

- Schuster, J., "The Mutation of Higher Education and Reconfiguration of the Faculty and their Roles," *25 Years of Higher Education Collective Bargaining Proceedings, Twenty-fifth Annual Conference*. New York: National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, Baruch College, City University of New York, 1997.
- Slaughter, S., "Retrenchment in the 1980's: The Politics of Prestige and Gender," *Journal of Higher Education*, (64)3: 250-282, June 1993.
- Vaughn, W., "Apprentice or Employee?: Graduate Students and Their Unions," *Academe*, (84) 6: 43-49, December 1998.
- Villa, J. Y., "Graduate Student Organizing: Examining the Issues," *Journal of the College and University Personnel Association*, (42)4: 33-40, 1991.
- Wisconsin Law Review*, University of Wisconsin, December 1971. The entire issue was devoted to unionization of teaching assistants and graduate assistants.

ENDNOTES

¹ In this article, graduate students may also refer to; readers, lecturers, tutors, and teaching assistants.

² Gumport, et al.

³ Gumport, et al. D. Julius (ed.), *Managing the Industrial Labor Relations Process in Higher Education* (Washington, D.C.: College and University Personnel Association, 1995). Hurd, R., et al., *Directory of Faculty Contracts and Bargaining Agents in Institutions of Higher Education*, Vol. 23, National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions, City University of New York, 1997.

⁴ See the current *Directory*, published by the National Center for the Study of Collective Bargaining in Higher Education and the Professions at Baruch College, City University of New York.

⁵ The distinction of "recognized" and "unrecognized" in the labor-management context is real. By recognition, we mean a certified bargaining unit (by a state agency, the NLRB, or through employer recognition) recognized by the university as the legitimate and legal representative of unit members. Simply being

VI. HUMAN RESOURCES ISSUES

- A. Arbitration of Faculty Statutory Employment Claims:
Lessons from the Corporate Sector**
- B. The Arbitration of Faculty Disputes ADA, ADEA and
FMLA**
- C. Pension and Benefit Issues Update Presentation**