Photo of the Day | Happy times back in Storrs Connecticut :D



UConn students hang out in McMahon Residence Hall before the women's basketball game. The team won in an absolute victory over Syracuse.
PHOTO BY MORGAN BLANCHARD, GRAB PHOTOGRAPHER/THE DAILY CAMPUS

Op-Ed: UConn must protect international graduate students

by Julia Oas
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My name is Julia Oas, and I am sharing some statements on behalf of my fellow international workers. I am a member of the Graduate Assistant and Post-Doc Union's International GA Rights working group and here I share thoughts and testimonies we collected anonymously. Across the country, international workers are subject to litigation, harassment and violations of constitutional rights. Here at UConn, international GAs have wanted to speak out in support of our union's proposed common-sense protections for their rights in our upcoming contract, but have felt scared to publicly attach their names to anything vaguely "political."

Their fears are not unfounded. These threats hit our community directly around a year ago, when over a dozen UConn students had their work status revoked in an illegal federal action that subjected them to the immediate threat of immigration enforcement and criminalization. Though visas were subsequently reinstated for these students, one of our fellow graduate workers describes an experience during this time:

"One day, while I was sitting in my lab, two UConn staff abruptly entered the space and aggressively asked me whether I was a U.S. citizen. It turns out they were looking for a student who had already been moved to another project. The way they barged into the lab and asked, without any context, 'Are you a U.S. citizen?' left me feeling stressed, unsafe and targeted. What if this happened while I was teaching, putting both me and my students in a critical and frightening situation?"

In our contract negotiations, we have asked that UConn not unnecessarily share non-citizen GA information, respect federal and local laws that restrict federal immigration authority access to private spaces, establish a modest emergency fund and give as much job security reassurance as possible to GAs who experience immigration issues outside their control. We proposed those protections on Jan 15, and the university took until March 12th to respond. Their response rejected most of what we proposed. Anyone from the public can take a look at the public bargaining tracker on our union's website.

As another international graduate assistant wrote, "this historical moment calls for bravery, for [UConn] to stand up actively for working students and by working intentionally to protect and uplift the entire GA community that sustains this University."

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A member of the Graduate Employee & Postdoc union holds up a sign in protest for better contracts. The GEU keeps track of bargaining updates on their website. PHOTO COURTESY OF THE GEU WEBSITE



The Wilbur Cross building on UConn's Storrs campus. The building houses many administrational offices.
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