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Graduate Workers Occupy UNM Regents' Office Building, Stage Work-In Protest

ALBUQUERQUE, NM - This morning, members of the United Graduate Workers of UNM (UGW-UE Local 1466) entered Scholes Hall, location of the UNM President and Regents' offices, to stage a "work-in" in response to the UNM Regents' recent attempts to strip graduate employees of their legally protected right to unionize in District Court. Graduate employees, who collectively teach over 500 classes attended by thousands of undergraduate students each semester, will be grading, lesson planning, and teaching from Scholes Hall while calling on regents to withdraw their taxpayer-funded appeal. Despite playing a critical role in the teaching and research mission of the University, graduate assistants earn an average minimum stipend of just \$14,438 per year and struggle with lack of access to medical care and inadequate protections from harassment.

"I am here today because I am disappointed that the UNM administration continues to devalue my work as a graduate employee," said UNM Teaching Assistant Alana Bock. "I grade papers, lesson-plan, and hold office hours for my students. I love teaching but it is disheartening to see the university continue to sink resources into fighting graduate workers who want to be paid a living wage for doing the important work of educating our undergraduate Lobos".

The New Mexico Public Employee Labor Relations Board (PELRB) ruled in August of 2021 that graduate employees have the right to unionize in New Mexico and subsequently ruled in November that all UNM graduate workers constitute "an appropriate bargaining unit". On November 2nd, the PELRB urged that a card count and union certification for UGW-UE occur "without further delay". A motion to stay the card count filed by the University was denied by the labor board on Friday, December 3rd and the PELRB is moving forward with certification. The UNM Regents, however, have yet to withdraw their District Court Appeal.

"With this work-in, we hope that the UNM administration will see what we already know - that this university works because graduate workers do," said UNM Teaching Assistant Lindsay Morrone. "The Regents say that they value our role on campus, but their repeated attempts to circumvent state law do not reflect this. If they really valued our labor, they would withdraw this appeal and meet our union at the bargaining table."