

The TUGSA Tribune

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TUGSA Work-In Protests Legal Delays

By Linda Greenwood

The bright orange "at work" signs were posted everywhere. TUGSA members wore hard hats, pushed wheelbarrows, and punched time clocks, while giant blue books ambled about in the lobby of the Tuttleman Learning Center. No, these were not the delusions of an over-worked, sleep-deprived graduate assistant but a work-in so successful it seduced a Temple administrator into leaving the ivory tower and visiting the academic trenches where the real work gets done. Over 150 graduate student employees participated in the Feb. 29 and March 1 event that was the first-ever of its kind at Temple. During the two-day work-in, graduate students came to the lobby of the Tuttleman Learning Center to grade papers, prepare lectures, and meet with their students. They worked quietly and diligently, knowing that persistence and solidarity are the only ways to overcome the administration's refusal to recognize them as employees and grant them the respect they deserve.

Amanda Tinker, a Photography TA, drove in from Tyler School of Art to participate. "I thought the TUGSA-Work-In was important. We are valuable educators and

deserve respect, as well as adequate health care and safer working conditions in the arts and the sciences," she says.

The work-in ended in a visit to the office of President Liacouras. Graduate workers put their stacks of time cards in a wheelbarrow and rolled them over to Liacouras' office. Along with the time cards, a giant blue book was delivered to him. He got a C- in labor relations, but there were those in the group who thought this was a prime example of grade in-



TUGSA members en-route to Sullivan Hall

flation. The graduate workers who joined the walk-over to Liacouras' office got more than a few thumbs-up from passers-by as they chanted "Temple works 'cause we do" outside the stone façade of Sullivan Hall.

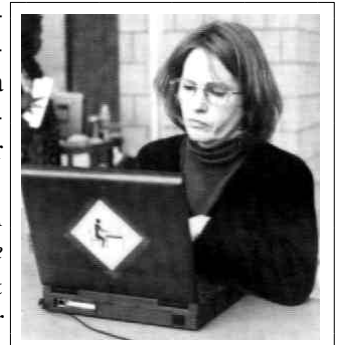
So what happens now? Well, that depends, of course, on how the administration responds to this latest attempt by graduate employees to be recognized as such. Thus far, the administration has spent over \$150,000 to fight TUGSA's unionizing efforts and has not agreed to meet with any TUGSA members to discuss graduate workers' concerns. As one enterprising undergrad remarked, "Instead of spending all that money on lawyers, why don't they just spend it on better health care benefits for the graduate assistants?" Why, indeed.

Will the administration continue to be recalcitrant, or will they submit to common sense and good judgment? No one knows for sure. But one thing is for sure. TUGSA is not going away. The graduate workers of Temple University will continue to fight for a voice in the terms and conditions of their employment—for as long and as hard as it takes.

Linda Greenwood is a TA and TUGSA steward in the School of Communication & Theater



Religion TA Ping Guan grading papers



Legal Update: What Happens Now?

By Paul Riley



TUGSA has been organizing for union recognition or a referendum on unionization for over a year. Rather than talk across a bargaining table with graduate employees—which they could do at any time—the Temple administration has been using legal stalling tactics to try to shut TUGSA down. Since last February, they have spent hundreds of thousands of dollars to hold TUGSA in legal hearings and block a referendum on unionization. The latest turn came on January 31, when a Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board (PLRB) hearing examiner, Donald Wallace, issued a proposed decision order that agreed with the administration's lawyers that graduate assistants are not really Temple employees.

Wallace's ruling was based on the

1976 case of Philadelphia Association of Interns and Residents (PAIR) vs. Albert Einstein Medical Center, where the Pennsylvania Supreme Court rejected collective bargaining rights for the medical interns and residents there. Interestingly, this 1976 decision was based on a similar National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) case, which was reversed this last December by the NLRB. Thus the 1976 PAIR ruling is questionable. Mr. Wallace, while acknowledging this fact in his proposed decision, held that the decision reached in 1976 in the PAIR case is still the law in Pennsylvania, and, until reversed by our own state supreme court, must be followed.

At this point, we are appealing Mr. Wallace's preliminary ruling to the full PLRB, which should issue a ruling in a few months. We will take

this case as far as we need to; legislative action may need to be taken as well, since the findings of this case are important not only to us, but to the groups seeking union recognition at Pitt and Penn State as well.

In any case, the next move is up to the administration. The administration can and should negotiate with its graduate employees, regardless of expensive legal delays and technicalities. All this "legalese," or, as I like to say, "academese," is moot, since we all know that we work for Temple as valuable contributors to the overall mission of the university every single day. This preliminary ruling shows again that TUGSA has to take our case to the community and the streets. The court of public opinion is where this all really matters.

Paul Riley is an RA in Biochemistry and a proud TUGSA member.

The Liacouras Legacy

By Joe Corrado



The recent "success" of Temple University has given educators an opportunity to reflect upon the way in which Peter Liacouras has led us into the new millennium. Pete's announcement to retire came at a time in which he had much to be proud of. Enrollment has increased at Temple, the Tuttleman Learning Center has been built, Cooney Hall has been demolished to make way for new undergraduate dorms, and the Apollo has been renamed to reflect the commitment that Liacouras has put into the fifth ranked Owls. Yet, Temple's progress has come at the expense of divestment from education. The administration is not replacing full time tenured professors as they retire. This erosion of tenure by attrition is cost

effective for the university.

So, it appears as if Temple were being run as if it were a business. Liacouras is surrounded by corporate CEOs—the Board of Trustees—and the university appears to be willing to attract students on the basis of being a "college town," while adjunct faculty, teaching assistants, and internet based classes are deployed to cut labor costs and keep tuition down. The "Work-In" demonstration that showed graduate employees do indeed perform valuable services at this university was also a demonstration that will affect our future. Getting the university to pay us a living wage, give us quality affordable health care, and gaining a voice in our employment conditions will make TA's more expensive and less exploitable—which may cause Temple to make a new

commitment to replace tenured professors when they retire. In some ways, the spread of graduate employee and adjunct faculty unionization is a movement for more than tangible economic benefits; it is a battle to preserve the one institution in America that fosters critical thinking and free speech. If we allow universities to be run like businesses, administrators may find it cost effective to emphasize marketing and image over education as a way to bring in tuition money, rather than preserve a commitment to a university accessible to its community with an emphasis on quality education. Should Temple be a virtuous institution committed to education or a virtual institution concerned with the bottom line? Teachers of the world unite!

Joe Corrado is a Political Science TA

Ask Ms. TUGSA: What next?

By Ms. TUGSA



Dear Ms. Tugsa,

I got the news about the ruling back in January. I can't believe that the university spent all that money to convince the PLRB that I don't work for Temple. It has me really angry. So what happens now?

—Raging in Ritter

Dear Raging,

As you've noted, a hearing examiner with the Pennsylvania Labor Relations Board issued a preliminary ruling siding with the university's lawyers, who claim we're not employees and thus aren't covered under the law that allows all the university's other workers to unionize. We're appealing this initial decision to the full Labor Board, and beyond, if necessary.

Ultimately, though, whatever the outcomes of our legal appeals, this fight will not be won in the courts. According to conservative estimates, the administration has already spent well over \$150,000 in legal fees to thwart us. Once we do receive a favorable ruling, there's no reason to think that the administration won't continue to buy time in the courts. So, while we are filing the necessary appeals, we have to realize that this struggle won't be won in the legal system, but instead in the hearts and minds of Temple's graduate employees, in the streets, and in the court of public opinion.

At any time, university administrators could meet with us and agree to recognize our union. By now, though, we've learned that they're unlikely to honor any of our requests unless pressured to do so. Our job, then, is to apply the pressure. That means talking to our co-workers about the union; that means coming out to TUGSA rallies; that means raising awareness of our

struggle throughout the university community and the public at large. Pressure can take the form of pamphlets, posters, press releases, protests, or informational pickets. A pressure campaign might eventually entail some sort of work-action — e.g., a slow-down, sick-out, or strike of some kind. Ms. Tugsa personally believes that we ought to exhaust all other options before having recourse to a work-action, and no major work-action could take place without first being brought to a vote of the general membership, but, if Temple's administrators refuse to negotiate, they may force us to disrupt business as usual at the university.

The pressure campaign could prove to be a tough fight, but it's one we can and will win. Such campaigns have been won at other schools — UMass, for example. We'll win because we're strong: we've strength in our numbers — a solid majority of graduate employees who are convinced that we deserve a voice in the terms and condition of our employment — and we've strength derived from the importance of the work that we do — over 4,000 hours of labor each day that we provide Temple.

Dear Ms. T,

I assigned my students a five-page essay, and one of them turned in a paper with two-inch margins and 48-point type! The essay does indeed span five pages, but it's only 75 words. Am I justified in failing her?

—Big Print in Barton

Dear Big Print,

Your student probably realized that you have no vision coverage, and so she formatted her essay so as to be easier on your uninsured eyes. In any event, Ms. Tugsa's editors here at the *Tribune* continually remind her that brevity is virtuous. Indeed, they've threatened that if I don't pare down my column then they might cut me off in mid-

NEWS & NOTES

Oregon State Grad Employees Win Union

In November 1999, the Coalition of Graduate Employees/AFT at Oregon State University won recognition as the union for OSU's Teaching and Research Assistants. In a state labor-board sponsored referendum, Oregon State grad employees voted 316 to 166 to unionize. The Coalition of Graduate Employees will now negotiate a contract with the Oregon State administration. According to President Mary Schutter, health insurance benefits are their primary issue: unionized graduate employees at the University of Oregon have full health coverage, while Oregon State grad employees have none.

Penn State Grad Students Following in TUGSA's Footsteps?

Graduate students at Penn State have long been dissatisfied with high teaching loads, poor health insurance, and inadequate representation in university decision-making. This year they are taking action. The Graduate and Fixed-Term Employees Organization has held three mass meetings, with attendance of up to 100 people, to discuss unionizing, and has an active organizing committee of about 30 people. They are working closely with TUGSA and the American Federation of Teachers. If you know Penn State graduate employees who you think may be interested in organizing, give the TUGSA office a call!

Students Against Sweatshops Win Victories in Philadelphia

This spring, Students Against Sweatshops—a national group that works to make sure university logo clothing is manufactured under fair working conditions—made significant progress in Philadelphia. First, Penn agreed to pull out of a manufacturer-dominated industry monitoring group, after Penn students occupied the President's office for over a week. Secondly, Temple has said it will also pull out of the inadequate monitoring organization unless the industry cleans up its performance. TUGSA members were involved with rallies in support of the Penn protesters and with the new Temple Students Against Sweatshops group.

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Temple Tears Down Cooney Hall — Grad Housing's Future Unclear

By Diditi Mitra



Cooney Hall is no more. Temple's administration has torn down the graduate housing complex and plans to build a new undergraduate dorm at the corner of 13th and Cecil B. Moore. This eliminates 150 grad housing spaces, and the only family housing on campus.

On December 9th, 1999, the graduate residents of Cooney received notification that the University planned to demolish the building. The notice stated that the University would not renew residents' housing contracts and wanted the residents to move out by January 31st, 2000. The administration offered residents a compensation package to facilitate their cooperation, and a week to decide.

December 9th was the day before the last day of classes; it was close to finals and the due dates for final papers—a stressful time for graduate students. It is also a time when TAs and part-time lecturers have papers to grade; not to mention a time when students go away for vacation; some even leave the country to go home.

Despite these constraints, the residents organized. A group of Cooney residents met at the TUGSA office to write a petition asking for a compensation package that covered the actual

costs of moving, a guarantee that there would be no evictions, and a long-term commitment to grad housing at Temple.

In just two days, a majority of Cooney residents had signed the petition. It was presented to the administration at 10 am on December 14th, and by 6 p.m. that day, the administration had conceded to the residents' demands and offered an estimated \$200,000 worth of improvements in the compensation package. The victory clearly demonstrated that the administration can be forced to listen if we are ready to work collectively.

However, the ongoing issue of graduate housing should not be forgotten. Many residents felt they were being treated as old products less profitable to the University. Jin Park is a Finance grad student who moved to Triangle from Cooney. "Housing offered by Temple is often the best place to live for international students, particularly those without family here," he says. "I'm worried Triangle may also close, and I want Temple to continue to provide graduate apartments. If Temple wants to welcome international students, there needs to be graduate housing here."

The new dorm will bring in more



Cooney Hall, mid-demolition

revenue for Temple. But what about graduate students who will no longer be able to live on campus? What about those students who did not do well on their exams because the administration decided to drop such news a week before finals? What about those who have no other home in this country? The administration must be held accountable. The speed of the demolition and the lack of consultation with residents show that without organization and a strong graduate voice at Temple, graduate students' and graduate employees' interests are not secure.

TUGSA is convening a graduate housing task force. To get involved, call the TUGSA office at (215) 235-0512, or email tugsa@2street.com.

Diditi Mitra is a PhD candidate in Sociology and a former Cooney resident.