

#1 (TOWN HALL RES): Res of the Bloomington Faculty Concerning Shared Governance and Graduate Student Supervision

This resolution asks you to re-assert the authority of departments, programs, and schools to appoint SAAs as granted by the Bloomington Faculty Constitution. Two concerns compel this reassertion: 1) the unprecedented withholding, by the Provost and VPFAA, of SAAs appointments as duly authorized by departments; 2) the sanction against striking SAAs implied by this withholding and imposed on them without the protection of due process. The immediate consideration is that only those in departments, programs, or schools who work with graduate students in an academic capacity have the relevant knowledge and experience to judge the suitability of an academic appointment; the fact that the VPFAA, with no academic knowledge of individual appointees, has withheld reappointments can only be interpreted as a sanction against them for participation in a legal collective bargaining activity.

The Bloomington Graduate Academic Appointees Guide (SAA Guide) specifies, "graduate student appointments are offered by academic schools or departments." The Provost has appealed to the SAA Guide to justify overriding the appointments of schools and departments, citing the provision that holds, "reappointment is contingent upon [...] satisfactory discharge of duties in previous appointments." There has not, however, been any finding as to whether a reappointed SAA has discharged duties or not. No charges have been brought forth against any SAA, and no opportunity provided to any SAA for appeal. The Guide specifies that "an SAA is entitled to appeal actions or conditions affecting his/her role, including such matters as [...] reappointment."

These are serious breaches of the standards of shared governance as legislated by the Bloomington Faculty Council (which makes available two levels of appeal, the SAA Mediation Committee and the SAA Board of Review). In its principles of shared governance, the AAUP stipulates that "graduate-student assistants, like other campus employees, should have the right to organize to bargain collectively. [...] Graduate-student assistants must not suffer retaliation from professors or administrators because of their activity relating to collective bargaining." It moreover holds that when an SAA is an instructor of record, due process and academic freedom should guarantee the SAA the same classroom access as any member of the faculty. In this regard, the AAUP Statement on Collective Bargaining is clear that a strike does not constitute grounds for non-reappointment: "Participation in a strike or other work action does not constitute grounds for dismissal, nonreappointment, or other sanctions against faculty members."

Given the failure of shared governance and due process represented by the VPFAA's withholding of SAA reappointments, the resolution asks the faculty to reassert its true authority over SAA appointments, to insist on due process in all cases of nonreappointment, and to task the BFC with clarifying and strengthening IUB policy regarding SAAs to emphasize the central role of the department, program or other supervising unit in making SAA appointments.