

NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY GRADUATE WORKERS
CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

MISSION STATEMENT

We are Northwestern University Graduate Workers (“NUGW”), an antiracist, feminist labor union fighting for better working and living conditions for all graduate workers of Northwestern University.

We understand that the material conditions of our academic lives, and the right to a collective voice in decisions that affect these conditions, are inherently issues of racial, gender, and decolonial justice.

We are dedicated to building a diverse and democratic union that centers the needs of historically excluded and underrepresented graduate workers, particularly Black, Indigenous, POC, queer, trans, undocumented, low-income, first-generation, parenting workers and workers living with disabilities and chronic illnesses.

We aim to collectively bargain for an inclusive, collaborative workplace where all graduate workers flourish.

Specifically, we advocate for:

- A democratic union that empowers graduate workers to advance their interests as equal participants in their institutions’ decision-making processes and holds those institutions accountable to their missions of research and education.
- The needs of our diverse body, especially those of historically excluded and underrepresented groups. We strongly oppose discrimination and harassment in all forms.
- Safe, reasonable, and comfortable working conditions.
- The financial security necessary to enable academic success, including adequate healthcare, childcare, and wages.
- The intellectual and academic freedom of graduate workers to teach and research topics of legitimate scholarly interest without fear of reprisal.

Our union exists to preserve and expand our rights as employees and as members of Northwestern University’s academic community. We stand in solidarity with workers and students everywhere organizing for a just and equitable system of higher education.

ARTICLE I

NAME AND PRINCIPAL OFFICE

Section 1.1. Name. This organization shall be known as Northwestern University Graduate Workers (“NUGW”).

Section 1.2. Principal Office. NUGW may establish a principal office for the transaction of its activities, affairs and business. Once established, the address of such office shall be the mailing address for official correspondence with or from NUGW.

Section 1.3. Mailing Address. The mailing address for correspondence with or from NUGW shall otherwise be PO Box 5587, Evanston IL 60204-5587.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

Section 2.1. Purpose. The principal purpose of NUGW is to further the interest of its members in connection with their employment by Northwestern University. The furtherance of that interest includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- (a) Collective bargaining;
- (b) Concerted activities and other organized actions;
- (c) Mutual aid and the collection and distribution of funds for mutual aid;
- (d) Member and community education; and
- (e) Organizing the unorganized.

Section 2.2. Limitations. Neither NUGW nor any of its officers, employees, or agents shall take any action prohibited by the foregoing Constitution and Bylaws.

ARTICLE III

MEMBERSHIP ELIGIBILITY

Section 3.1. Eligibility. All Northwestern University graduate students are eligible for NUGW membership.

Section 3.2. Application. An eligible individual may apply for NUGW membership by signing a membership card and paying the Initiation Fee.

Section 3.3. Initiation Fee and Dues. The rates of initiation fees and dues for members holding a bargaining-unit position shall be approved by special referendum pursuant to Article IX, Section 9.3(a) and consistent with the dues and fees requirements of any national or international constitution and bylaws to which NUGW is subject.

Section 3.4. Retention of Membership Status. To remain a member of NUGW, a member of NUGW must pay Dues pursuant to Section 3.4(a) of this Article.

Section 3.5. Restriction on Increases. The rates of the Initiation Fee and Dues shall not be increased except by majority vote of NUGW members voting at a duly called General Membership Meeting, by secret ballot.

ARTICLE IV

MEMBERSHIP RIGHTS

Section 4.1. Equal Rights.

(a) All members of NUGW shall have equal rights and privileges within NUGW to nominate candidates, to vote in elections or referenda, to attend General Membership Meetings, and to participate in the deliberations and voting upon the business of General Membership Meetings, unless otherwise provided by the Constitution and Bylaws.

(b) All members of NUGW shall have the equal opportunity to hold office regardless of race, creed, color, ethnic or religious background, national origin, descent or nationality, native language, ancestry, marital or domestic partner status, familial status, parental status, pregnancy status, number of dependents, sex, gender, gender identity or expression, genetic information, sexual orientation, age, height, weight, disability, mental condition, citizenship status, veteran status, source of income, economic status, HIV antibody status, political belief, personal appearance, or membership in any social or political organization.

Section 4.2. Freedom of Speech and Assembly. All members of NUGW shall have the right to meet and assemble freely with other NUGW members; to express their views, arguments, or opinions; and to express at General Membership Meetings their views on candidates in an election or upon any business properly before General Membership Meetings, unless otherwise provided by the Constitution and Bylaws [and Ethics Code/Code of Conduct].

Section 4.3. Right of Due Process. Except as provided in Section 2.6 of Article III, no member of NUGW shall be suspended or expelled from membership, or otherwise disciplined by NUGW or by any officer of NUGW unless such member has been (A) served with written specific charges; (B) given a reasonable time to prepare their defense; and (C) afforded a full and fair hearing in accordance with Article X.

ARTICLE V

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

Section 5.1. General Membership Meetings.

(a) General Membership Meetings shall be held once each academic quarter, except the summer quarter, of Northwestern University at such times and places as the Co-Chairs in substantive consultation with the Organizing Committee may determine.

(b) The Organizing Committee, with the consent of the Co-Chairs, may convene additional General Membership Meetings during the academic year.

- (c) No persons other than NUGW members shall attend a General Membership Meeting except by approval of the Co-Chairs.

Section 5.2. Notice of General Membership Meetings. Notice of General Membership Meetings shall be provided via electronic means, including via email. Agenda items for each General Membership Meeting shall be published electronically at least seventy-two (72) hours prior to the applicable General Membership Meeting.

ARTICLE VI

UNION OFFICERS

Section 6.1. Union Officers in General.

- (a) All union officers listed in this Article VI (“Union Officers”) shall be appointed by secret-ballot election pursuant to Article VIII.
- (b) Each Union Officer shall be elected for a term of one year. An incumbent Union Officer shall be subject to re-election upon expiration of their term.
- (c) Each Union Officer may introduce a referendum to be approved by the NUGW membership pursuant to the procedures of Article IX, sections 9.2 and 9.3, provided that a majority of Union Officers consent to such introduction. Additionally, a Committee Chair shall first receive approval of the referendum’s introduction by the respective Standing Committee pursuant to Article VII, Section 7.1(c) prior to such introduction.
- (d) The Union Officers shall convene at least once per academic quarter of Northwestern University. The Union Officers are empowered to conduct any part of such meeting in executive session.
- (e) Union Officers serving as financial officers of NUGW shall be bonded in compliance with the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act.

Section 6.2. Co-Chairs. The Co-Chairs shall be responsible for the following:

- (a) Serving as the two (2) principal executive officers of NUGW.
- (b) Serving as responsible financial officers of NUGW with authority to co-sign financial instruments and make regular and usual disbursements of funds.
- (c) Executing official documents on behalf of NUGW.
- (d) Maintaining communication between NUGW and Northwestern University, in substantive consultation with other Union Officers and the Standing Committees.

- (e) Representing NUGW to other parties or delegating such representation to a designee.
- (f) Making interim appointments to vacant Union Officer positions.
- (g) Facilitating, or designating facilitators for, all General Membership Meetings, including the solicitation of agenda items and taking minutes for such General Membership Meetings.

Section 6.3. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall be responsible for the following:

- (a) Serving as the principal financial officer of NUGW with authority to co-sign financial instruments and make regular and usual disbursements of funds.
- (b) Creating a budget for each fiscal year for the approval of the NUGW membership.
- (c) Processing the collection of Dues and Initiation Fees to the extent not performed by Northwestern University in an agreed-upon dues checkoff process.
- (d) Approving and declining expenses and reimbursements from the NUGW Treasury.
- (e) Providing an annual financial report of the NUGW Treasury's gross receipts, expenses and reimbursements, and net assets each fiscal year (the "Financial Report").
- (f) Presenting the Financial Report at the first General Membership Meeting following the closure of the fiscal year which the Financial Report concerns, unless a later date of presentation is proposed by the Treasurer and approved by the Organizing Committee.
- (g) Maintaining in a manner reasonably secure and current the financial records of NUGW, including arranging for annual independent audits of such records.
- (h) Filing, or engaging a service provider to file, required disclosures to tax authorities and similar agencies.
- (i) Delegating, as the Treasurer finds necessary, financial responsibilities not enumerated herein to the Budget Committee with approval of the Co-Chairs.

Section 6.4. Secretary. The Secretary shall be responsible for the following:

- (a) Maintaining in a manner reasonably secure and current all non-financial files and records of NUGW, such as meeting minutes.
- (b) Responding to NUGW members' records requests as appropriate.
- (c) Distributing, or designating such distribution, from time to time announcements to the NUGW membership on NUGW's operations, including notices of the dates, times, and locations of General Membership Meetings, NUGW elections, and other events.
- (d) Performing all administrative tasks expressly required of the Secretary in the Constitution and Bylaws.

Section 6.5. Committee Chairs. Each Committee Chair shall be responsible for the following:

- (a) Convening regular meetings of their respective Standing Committee.
- (b) Maintaining reasonably current and secure minutes for their respective Standing Committee's meetings, to be provided to the Secretary.
- (c) Providing status reports, verbal or written, to the NUGW membership regarding their respective Standing Committee from time to time.
- (d) Implementing the decisions of NUGW, such as duly approved referenda, that pertain to their respective Standing Committee.

ARTICLE VII

STANDING COMMITTEES

Section 7.1. Standing Committees in General.

- (a) The committees listed in this Article VII shall be the Standing Committees of NUGW.
- (b) No individual may serve on any Standing Committee of NUGW unless such individual is a member of NUGW. Individuals interested in serving on any Standing Committee shall affirm to the applicable Committee Chair, verbally or otherwise, that they have reviewed this Article VII.
- (c) Each Standing Committee shall be presided over by a Committee Chair, pursuant to Article VI, Section 6.5.
- (d) Each Standing Committee may by majority vote approve a referendum to be introduced by the respective Committee Chair pursuant to Article VI, Section 6.1(c).
- (e) Each Standing Committee acting alone or jointly may establish ad-hoc working groups to carry out tasks at the direction of the Standing Committee. No working group shall perform the enumerated responsibilities of any Union Officer unless such Union Officer is permitted expressly by the Constitution and Bylaws to delegate such performance. No working group established by a Standing Committee acting alone shall perform the enumerated responsibilities of a different Standing Committee.

Section 7.2. Organizing Committee.

- (a) The Organizing Committee shall be responsible for developing, proposing, and implementing organizing plans to strengthen the bargaining power of NUGW's membership, as well as coordinating NUGW's issue campaigns, events, and actions.

(b) The Organizing Committee shall develop its organizing plans in consultation with the other Standing Committees and the Treasurer prior to the submission of such organizing plans for approval pursuant to this Article VII, Section 7.2(c).

(c) The Organizing Committee shall submit proposed organizing plans for approval by NUGW's membership at General Membership Meetings.

(d) The Organizing Committee shall meet from time to time to implement organizing plans approved pursuant to Section 7.2(c).

(e) The Organizing Committee shall recruit, train, and support Department Organizers, or upon recognition as exclusive bargaining representative of employees at Northwestern University, Stewards, in their efforts to organize their departments.

(f) The Organizing Committee shall cooperate with the Co-Chairs on the scheduling of General Membership Meetings.

Section 7.3. Budget Committee. The Budget Committee shall be responsible for assisting the Treasurer with financial responsibilities pursuant to Section 6.2(i).

Section 7.4. Research Committee. The Research Committee shall be responsible for assisting Union Officers and other Standing Committees with strategic informational inquiries from time to time. Such inquiries may include but are not limited to polling NUGW's membership as to bargaining proposals, researching and reporting on Northwestern University's finances, and answering questions regarding best practices for higher-education labor unions.

Section 7.5. Communications Committee. The Communications Committee shall be responsible for managing the social media accounts and platform presence of NUGW, fielding media requests, fostering strategic communications relationships, and transmitting communications consistent with the objectives of approved organizing plans. The Communications Committee shall not be empowered to enter NUGW into agreements with other parties or to execute official documents of NUGW. The Communications Committee shall not endorse on behalf of NUGW any person, organization, or campaign without the approval of the membership.

Section 7.6. Solidarity Committee.

(a) The Solidarity Committee shall be responsible for promoting the full participation of NUGW members from marginalized communities in the life of NUGW, as well as for hosting social events promoting camaraderie among NUGW's members.

(b) The Solidarity Committee shall make recommendations to the Union Officers with the objective of promoting the full participation of NUGW members from marginalized communities in the life of NUGW.

ARTICLE VIII

ELECTIONS

Section 8.1. The Election Committee.

(a) Union Officer Elections and referenda votes shall be overseen by an Election Committee composed of three Election Coordinators, to be selected individually by each Co-Chair and the Secretary. The Election Committee shall serve on an as-needed basis.

(b) No sitting Union Officer or candidate for a vacant Union Officer position shall serve as an Election Coordinator. All Election Coordinators shall affirm, verbally or otherwise, that they have reviewed this Article VIII prior to or upon acceptance of appointment.

(c) The Election Committee shall be empowered to enforce the provisions of this Article VIII by written reprimand or disqualification of a Union Officer candidate with notice to the NUGW membership of the same. Grievous violations of the Election Committee's rules shall be chargeable pursuant to Article X as conduct unbecoming of a member.

Section 8.2. Timing of Elections. Union Officer elections shall be held once per year, during Northwestern University's Spring Quarter.

Section 8.3. Manner of Elections. Union Officer elections shall be conducted via secret ballot, with each NUGW member having one vote per vacant Union Officer position to cast. All Union Officer elections shall be conducted in accordance with the standards established pursuant to the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act.

Section 8.4. Campaign Expenses. No expenses for the distribution of Union Officer candidates' campaign literature shall be paid with NUGW funds. Neither moneys received nor assets possessed by NUGW shall be used to promote the candidacy of any person in a Union Officer election.

Section 8.5. Union Officer Elections Procedures. The Election Committee shall undertake the following activities in conducting Union Officer elections:

- (a) Notifying NUGW members of the provisions of this Article VIII, any other reasonable election and campaign rules, and of the opportunity to self-nominate or nominate another NUGW member as a Union Officer candidate at least ten (10) days prior to the Nomination Meeting as defined in the subsequent subsection 8.5(b).
- (b) Holding a Nomination Meeting where nominations for Union Officer candidacies may be made. The Nomination Meeting shall be held no sooner than six (6) weeks prior to the date of the Union Officer elections.
- (c) Accepting nominations for two (2) weeks (“Nomination Period”) following the Nomination Meeting.
- (d) Verifying the eligibility of nominated Union Officer candidates and notifying such nominees of their eligibility immediately after the Nomination Period ends.
- (e) Keeping up to date a list of eligible voters for the Union Officer elections.
- (f) Creating, distributing, and safeguarding secret ballots for eligible voters, as well as counting such ballots. Ballots shall be transferred to the Secretary following Union Officer elections to be kept for one (1) year from the date of the Union Officer elections.
- (g) Announcing the results of Union Officer elections to the NUGW membership.
- (h) Maintaining reasonable rules for carrying out fair and honest Union Officer elections.

ARTICLE IX

REFERENDA

Section 9.1. Introduction of a Referendum by Petition.

- (a) NUGW members may introduce a referendum to be approved by the NUGW membership upon a petition for such referendum by ten percent (10%) of the NUGW membership.
- (b) The Secretary shall verify whether the referendum received the required ten percent (10%) of support prior to any vote of the NUGW membership on such referendum.
- (c) Upon such verification, petitioners shall be provided an opportunity to be heard and inquired regarding their referendum at the next General Membership Meeting.

Section 9.2. Approval of a Referendum.

- (a) Except as provided in Section 9.3, a referendum shall be considered approved and binding only if it achieves majority support from those who vote and the total number of votes exceeds twenty-five percent (25%) of NUGW’s membership.
- (b) No such vote on any referendum shall occur prior to an opportunity for hearing and inquiry on the referendum at a General Membership Meeting.

Section 9.3. Approval of a Special Referendum.

(a) A special referendum shall be considered approved and binding only if it achieves two-thirds majority support from those who vote and the total number of votes exceeds twenty-five percent (25%) of NUGW's membership.

(b) A referendum is a special referendum if it resolves to affiliate or disaffiliate with an international union or labor federation or to amend the Constitution and Bylaws.

ARTICLE X

DISPUTE RESOLUTION

Section 10.1. Submission of Membership Charges.

(a) A charge by a member or members of NUGW (the "charging party") against another member (the "charged party") that the charged party violated this Constitution and Bylaws or engaged in conduct unbecoming of a NUGW member shall be specifically set forth in writing and signed by the charging party.

(b) A charge shall state the precise nature of the offense or offenses and, to the extent possible, the period of time during which such offense or offenses allegedly occurred.

(c) Except as provided in Section 10.1(d), the charging party shall submit the charge in writing to the Secretary within thirty (30) days of the time when the charging party became aware, or reasonably should have been aware, of the charged party's offense or offenses alleged to have occurred.

(d) A charge involving the Secretary as a charged party shall be submitted jointly to the Co-Chairs within thirty (30) days of the time when the charging party became aware, or reasonably should have been aware, of the charged party's offense or offenses alleged to have occurred.

(e) Prior to the notification of the charged party of a charge, the charge shall be reviewed by the Secretary or the Co-Chairs, as appropriate, and dismissed if and only if: (i) the charge does not state the exact nature of the offense or offenses alleged to have occurred, (ii) the charge is untimely, (iii) the charge involves a question which should be decided by vote of the NUGW membership and/or Union Officers rather than a trial procedure, or (iv) the act or acts forming the basis of the charge do not reflect a plausible violation of the Constitution and Bylaws or conduct unbecoming of a member.

(f) The charged party of a charge shall be notified of such charges within seven (7) days of the completion of review pursuant to Article X, Section 10.1(e). Within seven (7) days of the same, the charging and charged parties shall be notified of the determination made upon review pursuant to Article X, Section 10.1(e).

(g) The dismissal of a charge pursuant to Article X, Section 10.1(e) may be appealed by the charging party fifteen (15) days of notification of the charge's dismissal. A request for appeal shall be in writing to the Secretary or the Co-Chairs, as appropriate, and an Appeals Committee shall be convened in the same manner as a Trial Committee pursuant to Article X, Section 10.3(b). Such appeal shall solely concern whether the charge should or should not have been dismissed pursuant to Article X, Section 10.1(e), based solely on a review of the charge and the Secretary's or the Co-Chairs' justification for dismissing the charge. The dismissal shall be reversed upon majority vote of the Appeals Committee. The Appeals Committee shall notify the Secretary or the Co-Chairs, as appropriate, and the charging and charged parties of whether the dismissal was reversed within five (5) days of such decision.

(h) If an appeal under Article X, Section 10.1(g) results in a reversal, a member trial for the charged party shall be convened within three (3) weeks of the notification of the appeals decision to the charging and charged parties.

Section 10.2. Optional Mediation.

(a) Upon the submission of a charge, the charging party may engage in mediation with the charged party. Such mediation shall be requested within five (5) days of submission of the charge, and it shall be overseen by a member of NUGW sufficiently removed from the dispute and appointed by the Co-Chairs. The parties shall convene for mediation at least once a week for four (4) continuous weeks, with the first mediation session beginning within one (1) week of the request for mediation.

(b) If the charging and charged parties fail to resolve the charge at mediation, a member trial for the charged party shall be convened within three (3) weeks of the last mediation session.

Section 10.3. Member Trials.

(a) Except as provided in Sections 10.1(h) and 10.2(b), a member trial shall be convened within three (3) weeks of the submission of the charge.

(b) The charged party shall be tried by a committee of five (5) NUGW Stewards selected at random (the "Trial Committee"). Any Steward so selected who has or appears to have a conflict of interest in the member trial shall recuse themselves from the Trial

Committee and be replaced by another Steward. Any Steward who cannot attend the member trial or Trial Committee deliberations following such trial shall be replaced by another Steward. For purposes of this section, "Steward" shall include "Department Organizer" so long as NUGW is not an exclusive bargaining representative of employees at Northwestern University.

(c) The Trial Committee shall be empowered to make arrangements as to time, location, and manner of hearing on the evidence and arguments of the member trial.

(d) The charging and the charged parties shall be notified of the time and place of the member trial no less than ten (10) days prior to such member trial.

(e) The charging and charged parties may submit written statements, with evidence and arguments, to the Trial Committee.

(f) The charging and charged parties may call, question, and cross-examine witnesses before the Trial Committee.

(g) Upon completion of hearing on the evidence and arguments, the Trial Committee shall deliberate in closed session to determine their verdict and penalty.

(h) A verdict of the Trial Committee shall be limited to "guilty" or "not guilty" as to the charged party. A verdict shall not stand except by majority vote of the Trial Committee.

(i) If a simple majority of the Trial Committee concur on a not guilty verdict, the charged party shall be acquitted. Such acquittal shall be final.

(j) If no more than three (3) Stewards on the Trial Committee concur on a guilty verdict, a penalty of the Trial Committee shall be limited to recommendation of written reprimand of a guilty charged party.

(k) If more than three (3) Stewards on the Trial Committee concur on a guilty verdict, the Trial Committee may recommend as a penalty to suspend or expel the guilty charged party from any NUGW Union Officer position, Standing Committee, and/or working group, or to suspend or expel the guilty charged party from NUGW membership.

(l) The Trial Committee shall submit in writing its verdict and penalty to be approved or modified separately and consecutively at a General Membership Meeting by secret ballot and simple-majority vote. As to the verdict, the membership at such General Membership Meeting shall be empowered to approve the guilty verdict, order a new trial,

or acquit the charged party. Such acquittal shall be final. As to the penalty, the membership at such General Membership Meeting shall be empowered to first vote on whether to approve the penalty of the Trial Committee, and if not approved, to then vote on another penalty as provided in Article X, Sections 10.3(j)-(k). A penalty approved under this Section 10.3(l) shall take immediate effect.

(m) The Trial Committee's verdict and penalty, as well as the results of the votes thereon at the General Membership Meeting, shall be archived among the records for which the Secretary is responsible.

Section 10.4. Appeals Procedure.

(a) A charged party who is penalized pursuant to Article X, Section 10.3(l) may appeal a guilty verdict and/or penalty upon submission of written appeal to the Secretary or Co-Chairs, as appropriate, within fifteen (15) days of such penalty taking effect.

(b) An Appeals Committee shall be convened in the same manner as the Trial Committee pursuant to Article X, Section 10.3(b) upon timely filing of a written appeal.

(c) The issue for review of the Appeals Committee shall be whether the guilty verdict and/or the penalty or both merit the order of a new trial. Such review shall be limited to written record of the member trial—including the initial written charge, the Secretary or Co-Chairs' determination upon review of the charge, any evidence and written arguments presented at trial, the written verdict and penalty presented by the Trial Committee at the General Membership Meeting, and the minutes of the General Membership Meeting—and, upon request of the Appeals Committee, the testimony of any Steward who served on the Trial Committee whose verdict and/or penalty approved by the membership is appealed.

(d) If a simple majority of the Appeals Committee concur that a new trial is merited, the Appeals Committee shall so notify the Secretary or Co-Chairs, as appropriate, in writing and with explanation of the decision. Such writing of the Appeals Committee shall be archived among the records for which the Secretary is responsible. Such writing shall be treated as an initial charge for purposes of initiating the membership trial procedure pursuant to Article X, Section 10.3.

(e) If a simple majority of the Appeals Committee concur that a new trial is not merited, the guilty verdict and effective penalty shall be final.

ARTICLE XII

FISCAL YEAR

The Fiscal Year of NUGW shall begin on the first day of September of each year and end on the last day of August of the following year.

ARTICLE XIII

DISSOLUTION

Upon dissolution, all properties and assets remaining after payment, or provision of payment, of all debts and liabilities of NUGW shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(5) by majority vote of the NUGW membership. Any such properties and assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a court of competent jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of NUGW is then located.

ARTICLE XIV

AMENDMENTS

Section 11.1. Amendment Process. The Constitution and Bylaws may be amended by special referendum, pursuant to Article IX, Section 9.3(a).
