



Grad Assistants and AAP

How Does the GEO's Recent Success Affect Academic Professionals?

By Jenny Barrett and Peter Miller

Since 1996, when 3,200 graduate assistants signed cards stating that they wanted the Graduate Employees' Organization to represent them in collective bargaining, university administrators have fought the group's efforts.

University lawyers were instructed to argue that graduate assistants are not entitled to the right to unionize under the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act (IELRA) because they are students, not employees. However, on October 4, 2000, the Illinois Supreme Court disagreed when it refused to hear the administration's appeal of a June state appellate court ruling that graduate assistants are indeed employees and have the right to organize.

The AAP believes that graduate assistants should be allowed to vote on whether they want a union, and that the administration degrades the notion of collegiality when it fights democratic decision making.

Why is it that on a university campus, where "shared governance" is a desired goal, the administration is opposed to democratically elected bodies representing their employees?

Organizing Works!

Through the GEO, graduate assistants worked to control their teaching loads (which vary dramatically from department to department), improve wages and benefits, and ensure fair treatment in their jobs. Even without winning the right to bargain a contract, graduate assistants by virtue of their organizing efforts have made significant gains over the past several years: a new eye-care benefit, a refund to graduate students of the \$68 athletic fee, a new free dental insurance plan, parental leave, and large pay raises.

In addition, the GEO won two small but important changes in working conditions. First, graduate assistants are no longer required to pay student fees before receiving their first paychecks. And, second, the GEO stopped administrators from taking away staff ID cards,

Graduate assistants' organizing efforts have captured the attention of administrators, leading to improved pay and benefits. We believe that APs, too, can gain improvements by forming our own organization.

The Association of Academic Professionals is a group of academic professional employees at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign that is attempting to organize for the purpose of collective bargaining. The AAP is affiliated with the Illinois Education Association and the National Education Association. We are part of a national movement of academic professionals who seek collective bargaining rights.

In order to maintain and improve on the benefits of working at this great university, we believe that we need to organize so that our voice commands attention when administrators make decisions that affect our jobs.

The AAP seeks to ensure certain rights such as:

- ☆ clear paths for career development and advancement
- ☆ third-party resolution of disputes with supervisors
- ☆ fair, timely, and consistent evaluation procedures
- ☆ safeguards against arbitrary dismissal
- ☆ rewards for good job performance
- ☆ compensation for mandatory overtime
- ☆ paid and unpaid leaves
- ☆ *a meaningful voice in decisions that affect our employment*

AAP Advocate—UIUC Association of Academic Professionals

STEERING COMMITTEE:

Jenny Barrett (chair), *Psychology*
 Cheryl Berger, *Psychology*
 Guy Davis, *Career Services Center*
 Mel Farrell, *Ill. Lib. Computer Systems*
 Neal Horner, *McKinley Health Center*
 Jamie Hutchinson, *ECE*
 Diana Johnson, *Spurlock Museum*
 Dan Lewart, *Veterinary Medicine*
 Jamie McGowan, *Ctr. for African Studies*
 Jane Mohraz, *UI Press*
 César Augusto Romero, *ACES/ITCS*
 Ron Szoke, *CCSO*

IEA STAFF: Peter Miller

Task Force Issues Child Care Statement

By Maeve Reilly

The following statement was sent by the Child Care Task Force Coordinating Committee to Chancellor Aiken, Provost Herman, and the *Daily Illini*.

The Child Care Task Force is heartened by the announcement of final approval for a major new child care facility (the Child Development Lab expansion) that will provide full-time and infant care beginning in Fall 2002. Clearly our efforts have not been in vain. But, as is recognized by almost everyone concerned, this important first step is only that: a first step. As the returns from the campus-wide survey on child care needs are tabulated, we will continue to work—with the Provost's Work/Life Advisory Committee, if possible, and in other venues when necessary—to bring the child care environment at the University of Illinois into the 21st century and into line with progressive peer institutions.

At this juncture, the Child Care Task Force has two immediate concerns. First, given that campus child care needs vastly exceed what the CDL expansion can provide, UIUC must continue on the path toward additional child care facilities, sick child care, drop-in child care, nursing rooms, and other family accommodations.

Second, we fervently hope that the relocation of the Asian Pacific American (APA) Studies House to make way for the new child care facility becomes an opportunity to reassert a campus commitment to a vital APA Studies program as an essential component of the diverse, world-class university that we are committed to building.

We therefore urge the administration to provide a viable relocation site for the APA Studies program and to join the Child Care Task Force in following through on the commitment to excellence reflected both in that program and in ongoing child care initiatives. ■

GEO and AAP

Continued from page 1

which grant holders discounts with certain hotels, airlines, and car rental agencies, and the right to cash checks and receive free traveler's checks at Henry Administration Building. Graduate assistants won those victories by working together within the GEO.

What are the implications for academic professionals if graduate assistants gain union rights?

The organizing efforts of graduate assistants have already captured the attention of administrators, leading to improved pay and benefits. If the GEO wins union rights, administrators will need to negotiate contract improvements for up to 5,400 employees.

The Association of Academic Professionals believes that APs too can gain improvements in our salaries, benefits, and working conditions, but only by forming our own organization. We are over 2,000 full-time professionals, performing many functions vital to the university. Negotiating as isolated individuals, academic professionals have little clout. United we can play a significant role in the university community. Working with other employee groups like the GEO, we can achieve the university-proclaimed goal of shared governance. ■

Issues Raised, Eyes Opened at AAP Open Meeting

By Mel Farrell

Both active AAP supporters and folks eager to learn more about AAP — about 50 in all—attended the AAP Open Meeting held at the McKinley Foundation on the evening of Monday, October 16. Attendees were treated to a delicious dinner from the La Salsa restaurant plus a tight set of tunes from the Impalas, a local blues favorite. Between the meal and the music, those on hand participated in a lively discussion of what a union has done for academic professionals at Michigan State University, and what one could do for them here.

Peter Miller, staff member of the Illinois Education Association, and Jenny Barrett, AAP president, kicked off the discussion with an update on recent AAP activities and efforts. Next Vance Kincaid, a biomedical researcher who was instrumental in organizing the academic professional

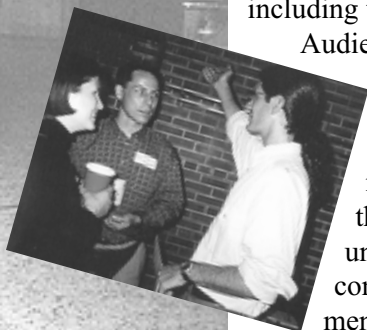
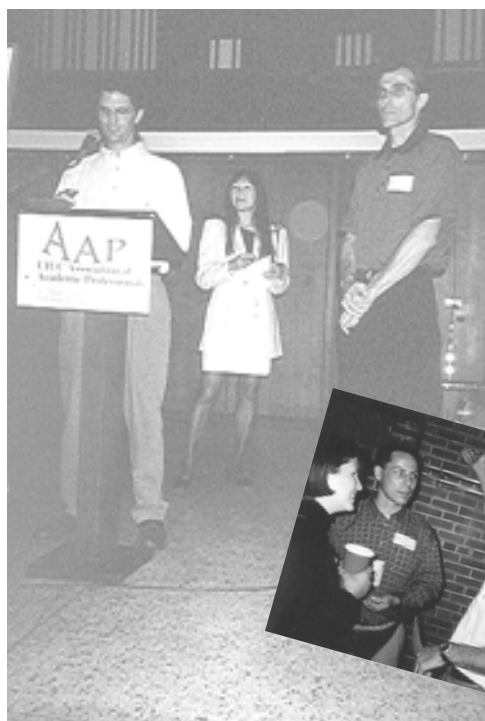
union at Michigan State University, explained how they organized a union in the early 1980s. Academic professionals at the University of Illinois have concerns similar to those of the staff at MSU.

Kincaid answered questions about job security, describing a strong recall system for APs whose positions are eliminated, including those on soft money.

Audience members were impressed to hear that, while on leave or while waiting to be re-hired, APs maintain their insurance, the university continues contributing to retirement funds, and seniority continues to accrue—APs

at MSU don't start from scratch each time they change jobs. He described a professional development program that guarantees APs the right to take up to 16 credits per year at MSU or elsewhere. When asked about performance evaluations, Kincaid said that the MSU system is "fair and impartial, and it has teeth," adding that merit raises are connected to evaluations. MSU also recently implemented domestic partner benefits.

Kincaid emphasized that these changes were all negotiated by the union, and he encouraged our local efforts, urging us to "hang in there!" ■

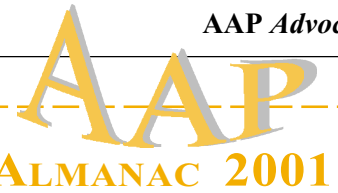


Audience responds to AAP goals

Through an informal survey, attendees rated the importance of the AAP's goals (listed at left on page 2). The three most highly rated were clear career paths, rewards for good job performance, and safeguards against arbitrary dismissal. Attendees also offered many of their own suggestions for improving work at UIUC, such as extending benefits like free access to IMPE, free parking, and sabbaticals; making retirement funds more flexible; ending the abuse of "visiting" titles; establishing fair and accurate job descriptions; and monitoring salaries for gender and market equity.

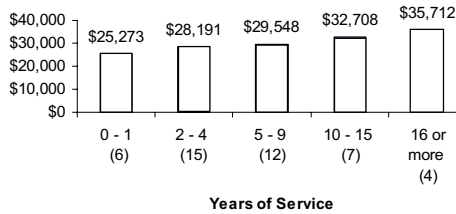
Overall, APs felt the evening produced results. After the meeting, Jenny Barrett commented, "In my 12 years at the U of I, I don't ever recall a group of APs getting together to discuss what they want from the university and going away feeling that they can do something about it. It was a real eye-opening experience."

The AAP hopes to represent your interests! Share your opinions about how to improve UIUC work life by sending comments to aap@shout.net.



UIUC Salary Snapshot: Research Specialists in Life Sciences

Annual Salaries for UIUC Research Specialists
in Life Sciences*



The sample includes all FY2001 APs who had at least one appointment with the title Research Specialist in Life Sciences. Less than full-time, 12-month appointments were pro-rated. The number in parentheses is the sample size for the corresponding category. Total sample size = 44.

Knowledge is power!

Become more knowledgeable about your employment environment by ordering your FREE copy of the *AAP Almanac*, a compendium of information about academic professionals on the Urbana campus. You'll find more than 50 pages containing vital data such as statistics on salary by appointing unit and by most common job title, University financial information, and resources for comparisons with APs at other Big Ten institutions.

Order your copy on our Web site (www.prairienet.org/aap/) or complete and return this form to: AAP, 304 N. Maple Ave., Suite 202, Urbana, IL 61801-2749. You need not be an AAP member. The *AAP Almanac* will be delivered in January 2001.

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