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Advocating for an inclusive and empowered graduate student community

February 21, 2022

Dear Provost Shrivastav:

It has been brought to my attention that you are organizing a meeting in cooperation with the Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences in order to discuss graduate student and graduate worker concerns including the question of unionization. My understanding is that you have asked the Directors of Graduate Studies from each department to choose two students to “represent” their department and it seems in some cases instructions were provided to find one student “concerned with unionization” and one who was not.

I write to point out to you that graduate students and graduate workers at Indiana University have a robust system of representation which this meeting seems to ignore. As President of the GPSG, the highest elected position of graduate students, I was neither invited nor informed of this meeting through official channels.

Graduate students and graduate workers are represented through the following organizations.

- The Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG) represents the 10,000 graduate students from all departments. Graduate students elect representatives to this body which then formulates graduate student concerns through various resolutions and committee actions.
- The Indiana Graduate Workers Coalition-United Electrical Workers (IGWC-UE) represents the 2,500 graduate workers. As you know, the majority of graduate workers have endorsed that organization and the IGWC-UE awaits your action to communicate directly with them regarding their program of a living wage and ending the fees for graduate workers. The GPSG has offered to mediate that relationship and facilitate a dialogue between your Administration and the Union.

- Graduate Student Associations (GSAs) exist in almost every department. Their leaders are typically elected by graduate students and represent those students vis a vis their department leadership.

Graduate students and graduate workers commit an enormous amount of time and energy to make these organizations and associations vibrant cultural spaces and articulate representational bodies of graduate student interests. We would appreciate it if you would respect the will of graduate students – recognizing our elected leaders and our chosen organizations.

We have excellent relationships with the Directors of Graduate Studies in our various programs. I find it unfortunate that you are putting our DGSs in the position of choosing for us our representatives at the first meeting in which you are engaging graduate students – when, in fact, graduate students have been absolutely clear about who they have chosen as their representatives.

We ask that in the future you communicate with the GPSG and the IGWC-UE over campus-level issues relevant to the domains in which they represent graduate students and graduate workers, respectively. For this upcoming meeting, I am willing to appoint a group of duly elected representatives of the GPSG to participate, if invited to do so.

Respectfully,

Valentina Luketa
President, Graduate and Professional Student Government (GPSG)