

## **Background**

In August 2024, representatives from the University of Vermont (UVM) and Graduate Students United—UAW 2322 (GSU) began working together to establish the inaugural collective bargaining agreement (CBA), which will govern the relationship between UVM and the GSU.

As of April 9, 2026, the bargaining teams have met 33 times to discuss key topics for the first CBA. Below is an overview of the bargaining process and the progress made by both bargaining teams to date:

## **FAQs – Negotiation Process and Bargaining Updates**

### **1. What does a bargaining session look like?**

UVM and the GSU have each identified representatives to make up their respective “bargaining teams.” These teams agreed to the cadence and format of negotiations. During the academic year, the teams met approximately twice per month, and over the summer, the teams met once per month for longer, six-hour sessions, as mutually agreed upon by the parties. The teams have discussed and are open to meeting more frequently, depending on mutual availability. The bargaining sessions are in person, and during these sessions, the parties discuss their respective proposals and counterproposals, as well as other open items.

### **2. Who is on UVM’s bargaining team?**

UVM’s bargaining team is comprised of esteemed faculty and staff across various departments and administrative units with critical knowledge and experiences relevant to the subjects of bargaining and graduate education at UVM.

### **3. What goes into a bargaining proposal?**

A bargaining proposal contains UVM’s or the GSU’s proposed CBA language for any given issue, like wages, time off, and benefits. The proposals are typically separated by topic to address matters that are important to each bargaining team.

### **4. How does each bargaining team respond to the other team’s bargaining proposal?**

When UVM or the GSU passes a proposal to the other team, the passing team will go over any necessary context for the proposal and answer questions about the proposed language. There is no obligation for either bargaining team to accept proposed language as is, and it is common practice to provide counter proposals and go through several drafts before the parties reach a “Tentative Agreement” on a topic. That is especially true for first contracts like this one where the proposals are being drafted for the first time.

### **5. Have UVM and the GSU made meaningful progress towards a CBA?**

Yes. A lot of effort goes into a first collective bargaining agreement, and both parties have focused on understanding the other's priorities and key concerns. There have been testimonials from graduate students and UVM subject matter experts on various issues of key importance to both parties, like health and safety and non-discrimination.

To date, UVM and the GSU have exchanged close to thirty (30) proposals. Collectively, the parties have discussed the following topics:

- Non-Discrimination;
- Management and Academic Rights;
- No Strike, No Lockout;
- Training;
- Policies and Procedures;
- Recognition;
- Union University Committee;
- Ground Rules;
- Employment Files;
- Severability;
- Union Security;
- Health and Safety;
- Grievance and Arbitration;
- Discipline and Discharge;
- Workload;
- Academic Freedom;
- Successorship;
- Intellectual Property and Copyright;
- Appointment and Reappointment;
- Immigration, Non-Citizen Workers, and International Graduate Workers;
- Job Posting;
- Union Access and Rights; and
- FERPA Waivers.

**6. Have the University and Union reached more tentative agreements this academic year?**

Yes, the parties have made important progress on non-economic articles, resulting in tentative agreements on eleven (11) articles this academic year. While the language that goes into a first CBA takes a lot of time and attention, both parties have expressed their appreciation for the effort going into trying to come up with a good first contract. Significant progress is evident by the number of tentative agreements the parties have been able to reach this academic year, and continued progress is expected as they finish the spring semester and head into summer.

**7. How long does it typically take to bargain a first contract?**

In the higher education space, the timeline to a first bargaining contract varies based on the size of the Union, the individual needs of the institutions and bargaining units, and the parties'

preparation between bargaining sessions. Typically, we have seen institutions negotiate a first contract in 1-2 years, but there are outliers on both ends of that range.

#### **8. Will there be additional bargaining proposals?**

UVM expects to receive initial proposals from the GSU on economic issues. UVM has requested economic proposals from the GSU for months, but has yet to receive them. Working through economic issues often takes time and UVM would like to receive those proposals as soon as possible. UVM looks forward to continuing constructive dialogue and good faith discussions with the GSU's bargaining team. UVM remains dedicated to working collaboratively toward an agreement that supports its graduate student employees while maintaining UVM's long-term sustainability.

#### **9. Will I need to pay dues?**

Bargaining unit members are no longer required to pay union dues or services/agency fees in public institutions, like UVM. Members can certainly choose to join and contribute voluntarily. If a bargaining member opts out, they would still receive contract protections but wouldn't be a dues-paying member, which means they could forfeit their right to member-only benefits. The Union will set the amount of dues owed by each dues-paying member. Typically, graduate student union dues range from 1.5-2.5% of gross pay and are paid on a monthly basis.

#### **10. I heard there is a tentative agreement on the Recognition article. What does this mean for the bargaining unit?**

The following full-time and regular part-time positions are represented by the GSU: graduate teaching assistants (GTA), graduate research assistants (GRAs), graduate assistants (GAs), pre-doctoral trainees, and pre-doctoral trainees/fellows.

Graduate students with part-time hourly appointments are included in the bargaining unit only if their appointment: (1) requires 10 hours or more of work per week for a full Fall, Spring, or Summer semester; and (2) is an academic position in which they are required to perform job duties that are substantially similar to the academic work performed by GTAs, GRAs, and GAs.

#### **11. The GSU has filed an unfair labor practice charge (ULP) against the University. Does this affect negotiations?**

Under the Vermont Labor Relations Act, the existence of a pending ULP allegation does not stop or suspend collective bargaining. The University has demonstrated its commitment to negotiating a first contract in good faith, and remains committed to bargaining in good faith in compliance with applicable law.

While the University disputes these allegations, this is a common occurrence in collective bargaining and does not change the University's commitment to constructive and productive bargaining.

## **12. Will the Union have access to my personal information?**

In order to represent its members, the Union may request certain information about bargaining unit members. Some of the information is also protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA). FERPA is a federal law that protects the privacy of student education records at institutions receiving federal funds. It governs how institutions collect, use, and disclose personally identifiable information from student education records.

FERPA requires educational institutions to safeguard student privacy. With appropriate safeguards, such as the opportunity for bargaining unit members to consent to the release of certain information for representation purposes, educational institutions can remain compliant with FERPA while fulfilling their duties related to union representation and collective bargaining.

Members of the bargaining unit will receive additional information about FERPA consent and release forms.