



UNM WORKS BECAUSE WE DO

Graduate Worker Priorities and Working Conditions at UNM

**Findings from the 2024-25
United Graduate Workers of UNM
Bargaining Survey**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Who are the United Graduate Workers (UGW) of UNM?

We are graduate workers across all departments and colleges committed to improving working conditions for all graduate workers at the University of New Mexico. Our bargaining unit consists of over 1,500 teaching assistants (TAs), research assistants (RAs), graduate assistants (GAs) and project assistants (PAs) at UNM. UGW are members of UE, the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America. UE is a democratic, member-led national union representing tens of thousands of workers across a wide variety of public and private sector jobs.

What was the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey?

Over the past four months, 678 graduate workers completed the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey to communicate their priorities, working conditions, and living conditions as the UGW prepares for our second full collective bargaining agreement (CBA) bargaining session with university administration in the Spring. The survey was completed by the majority of card-signed UGW members, with 470 union members (63% of members) completing it. Overall, 44% of workers in the bargaining unit completed the survey. For a detailed description of the methodology of the survey, see Pages 22-25.

What was the purpose of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey?

The 2024-25 Bargaining Survey had three key goals:

1. Set bargaining priorities to be voted on by our bargaining unit, which reflect the living conditions, financial realities, and experiences of graduate workers at UNM.
2. Highlight the experiences of international students, parents, and workers with disabilities.
3. Understand worker's feelings towards union participation and membership to allow union leadership to strategize on the best techniques to build power.

What are the key findings of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey?

Even after winning 23% raises through three bargaining sessions and advocating at the NM State Legislature (Page 7), our workers strongly prioritized winning higher wages as their most important issue (Page 6). Workers need higher wages because the cost of living and the cost of housing in Albuquerque has doubled over the past decade (Figure 3). As a result of low wages and a high cost of living, 60% of survey respondents reported being "rent-burdened" by spending more than 30% of their income on housing (Page 8), with 70% of graduate workers rating their financial security as "moderately insecure" or "not secure at all" (Page 9).

In addition to wages, survey respondents prioritized issues that are critical to their financial well-being and peace-of-mind. Better health insurance (Page 11), more tuition coverage (Page 10), parking (Page 13), and benefits (Page 12) were also rated as "very important" by the majority of respondents. Workers prioritized full guaranteed funding through all semesters, university-provided dental and vision insurance, and lower-cost, more accessible parking. Nearly half of respondents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

were not aware that they had the right to two weeks of paid sick leave per semester (Page 12), highlighting the need for the university to make workers aware of this policy. Workers report the desire for contract hour standardization, as 34% of respondents report regularly working more hours per week than they are contracted for (Page 18).

The 2024-25 Bargaining Survey asked international workers, parents, and workers with disabilities about their experiences as well. International workers prioritize guaranteed summer funding (Page 14). International workers were twice as likely to rate their financial security as “not secure at all” when compared to their domestic peers. Parents highlighted the difficulties of accessing UNM Child Care services, as 44% of respondents who need childcare cannot afford it and/or are on the UNM Child Care waitlist (Page 19). Graduate worker with disabilities reported grossly inadequate accommodations, and regardless of personal needs, grad workers think accessibility is important (Page 17).

How do workers feel about the union?

Overall, UNM grad workers have a favorable view of our union (Page 20). However, many of the responses seemed to reflect understanding that "the union" fights on behalf of workers, rather than acknowledging that workers are our union. The wins that we have amassed have come directly through high participation in collective actions. There need to be more ways for workers to easily get involved and more discussion about why we need all of us in these fights, as respondents commonly said that they “did not have time” to attend union events. When the University Administration does not believe that most graduate workers are invested in our organizing for better working conditions, they think they can get away with denying us what we deserve.

The two most common reasons for people not joining our union are “I didn’t know I had to sign a union card” and “union membership is too expensive for me” (Page 21). This indicates that more needs to be done in the way of education. Our university has millions of dollars to throw at union-busting lawyers and policies that weaken our ability to effectively organize. Union dues are our way of building our own financial power to combat that. **Remember that union dues are a small fraction of the raises that UGW has won in just over two years! Two ways to show the university you care is to sign a union card and to attend and bring coworkers to collective actions!**

Join us in the fight for higher wages, better healthcare and benefits, and protections for all graduate workers! Nothing will be given to us without building and exercising our power! We need you!

DEMOGRAPHICS

678 workers (**44%** of bargaining unit) responded to the survey

70% of respondents are cardsigned union members (relative to **47%** of the bargaining unit)

27% are international workers (relative to **33%** of barg. unit)

12% of respondents have children/dependents**

63% are Doctoral students, **35%** are Masters students**

678 workers responded to the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey, representing 44% of the bargaining unit (estimated to be 1,550 graduate workers at the time of this survey). Respondents were much more likely to be union members relative to the bargaining unit. Workers from the College of Arts and Sciences (A&S) are overrepresented in this survey. A&S workers were separated into three categories (Natural Sciences, Humanities, and Social Sciences) by their department. Workers from the School of Engineering, Health Sciences Center, and other colleges (School of Architecture and Planning, Anderson School of Management, School of Public Administration, NM School of Law) are underrepresented in this survey. UGW has the highest membership among workers in A&S, attributing to its overrepresentation in survey responses. International students are also slightly underrepresented.

**Unknown percentage relative to total bargaining unit

School	Survey	Barg. Unit
College of Arts and Sciences - Natural Sciences	25%	21%
College of Arts and Sciences - Humanities	22%	14%
College of Arts and Sciences - Social Sciences	18%	18%
School of Engineering	15%	19%
College of Fine Arts	7%	7%
College of Education and Human Sciences	6%	7%
Health Sciences Center	4%	7%
Other Colleges	3%	6%

Table 1. Percentage of survey respondents from each UNM college, relative to their total representation in the bargaining unit.

OVERALL PRIORITIES

Grad workers rated **higher wages** as their most important issue for bargaining. Better **health insurance**, more **tuition coverage**, **parking**, and **benefits** were also rated as "very important" by the majority of respondents.

The remainder of this report will discuss the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey and provide an in-depth analysis of the issues listed in Figure 1.

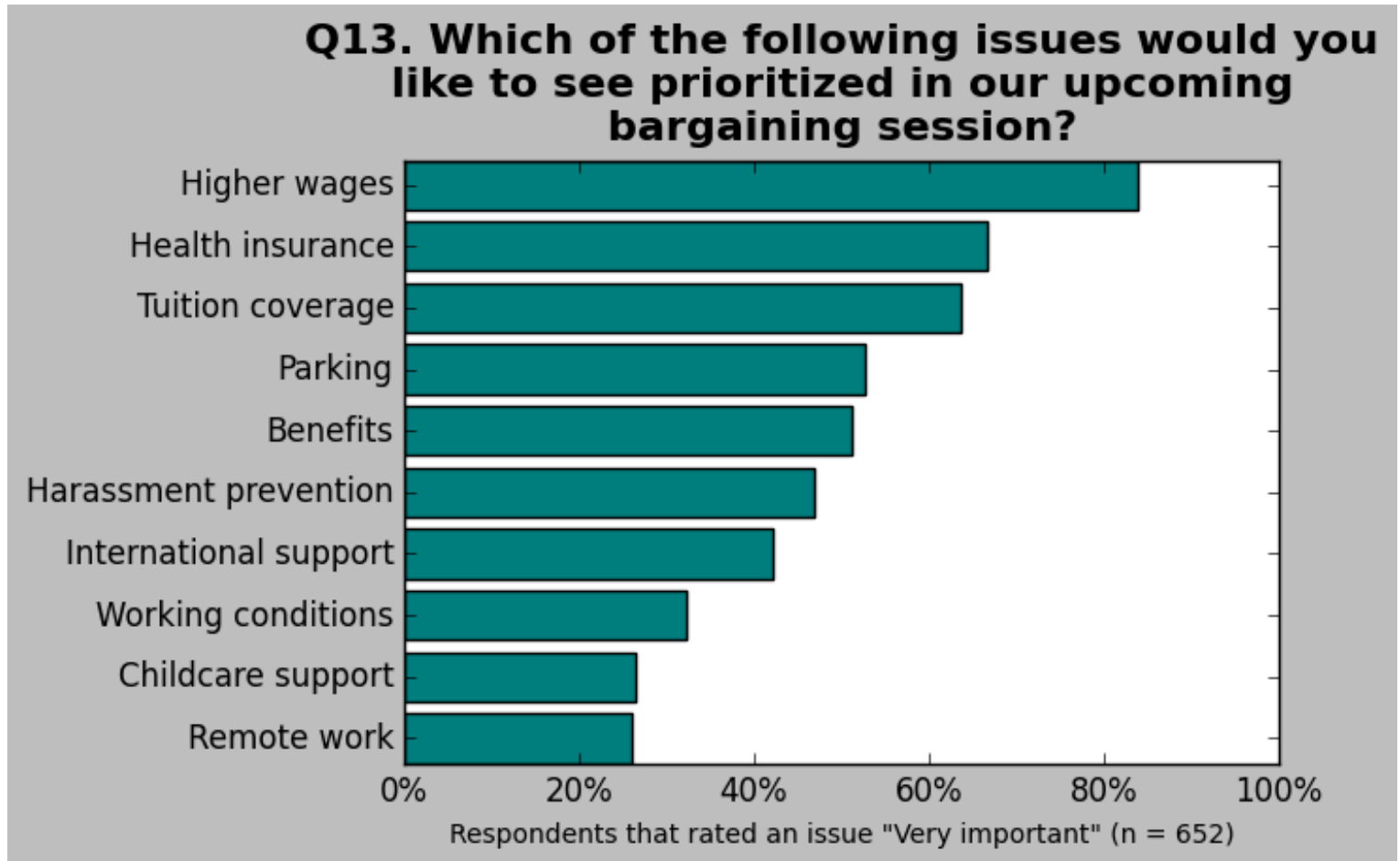


Figure 1. Percentage of respondents who rated an issue as "very important" on question 13 of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey

WAGES – UGW’S IMPACT

Across three bargaining sessions and through advocating for \$2,000,000 allocated to grad worker raises across the state with NM HB2 (2024), wages have **increased** by **23%** in just over two years. This comes after **stagnating for over a decade**.

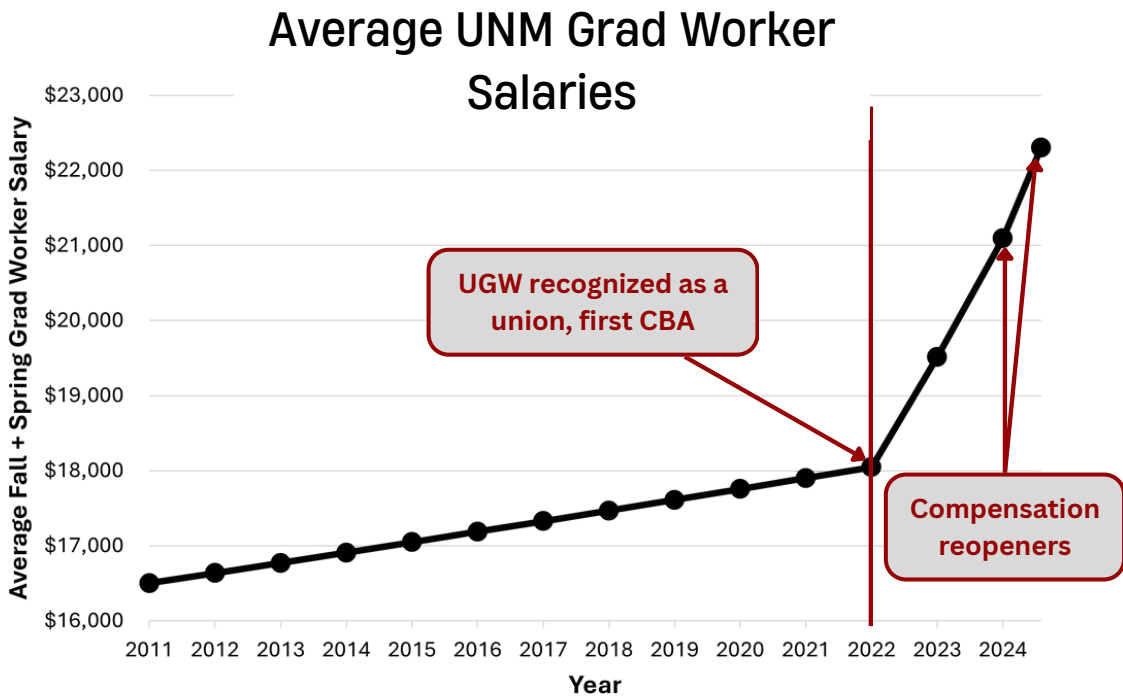


Figure 2. Average fall and spring grad worker salaries from 2011-2024. 2011 wages from Roy Keyes website [1]. Post-unionization wages calculated with data provided by UNM admin from all workers who filled out FERPA waivers. Salaries were interpolated from 2012-2022

The average grad worker makes about **\$4,300** more per year since UGW was recognized in November 2022.

Average salaries remained **stagnant** before unionization. With no mandatory raises since at least 2011, average salaries only increased by 10% from 2011-2022, **far outpaced by inflation**.

RENT BURDEN

Despite union-backed raises, **wages have not kept up with housing or the cost of living.**

Despite union-backed raises, wages have not kept pace with a living wage or housing costs in Albuquerque (Figure 3). Both a living wage and the cost of housing have more than doubled since 2015, but UNM grad worker average salaries have not increased at nearly the same rate (Figure 3). Nearly 60% of grad workers are rent burdened (defined by US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development [4] as spending more than 30% of salary on housing costs). Worse, 29% of respondents spend over half of their salaries on housing costs. It is imperative that salaries increase so that grad workers can afford housing.

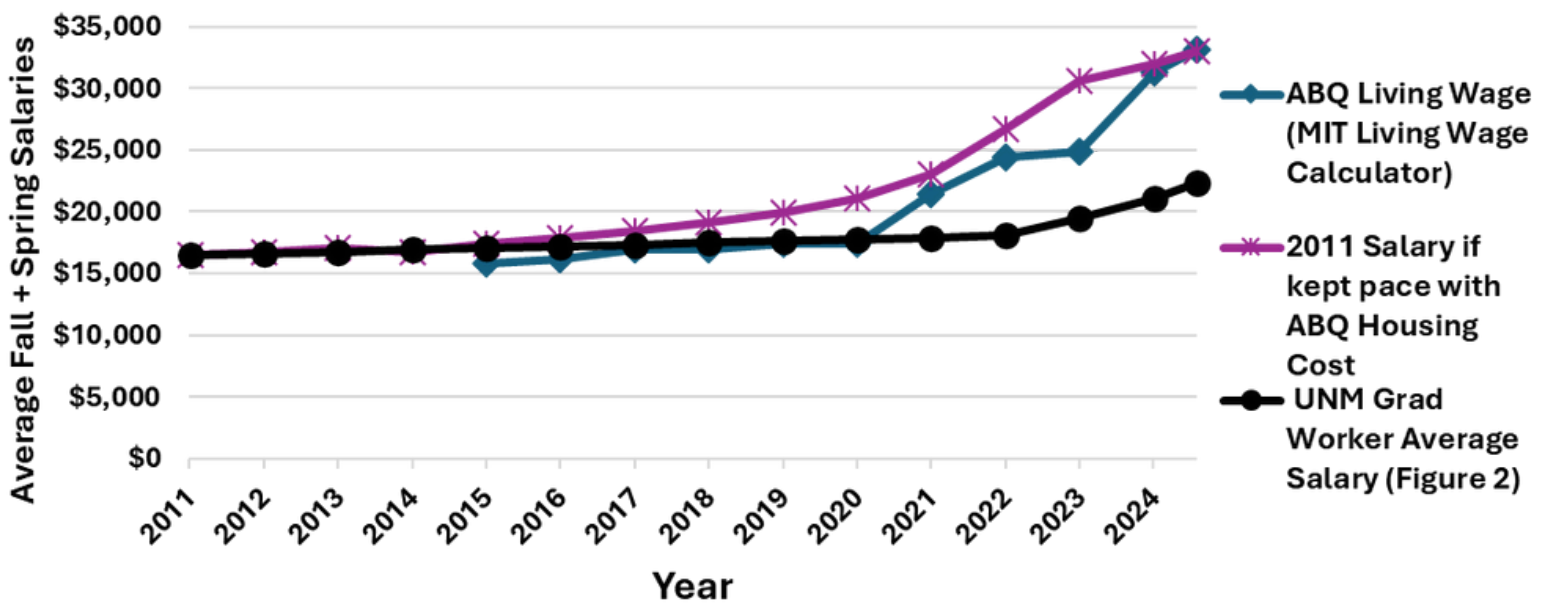


Figure 3. Average fall and spring grad worker salaries from 2011-2024 (Figure 2) compared to a nine month living wage [2] and a 2011 salary if it kept pace with the price of housing (defined as Federal Housing Finance Agency’s Seasonally Adjusted Housing Price Index [3])

60% of respondents spend over 30% of their income on housing, making them **rent burdened [4]**.

29% of respondents spend over half of their income on housing.

The average grad worker makes **about \$11,000 less** than a living wage.

FINANCIAL SECURITY

UNM's low wages cause economic stress for grad workers.

Most UNM grad workers are financially insecure. Many respondents are one unexpected expense away from losing their savings. Workers who reported that they were financially secure expressed gratitude for having the privilege of being supported by their family members and would not be able to afford graduate school without them. By not providing a living wage, UNM favors those who come from privileged backgrounds and excludes parents, lower-income, and historically disadvantaged populations from pursuing a graduate degree due to financial strain.

“ I am doing my best to live below my means as a grad student. This includes renting a really crappy apartment that has bugs and poor plumbing. It is cheap enough that I can afford it, but I worry about groceries often and I am rarely able to afford going out or fun activities. I spend a lot of time at home by myself, because I can afford to pay rent, but not much else. Even just another \$100-200 would alleviate significant financial stress.

-
Teaching Assistant, Department of
Biology ”

70% of respondents rated their financial security as moderately insecure or not secure at all (Q81).

9% of respondents are “very financially secure” (Q81).

40% of respondents could not afford graduate school at UNM “without financial support from my spouse/domestic partner/parents” (Q76).

43% of respondents support someone else with their income (Q77).

FUNDING

A significant portion of graduate workers are underfunded or do not have guaranteed funding.

According to survey responses, most grad workers at UNM are funded at a 0.5 full-time equivalent (FTE) and expect to have funding every semester. However, 70% of respondents in the College of Fine Arts (CFA) are funded at a 0.25 FTE or less, and 53% of workers in the CFA do not expect to have guaranteed funding for every semester of their graduate degree. Respondents placed a high importance on all funding issues, with tuition and fee coverage being ranked as “very important” by about 90% of respondents.

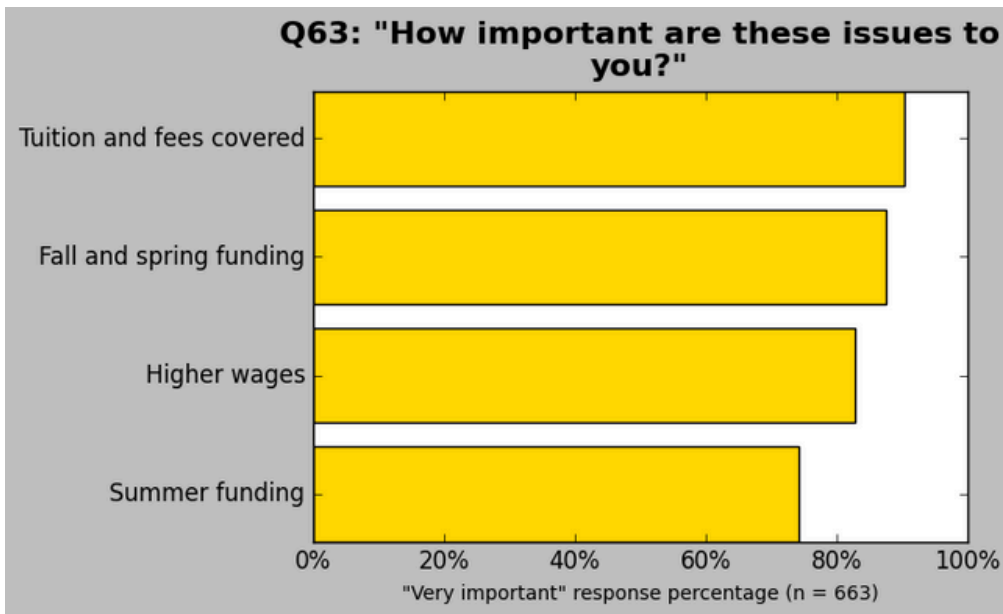


Figure 4. Percentage of respondents who rated an issue as "very important" on question 63 of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey.

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In the Department of Fine Art - MFA grads are only given 6 credits of tuition coverage while being required to take at least 9 credit hours of classes. If we don't teach we don't get any tuition covered. The teaching pays terribly vs the amount of time we have to put into teaching.

Teaching Assistant, Fine Arts

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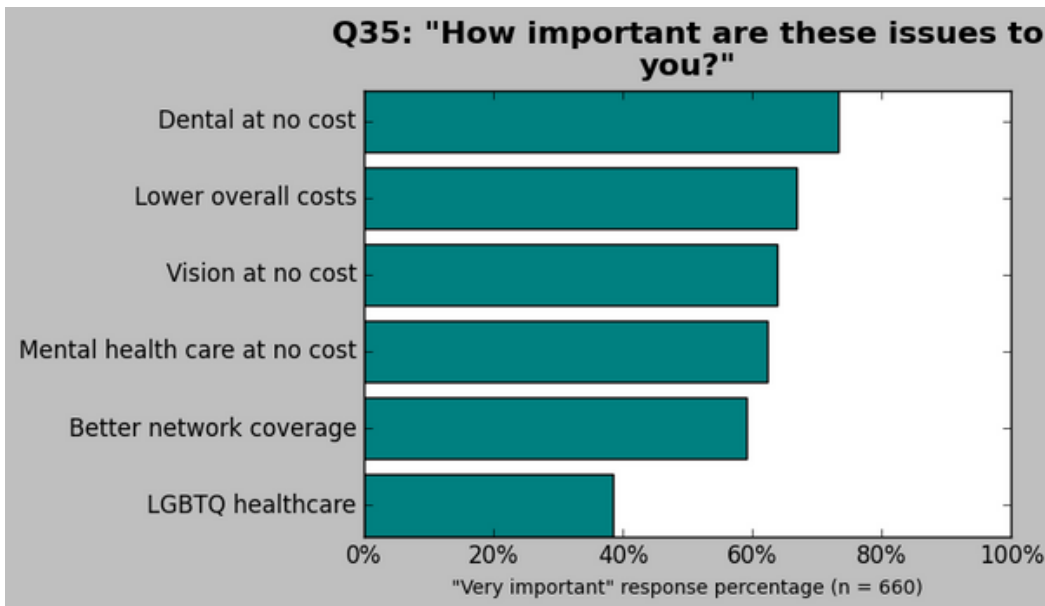
15% of workers are funded as “half-time” grad workers, with 0.25 full time equivalent (10 hours per week) (Q20).

20% of respondents **do not expect to have guaranteed funding** for every semester of their graduate degree (Q15).

HEALTHCARE

By not having access to free dental and vision insurance, grad workers are underinsured.

At UNM, grad workers do not have free dental and vision insurance. Instead, they have to opt in to those insurance plans and pay hundreds of dollars per year, taking a large chunk out of already low salaries. Additionally, grad workers expressed concerns about coverage for general health issues such as maternity care, family planning, lab-work, co-pays, and medication. Though 82% of workers who use UNM's Student Health and Counseling indicated they were moderately or very satisfied with these services (Survey Q42), some respondents were frustrated with the lack of available psychiatry and mental health availability at UNM, as many of these services off campus are prohibitively expensive.



“I have deferred specialized jaw treatment and dental cleanings due to lack of dental coverage.”

-
Sydney Shaner,
Teaching Assistant, Earth
and Planetary Sciences

Figure 5. Percentage of respondents who rated an issue as "very important" on question 35 of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey.

45% of respondents have ignored treatment or delayed treatment due to the cost of care (Q40)

79% of respondents do not pay for **vision** or **dental** coverage through UNM grad student health insurance (Q39)

BENEFITS

Graduate workers are working through illness, injury, maternity/paternity, and holidays.

Graduate workers have the right to take paid time off, but there needs to be stronger language in the CBA about how to exercise and guarantee this right as part-time workers. Asking for paid time off is dependent on people's relationships with their supervisors. In the most extreme cases, workers have had to quit their assistantships to be able to take needed time off. In addition, workers will work on University holidays and breaks and outside of their contract dates, effectively eliminating time to take a vacation or visit family, because supervisors expect them to and they fear retaliation.

“

“I was denied time off because they didn't have addition workers to handle my job in my absence.”

-

Anonymous

“I've been very fortunate to have understanding supervisors that supported me in taking unofficial maternity leave. Two weeks would not have been enough. I ended up taking six, and even that was not quite enough time. I cannot imagine going through that and also having an unsupportive supervisor who didn't care about my wellbeing.”

-

*Research Assistant,
Sociology*

“I had an accident where I fractured my arm. I was asked to keep working unless I used unpaid leave.”

-

Anonymous

”

46% of respondents were not aware that by UNM policy and our collective bargaining agreement, graduate workers have up to two weeks of paid sick leave per semester (Q50).

61% of respondents ranked guaranteed parental leave as important or very important (Q52).

32% of respondents were uncomfortable asking a supervisor for paid time off (Q51).

PARKING

\$270: The median annual estimated parking cost for respondents who drive to campus (Q96)

79% of respondents do not have a parking pass (Q94)

56% of respondents drive a personal vehicle to campus (Q93)

Many graduate workers have to park 1-2 miles from campus and then walk the remainder of the distance to avoid expensive parking fees or come to campus less altogether. This had led graduate workers to be late to teach, miss their own coursework, or have other assistantship-related issues like failed experiments. Lack of parking accessibility creates safety concerns for those walking to their cars in the dark, and accessibility concerns for students with physical disabilities. Finally, graduate workers are frustrated that they are not given access to the same types of parking passes on the same time table as faculty and staff, but instead compete with the general study body for passes. Many respondents proposed expanded infrastructure for other modes of transportation as a solution.

Q96: Because of lack of parking accessibility, I have...

Question/issue	Percentage of Respondents
Been impacted in any way	79%
Reduced the number of hours spent on campus	62%
Not attended extra curricular or department activities	54%
Missed/been late for attending class	43%
Missed/been late for TAing (among TAs)	39%

"I cannot stress how important this is. My work, family life, and personal life have been affected by the fact that I cannot park my car at UNM... I've had to cancel week-long experiments and lose precious data due to the lack of parking during the weekdays when I couldn't get a carpool ride which is difficult to schedule as is."
-
Research Assistant, Biology

"I think UNM should expand its own bike infrastructure-- bike paths on campus (CU Boulder can be a good example), and be a stronger advocate to the city for expansion of bike and public transit options to access campus to deal more effectively with the parking problem."

-
Anonymous

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

International workers require specific supports to ensure equitable work environments on campus.

International students and workers occupy a precarious position on campus. These workers rely on their departments to maintain their visa status, they cannot obtain additional sources of income in the US, and they are often at the mercy of an ever-changing political climate, both in the US and in their home countries. With the change in the presidential administration, many of the legal processes and pathways for studying and working in the US are sure to become even more challenging. 31% of international worker respondents reporting experiencing unexpected immigration costs prior to these changes; we must prepare to see this statistic increase and act accordingly. Passage of the Laken Riley Act this past January has also placed an additional stressor on international workers who now fear reprisal for speaking out.

Additionally, over half of international worker respondents (54%) indicate that they support someone else with their income, with 16% of these workers being parents. Many of these workers are trying to support their family on a single salary unless their partner is otherwise able to obtain work through a visa or their own citizenship status. With rising costs of living and astronomical childcare costs, international workers supporting others with their income are struggling to make ends meet.

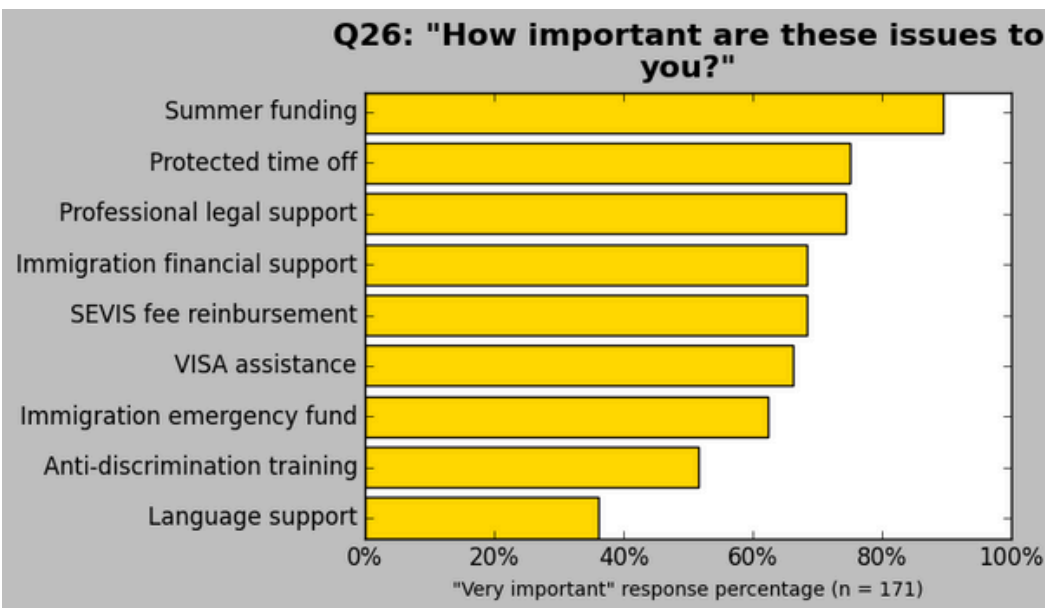


Figure 6. Percentage of self-identified international worker respondents who rated an issue as "very important" on question 26 of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey.

"At times I'm concerned about how my actions could impact my student status in ways that US citizens probably do not"
-
Anonymous

"I have a baby. Daycare costs for my baby is almost the same as my monthly income... Being an international student, I cannot work outside either."
-
Anonymous

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS

The Global Education Office (GEO) has been an important source of support for international workers, with 94% of international worker respondents indicating they have had positive experiences with GEO. That being said, GEO is unable to provide much support with untangling complicated tax requirements and has limited ability to address discrimination against international students.

A quarter of our international worker respondents (25%) reported feeling that their status has caused faculty to treat them differently, and qualitative data supports a general lack of understanding from faculty and students around international student specific needs and supports. An additional 23% of respondents reported feeling unsure if their status as an international student has impacted how they are treated. As work and study visas are contingent upon faculty and programmatic support, international workers report feeling unable to address discriminatory or otherwise concerning conditions or situations in their work environments.

“Many faculty members are unsympathetic or even unaware of the precarious nature of international students e.g. discriminatory practices that may jeopardize immigration or legal status, passive aggression, power imbalance when it comes to grievance issues.

-
Anonymous

“I think faculty and staff are not aware of what limitations International Students have when [we] have to get funding outside the [sic] UNM. Every Spring is stressful for me and my family because in the case of not being paid in June and July, I can't visit my family overseas. My department doesn't disclose about summer funding opportunities until very late in the semester. Last Spring 2024 I had health issues due to the stress this caused to me, and now I am getting counseling to prepare to the next time. It is very hard.

-
Anonymous

36% of international workers report working more than their contract states in the average week (Q21).

28% of international worker respondents feel 'not at all' financially secure as compared to 14% of domestic workers (Q81).

HARASSMENT & DISCRIMINATION

We need stronger protections. Many workers still face hostile working conditions and reporting mechanisms are not effective.

Responses to the bargaining survey disturbingly demonstrate that many marginalized groups of graduate workers experience frequent harassment and discrimination. Women workers are sexually harassed by their students, coworkers, and supervisors and experience discrimination in workloads and career opportunities. International students are discriminated against with regard to their language, race, religion, and national origin. In addition, workers with mental health issues and physical disabilities are denied accommodations at work. Workers of color experience racism and discrimination by advisors, peers and students. Transgender graduate workers have been misgendered and deadnamed publicly by supervisors and coworkers and are not given adequate restroom access. Finally, workers consistently report OEO and other anti-discrimination and harassment mechanisms at UNM are ineffective. In our last contract, we fought hard for language on non-discrimination. The administration was hesitant to include it in the CBA because there were national laws that prevented against gender-, sexuality-, and race-based discrimination, among other forms. As of a recent executive order, some of these national protections no longer exist, but they are still protected under our CBA. Winning additional non-discrimination language in union negotiations is our strongest way of ensuring permanent protections for our most vulnerable.

“ I think UNM did an extremely poor job of keeping in touch, following up, etc. When I did call Title IX to file a formal complaint, they never got back to me

-
Research Assistant,
Economics

My previous supervisor may numerous racially disparaging comments about me and about other people in my lab who were also minority group members. I left the lab, partially as a result of these comments.

-
Research Assistant,
Psychology

Ultimately, I believe the OEO process functions to maintain the status quo and protect the university rather than marginalized students/faculty/staff.

-
Teaching Assistant,
LLSS

”

16% of respondents indicated they have experienced discrimination (Q87).

6% of respondents have filed or considered filing a formal complaint through the Office of Equal Opportunity (Q89)

ACCESSIBILITY

Graduate worker with disabilities reported grossly inadequate accommodations. Regardless of personal needs, grad workers think accessibility is important.

Most respondents to our survey likely did not have disabilities and 94% reported that they felt UNM was accessible. However, respondents with disabilities had a different story. Some explained faculty, staff and other students are not always knowledgeable about accommodation or accessibility issues with some supervisors refusing to support or report the need for accommodations. Some workers have even been disciplined for not being able to complete work despite lack of accommodations. Lack of accessible parking and ADA compliance on campus, including some buildings with no elevators, are important issues for grad workers. Grad workers also feel they are not provided enough training to support students and coworkers with disabilities.

“When TAing, I have found many of the undergraduates have ARC accommodations and yet I have had no training in teaching to those accommodations.”

Anonymous

Q83: "How important are these issues to you?"

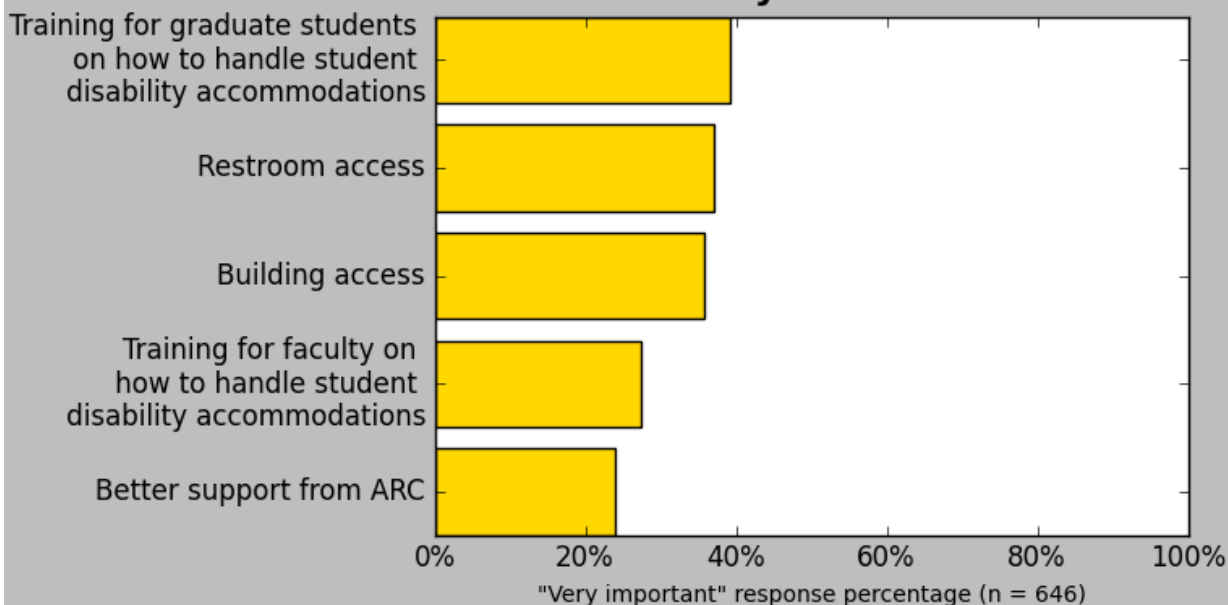


Figure 7. Percentage of respondents who rated an issue as "very important" on question 83 of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey.

WORKING CONDITIONS

Workers aren't prepared to succeed at their jobs, either due to lack of training, workspace, or materials

TAs are not well-trained in pedagogy, course material, and teaching to diverse populations. Many departments don't give out TA assignments until just before the semester and do not leave adequate time for training; sometimes there is no formal training. Most of the people who have already been trained were trained somewhere else, which is not sustainable. UNM does not effectively train its TAs. Something we can do is put more specifications on trainings in terms of when exactly they should occur, what should be covered, and others. Some workers do not have proper office space, especially after the closure of the Humanities building, and others only have access when admin is around to let them in. Contrary to what the university has told us, remote work is still an issue and it's been more difficult to get remote work contracts since the MOA. Some departments are not allowing remote work contracts at all.

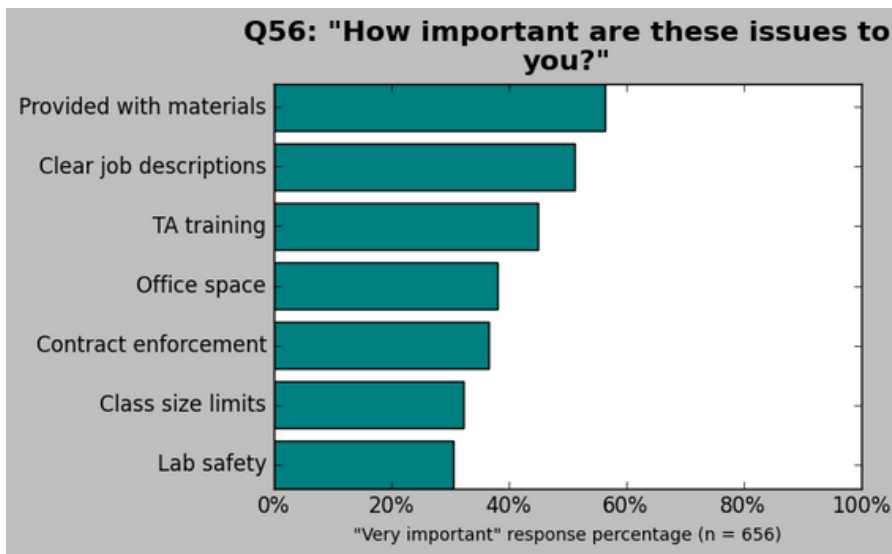


Figure 8. Percentage of respondents who rated an issue as "very important" on question 56 of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey.

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The yearly training covers so much bureaucracy, but not the things that actually matter - how do we grade students who don't possess middle school level reading, writing, and thinking skills? how do we help students who aren't being helped by the school or who don't have time to get to the academic level needed to pass the course? In practice, the trainings we do for FERPA, being a mandatory reporter, etc come up very rarely, if ever (at least in my experience), whereas the realities of the students are presented to us every day.
-Anonymous

”

11% of respondents estimated working 10 or more hours over their contracted FTE (Q20, Q22).

34% of graduate workers reported regularly working above their contracted hours (Q21).

CHILDREN AND DEPENDENTS

Graduate workers with dependents struggle to obtain and afford childcare at or outside of UNM

While the stereotypical graduate student is often imagined as a single person in their early twenties, the reality is far more diverse. In fact, 12% of survey respondents have children or dependents, highlighting a significant population of student parents juggling academic pursuits with family responsibilities. Childcare costs for a single adult with a single child have more than doubled in Albuquerque in the past decade, going from \$5,932/yr in 2015 [7] to \$12,805/yr in 2025. Grad workers expressed concern about the long waitlists at UNM Children Campus (UNMCC), which offers discounted rates to grad students. Other grad workers find that even with discounted rates, UNMCC is too expensive. Several grad workers with dependents are only able to afford childcare because costs are subsidized by the State of New Mexico's Early Childhood Education & Care Department (ECECD) and UNM's Child Care Access Means Parents In School (CCAMPIS) program (Q48).

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“I currently have a contract through the ECECD. If that goes away, we will have a hard time paying for childcare.”

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*Research Assistant,
Sociology*

”

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“My child is at UNMCC, the fees were expensive because the student program does not cover everything. And the CCAMPIS for students only allows to bring your child in when you have lectures. If you have to work in the lab during the semester or during summer without taking classes, you'll have to pay out of pocket. I had to apply for New Mexico ECECD funding to cover for the full tuition.”

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Anonymous

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44% of respondents who need childcare cannot afford it and/or are on the UNM Child Care waitlist (Q46)

Only **14%** of respondents with children or dependents use UNM Child Care (Q45).

UNION PARTICIPATION

It is not **the** union, it is **our** union!

Overall, UNM grad workers have a favorable view of our union. However, many of the responses seemed to other our union and reflect understanding that "the union" fights for people or should fight harder for people, rather than acknowledging that **we are our union. This view of our union as a service arises from wanting more, but not understanding the need of each of us to take action to win more. When the University Administration does not believe that most people care, they think they can get away with denying us the treatment we deserve.** The University Administration will not give us what we need without us exercising our power. Two ways to show the university you care and our paying attention to union negotiations is to sign a union card and to attend, and bring coworkers to collective actions!

“
I think the active members of the union are fearless students who are not afraid of raising their voices for others and themselves. And are also willing to sacrifice their own time for trying to ensure better conditions for students. Viva la union!!
-
*Esteban Restrepo,
Teaching Assistant
Biology*
”

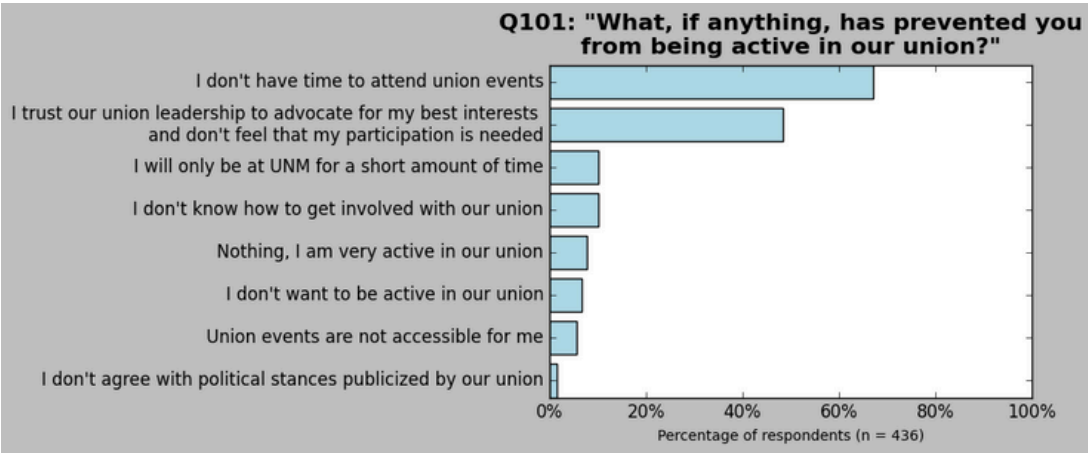


Figure 9. Responses to Question 101 asking for reasons why union members are not active in our union.

48% of union members trust union leadership to advocate for their best interests and do not feel their participation is needed (Q101)

Only **8%** of union members are very active in our union (Q101)

UNION MEMBERSHIP

**The University Administration has millions of dollars to fight us.
Union dues build our financial power to fight back.**

The two most common reasons for people not joining our union are “I didn’t know I had to sign a union card” and “union membership is too expensive for me”. This indicates that more needs to be done in the way of education. Our university has millions of dollars to throw at union-busting lawyers and policies that weaken our ability to effectively organize. Union dues are our way of building our own financial power to combat that. Dues are a financial sacrifice for all workers, especially those at the lowest pay scales. However, workers must understand dues are an important part of us being able to win better lives and should be a priority. We see more in raises annually than the 1.44% taken for dues. Even our lowest paid members can afford dues when it is seen as something for the greater good that they need to prioritize. If you didn’t know you needed to sign a union card and would like to, find the QR code below!

Sign a union card [HERE!](#)

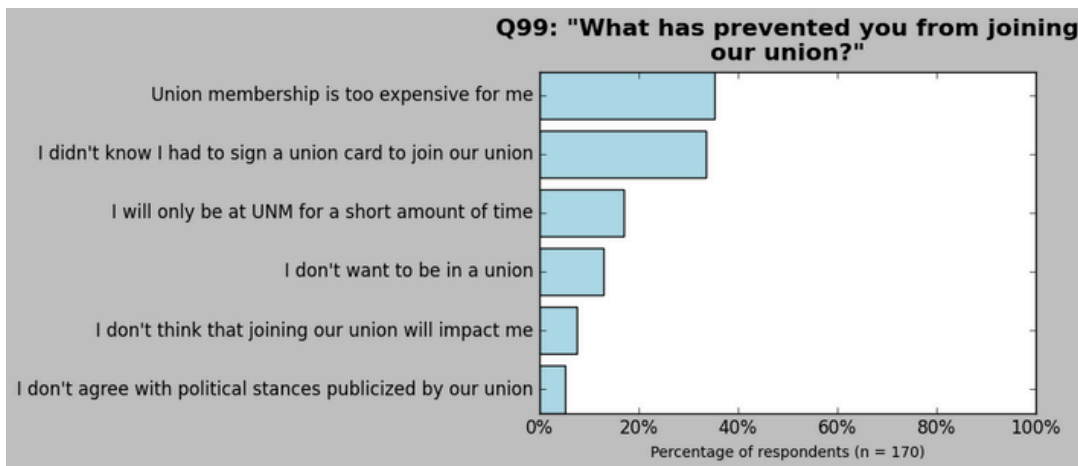


Figure 10. Reasons non-union members have not joined our union.



90% of respondents feel that our union has advocated very or moderately well for issues that are important to them (Q109)

34% of non-union member survey respondents did not know they had to sign a card to join our union (Q99)

METHODOLOGY

Survey form: A full template of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey can be found at this link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1K-30df-kV2FO476BGwkHQGxH5YIJPlqm/view?usp=share_link

Survey length and organization: The survey had 112 questions, but not all questions were mandatory. Additionally, respondents who did not belong to a given demographic group were not shown questions related to that demographic group. For example, domestic grad workers were not shown questions in the “International Students” section. The median survey completion time was 17 minutes.

Survey instructions: The instructions of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey reads as follows:

“Please fill out this survey by the United Graduate Workers (UGW) of UNM as we determine our initial proposals and priorities for our contract negotiations in Spring 2025. We expect this survey to take 15-45 minutes depending on the length of your responses. You do not need to answer all survey questions. The only exception to this is the first and last name questions, which allow us to track who has completed the survey. We strongly encourage everyone to answer every question they are comfortable answering. You do not have to complete the survey in one sitting.

Your answers will be initially linked to your name so we can see who has filled out the survey. However, only the Executive Council and Data Team members will see any identifiable information. We will de-identify any information that is shared.

If you have not signed a union card, please sign one here to become a union member:

<https://uecrm.knack.com/ue-crm#join-ue-local-1466-ugw/>. You do not need to be a union member to complete this survey.”

Survey outreach strategy and timing: The 2024-25 Bargaining Survey was released on October 17, 2024 to coincide with UGW’s Sticker Day outreach campaign. The survey was advertised as being closed on January 31, 2025, but the survey was kept open until February 3, 2025 to allow for several additional responses. The survey was sent out as a Microsoft Forms link via UGW’s Mailchimp email and text phone number.

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Confidentiality: The final question of the bargaining survey asked:

“Do we have your permission to share the comments that you provided in this survey, either in our negotiations with the university or in our communications/social media?”

The responses were:

- Yes, with my name (14% of respondents)
- Yes, with only my department and job title (31%)
- Yes, if I am completely anonymous (49%)
- No (6%)

Survey eligibility, worker identification, and duplicate removal: In total, there were 725 responses to the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey. 678 responses were used for survey analysis. The remaining 47 responses, representing 6% of total responses, were removed for one or more of the following reasons:

1. *No Broadstripes Profile:* All workers with a Broadstripes profile were included in survey analysis. UGW uses Broadstripes to store contact information, assess worker sentiment, and track progress towards goals. Workers were identified with their “unm.edu” or “salud.unm.edu” emails. All unmatched survey responses were manually identified by members of UGW’s Research and Data committee. Survey respondents without Broadstripes profiles were excluded from analysis. Since many non-bargaining unit graduate students do not have Broadstripes profiles, several graduate students who are not in the bargaining unit were excluded from analysis. However, the small number of graduate students not in the bargaining unit, but with a Broadstripes profile were included in this analysis. We estimate that there are fewer than ten non-Bargaining Unit members whose responses are included in the analysis. This decision-making process was made to ensure that non-graduate student responses would not be included, and all responses would reflect verified graduate students at UNM. We acknowledge that this process may have excluded a small number of legitimate graduate students at UNM.
2. *Multiple Survey Responses:* Respondents who filled out the survey multiple times had their last responses included in the analysis. Their earlier responses were removed from analysis.

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Survey eligibility for incoming Spring 2025 workers: New Spring 2025 graduate workers were eligible to complete the survey, even though the survey closed within two weeks of the start of the UNM Spring Semester. As such, five workers who started in Spring 2025 completed the survey. UGW was provided with many of these workers' identities on January 27, four days before the survey deadline. These workers were contacted two times during from January 28-January 31.

Qualitative Analysis: On fifteen questions, survey-takers were given the option to provide written answers. These questions were numbered: 34, 43, 49, 54, 55, 62, 82, 85, 86, 88, 89, 91, 97, 110, and 111 (see survey template for the question text). Each of the twelve members of the UGW's Bargaining Committee, comprising the Executive Council and Area Stewards, were assigned two or three questions, such that each question would be analyzed by at least two people. Responses were shared in a Google Sheets workbook.

Bargaining Committee members were instructed to read through the responses to their assigned questions and identify 3-5 "themes" (one to two sentences) for their question. They were also instructed to pull out quotes to be used as "soundbites" for communication and bargaining purposes.

All responses given to Bargaining Committee members were anonymized prior to analysis, and responses from survey-takers who did not want their response shared were identified. These "un-shareable" responses were used in the process of identifying themes, but no direct or indirect quotes were used in the creation of this report or for other UGW purposes.

Rent Burden Calculations: Rent burden calculations were made with the following assumptions and methods. Average monthly takehome pay was reported from Survey Q23, which asked: "Please estimate your average monthly take home pay from your current assistantship(s)." An average 8% income tax rate was assumed to calculate pre-tax income. Average monthly rent was reported from Survey Q80, which asked: "In the average month, how much do you spend on rent/mortgage including utilities?". The following formulas were used to make these calculations:

Pre-tax monthly salary (\$) = Average Monthly Takehome Pay (\$) / 1.08

Percentage of Pre-Tax Salary Spent on Housing = Pre-tax monthly salary / average monthly rent.

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Issue Importance: Many survey questions asked respondents to rank the importance of issues on a scale of one to four, with the option to give a “n/a (not applicable)” response if the issue “if you feel the issue does not apply to you.” The “n/a” option seemed to not be fully understood by many survey takers, as unrealistically low “n/a” response rates were found on many questions. For example, only 21% of respondents replied “n/a” to the prioritization of international student support, despite 74% of respondents saying that they were not international students. With this issue in mind, three possible methodologies were possible in determining issue importance.

1. The average issue score could be calculated with “n/a” responses excluded.
2. The average issue score could be calculated with “n/a” responses included as a zero score.
3. The percentage of respondents that responded that an issue was “4 - very important” could be calculated. In effect, this treats all “n/a” responses and 1-3 responses as equivalent.

We decided to use “4 - very important” percentage for all issue importance calculations. We made this choice for two primary reasons. First, “4 - very important” was the most common answer for many of the survey questions. Therefore, we determined that a worker was most likely to be passionate about an issue if they rated it as “very important,” and there would not be a meaningful difference in the ability to mobilize workers around issues that they did not find “very important,” regardless of if they were “moderately important,” “not important,” or “not applicable”. Second, it became clear that there was a larger range when comparing the “very important” percentage between issues than between the two averaging metrics detailed above.

DISCLAIMER: This report reflect the self-reported working/living conditions and priorities for union bargaining, and perceptions towards UGW of 678 UNM graduate workers. The findings presented here are descriptive in nature and do not involve advanced statistical analysis. This report is intended to provide insights for internal use and to inform discussions on graduate worker conditions and union priorities.

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Meirah Williamson, member of the UGW Research and Data Team, was the second author on this report. She was the primary author of the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey, co-led the report analysis, created most of the figures, and calculated most of the report's statistics. She also wrote and edited several pages of the report.

Ashley Bernardo, UGW Communications Chair, was the third author on this report. She led the qualitative analysis by collating survey responses, assigning Bargaining Committee members questions to analyze, and synthesizing themes/quotes. She was responsible for sending email and text communications to encourage workers to complete the 2024-25 Bargaining Survey. She also wrote and edited sections of the report.

Lexi Kenis (UGW Clerk) and **Ramona Malczynski** (UGW President) were co-authors on this report. They wrote and edited sections of the report and contributed to survey design. They also performed qualitative analysis by identifying themes and quotes from survey responses.

Dom Oddo (UGW Chief Steward), **Oona Takano** (UGW Treasurer) and UGW Area Stewards/Bargaining Committee members **Max Pagano**, **Wilbur Dominguez**, **Alicia Esquivel**, **Jay Jay Rawson**, and **Alex Baten** performed qualitative analysis.

Phoebe Mak Rui Teng and **Abi Granath** (UGW Research and Data Team members) contributed to survey design.

Jason Santos (UE Field Organizer) contributed to survey editing and formatting.

678 graduate workers who completed the survey!