

News from GSOC/UAW Local 2110

NYU Teaching and Research Assistants Applaud Labor Board Ruling for Hearing on Workplace Rights

New York: Teaching and research assistants at New York University, members of GSOC/UAW Local 2110, applauded [a ruling by the National Labor Relations Board \(NLRB\)](#) which requires a hearing on their workplace rights, including the right to collective bargaining over terms and conditions of employment.

"NYU employees who teach thousands of undergraduates and who perform thousands of hours of research worth millions of dollars have been standing up for our workplace rights for more than a decade," said GSOC/UAW Local 2110 member John Freudenthal a research assistant in the NYU Chemistry Department. "We do important work at our university; we get paid for it, and we are employees with full rights under the law - it's as simple as that."

An NLRB decision to restore workplace rights for NYU TAs and RAs would result in a union representation election. Members of the bargaining unit, which now includes some 1,800 workers, have repeatedly demonstrated majority support for their union, most recently [verified in April, 2010 by the American Arbitration Association](#).

In 2002, GSOC/UAW Local 2110 members at NYU negotiated the first-ever labor contract for teaching and research assistants at a private university. Union members and the NYU administration entered into collective bargaining based on a [unanimous 2000 NLRB decision](#) which stated:

Consistent with Supreme Court and Board precedent, we find that the graduate assistants are employees within the meaning of Section 2(3) [of the National Labor Relations Act].

In 2004, in [a narrow, 3-2 partisan ruling](#), Republican appointees to the NLRB broke with established precedent and overruled the 2000 NLRB case. The decision resulted in the destruction of impounded ballots that were never counted after democratic elections among TAs and RAs at Brown University and at other private universities, including Columbia, Tufts and the University of Pennsylvania. The NYU administration has refused to bargain with members of GSOC/UAW Local 2110 ever since.

In this week's ruling, the NLRB found "compelling reasons for reconsideration of the decision in *Brown University*" and ordered the matter returned to the New York Regional Director of the NLRB for a full hearing.

"We look forward to our day in court," said Emma Kreyche, a teaching assistant in the NYU Department of Social and Cultural Analysis. "The Labor Board got it right the first time in 2000, when they examined all the evidence and found we are employees with full workplace rights."

Recent maneuvers by NYU administrators to avoid collective bargaining with TAs and RAs "just don't make any sense," said Kreyche. NYU officials now concede that a few hundred teaching assistants (but no research assistants) are employees - and they insist that this subset of NYU TAs can only be covered by a different union contract, which was bargained by adjunct faculty who are members of ACT/UAW Local 7902. GSOC/UAW Local 2110 members had no role in negotiating the agreement which NYU officials say should govern their wages, working conditions and other terms of employment.

"NYU has admitted that we are employees," said Kreyche, "So it's obvious we have the right to choose our own union. University administrators have no business trying to tell us which union to join. We have a right to select our own union and negotiate our own contract."

ACT/UAW Local 7902 is on record in full support of the right of NYU TAs and RAs to choose their own union. Local 7902 has declined to collect dues from workers who have been unilaterally assigned to their bargaining unit by the NYU administration.

"I had the opportunity to work with GSOC/UAW members in 2002, when we negotiated our first landmark agreement with NYU," said Julie Kushner, director of UAW Region 9A, which covers the New England states, Puerto Rico, and eastern New York (including New York City). "It was a good contract for our members and for NYU, and widely viewed as a model for labor relations in higher education."

"We're confident we can once again reach an agreement that meets the needs of workers and the university - and which can open the door for academic student employees at private institutions all over the country to exercise their workplace rights."

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The United Auto Workers, one of the nation's most diverse labor unions, represents more than 45,000 workers in higher education, including teaching assistants, research assistants, academic administrators, full-time and adjunct faculty, postdoctoral researchers, and clerical, technical and professional employees.