



Resolution: 2

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Sponsoring Senator(s): John Oltean, GSG Senator
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RE: Resolution Regarding USC Forward's Unionization Efforts

WHEREAS, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled that graduate students at private universities are employees in a 3-1 decision on August 23, 2016, setting the stage for widespread unionization efforts at universities such as The University of Chicago, Duke, Yale, Cornell, and Harvard¹, and;

WHEREAS, NLRB supported this 2016 ruling by citing graduate workers at New York University (NYU), who unionized in 2013, then successfully negotiated and ratified a contract within the next year, and have worked under its protections since without incident or disruption to the University², and;

WHEREAS, all other available data on the impacts of graduate unions support that unionization does not negatively impact on the University's³ bottom line and slightly increased satisfaction in the relationships between advisors and their students³, and;

WHEREAS, existing data also suggests that graduate unionization can result in improvements in health care coverage for all Graduate Assistants (GAs), increased funding for childcare and parental leave, lower fees, and higher stipends that include yearly salary increases tied to costs of living³, and;

¹ <https://www.nlr.gov/news-outreach/news-story/board-student-assistants-covered-nlra-0>

² <https://unionization.provost.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/content/NLRB%20Decision.pdf>;
https://makingabetternyu.org/app/uploads/GSOCNYU_2015contract_searchable.pdf

³ <http://www.epi.org/publication/graduate-student-employee-unions/>;
<https://scholarship.sha.cornell.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?referer=http://www.epi.org/publication/graduate-student-employee-unions/&httpsredir=1&article=1731&context=articles>;
https://triggered.clockss.org/ServeContent?url=http%3A%2F%2Fbaywood.stanford.clockss.org%2FBWCN%2FBAW_OOD_BWCN_29_2%2FP07GC8RF5GG04VH8.pdf

WHEREAS, union-represented graduate student employees report higher levels of personal and professional support, unionized graduate student employees fare better on pay, and unionized and nonunionized students report similar perceptions of academic freedom³, and;

WHEREAS, unionization can also bring the added value of legally established, contractually backed mechanisms of transparency and accountability—in terms of a contract and also via direct mechanisms for mediation in case of work-related issues such as designated hours or sexual harassment³, and;

WHEREAS, the Graduate Student Organizing Committee (GSOC) of USC Forward is dedicated to securing a union for graduate students and professional-student workers (including but not limited to teaching, research, and project assistants)⁴, and;

WHEREAS, the union will enable student employees to exercise their legal right to collectively bargain and address issues affecting their employment⁴, and;

WHEREAS, wages matching cost of living, job security, robust health insurance, and other potential benefits of unionization are increasingly important for workers at USC – but also in the neighboring communities and across the city - given the rapidly rising rent burden in Los Angeles⁵, and;

WHEREAS, GSOC has partnered with SEIU Local 721—the largest public sector union in the U.S. and the Local that represents more than 95,000 professional and public workers in Los Angeles⁶, and;

WHEREAS, SEIU Local 721 has secured key protections such as the \$15 minimum wage in Los Angeles⁷, spearheaded key community-labor organizing campaigns (including Fix LA and community-based care), and helped in developing an inclusive movement in LA that has transformed other issues (including immigrant rights, racial equity, gender parity, childcare access, and environmental justice)⁸, and;

WHEREAS, SEIU Local 721 also has expertise representing Non-Tenure Track Faculty (NTT) at USC, and SEIU broadly represents more than 40,000 higher education workers across the country⁹, and;

WHEREAS, GSOC is currently reaching out to graduate students and professional student-workers across UPC and HSC campuses with the intention of creating a union for graduate students and professional student-workers⁶, and;

WHEREAS, GSOC has had and continues to have hundreds of dialogues and dozens of departmental-level meetings with these workers to better understand their experiences, concerns, and desires, with the explicit goal of improving the USC community for everyone⁶, and;

WHEREAS, GSOC now has active support and signed union authorization cards from student employees in every school at USC, signaling broad support for and momentum driving towards graduate worker unionization on campus⁶, and;

⁴ <https://www.uscforward.org>;

⁵ <https://www.kcet.org/shows/city-rising/rising-rent-burden-in-los-angeles>

⁶ <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vbDP4SlsGDrT1evHdJMFcsiVTOW6wUTZ4eCCXg2Dg3E/edit?usp=sharing>

⁷ <https://www.seiu721.org/myunion/about-seiu-721.php>

⁸ <https://www.seiu721.org/category/immigration-reform>

⁹ <https://rtpc.usc.edu/facts-about-seiu-and-local-721/>

WHEREAS, GSG has stood as a key voice for change on campus and helped advocate for greater respect of graduate and professional student contributions and concerns, and;

WHEREAS, peer graduate student governments including the Graduate Student Council at Harvard University¹⁰, and graduate student government associations (namely NAGPS) have formally supported graduate unionization efforts, including imploring Columbia University to engage and bargain with their graduate student union¹¹, and;

WHEREAS, it is the opinion of the authors that USC Forward and formal union representation will bolster GSG's work by institutionalizing a complimentary student-led body on campus with the power to voice and apply their support to important initiatives such as increasing diversity and inclusiveness, developing improved policies to prevent sexual harassment, providing better childcare, and other issues that enhance the lives of students, faculty, staff and neighboring communities, therefore;

BE IT RESOLVED, that GSG stand with USC Forward by publicly declaring its support for the right to form a graduate union at USC and for free and fair union elections, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that GSG distribute this resolution to all graduate students and professional student-workers, USC President C. L. Max Nikias, USC Provost Michael Quick, and the USC Board of Trustees.

¹⁰ <http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2015/11/5/gsc-endorses-union-workers/>

¹¹ <https://mailchi.mp/fe3e2713959c/nagps-press-release-1094601?e=a026849712>