



Statement from GAU Regarding SIU's Fall 2021 COVID-19 Policies

Above all else, GAU values the safety, health, and dignity of graduate workers at SIU. As we undertake the semester and continue to manage the ongoing health crisis, we ask you to join us in our effort to support graduate workers and protect the most vulnerable among our community.

We encourage everyone who can safely receive the vaccine do so. The data overwhelmingly demonstrates the vaccine is safe and effective at protecting us and our community. One of the vaccines, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 Vaccine, has been approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration, meaning that it meets the highest standards of safety and effectiveness. The more people vaccinated, the less risk there is to everyone, including our community members who are immunocompromised, have severe allergies to vaccine ingredients, or have other health conditions preventing them from getting vaccinated.

While we are pleased the university has implemented policies to protect our community by offering testing, planning vaccine clinics, requiring facemasks indoors, and setting aside a residence hall for isolation, we understand that there are still concerns as to the health and safety of our graduate workers. GAU remains committed to creating the most just and fair arrangements possible for GAs, and we're fighting to secure that in a number of ways.

The ever-changing contours of the pandemic continue to require modifications to our academic and work environments. The policies SIU has in place for the coming school year gives GAU the right to bargain for an addendum to our contract with the university that can account for and address significant issues that may result from these policies. We have assembled a team to engage in this bargaining with SIU, and we invite and encourage input from graduate workers on what should be included in the addendum. How might policies for the academic year impact you in your capacity as a graduate assistant? Please give us your feedback by emailing GAU at gau.siu@gmail.com, or by directly contacting our president, Clay Michael Awsumb, at claymichaelawsumb@gmail.com.

If you have further questions about GAU's mission, have concerns about your work environment as a graduate student worker, or want to find out how you can join us, we invite you to visit our website at gaunited.org

In solidarity with you and with all graduate workers,

Graduate Assistants United