



NAME: Arazeliz "Ara" Reyes

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PROGRAM: Early Childhood Education and Care, PhD

BIO: Arazeliz "Ara" Reyes is a PhD student in the Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) Graduate Program at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. As an undergraduate, Ara attended Northeastern University (NU) where she earned a BS in Electrical Engineering Tech with a Minor in Communications Studies. After graduating from NU, Ara worked as a Union Admin for Local 12 Plumbers Union in Boston for almost 10 years, where she learned the ins-and-outs of what it takes to support unionized organizations.

Her passion for supporting families of children with disabilities eventually led Ara to the field of ECEC, and a subsequent MEd in Early Childhood Education from Boston University. Most recently, she completed a Post-Masters in ECEC, Research, & Practice at UMass, where she is currently pursuing her PhD. Upon completion of her PhD program, Ara aims to use research-and strength-based models, tools, and strategies to increase economic, social, and emotional capital for families in the local communities of Boston. She hopes to continue to promote social justice and improve lives through making high quality early childhood care accessible to families in the Greater Boston area.

PLATFORM: Although I have always been involved in our UMass community in many ways, I never experienced the REAL value of GEO on a personal level so strongly until this past Spring semester when I had some major difficulties within my department. I felt alone, lost, and uninformed and I had no idea how to get the support I needed in order to deal with a high-stakes professional conflict within my department. This is when the VALUE of having access to the GEO became truly REAL for me. Their guidance, coaching, and support not only provided me with the knowledge I needed to get through this high-stakes situation, but also the confidence and support I needed to know I wasn't alone in my fight.

This is why I am running to become a GEO Organizing Committee Member. It is my goal and pledge to devote my time to support our student body not only during bargaining agreement negotiations, demonstrations or union issues, but MOST IMPORTANTLY, supporting our students individually within their departments! It is my commitment to be there for my fellow students and provide them with the guidance, courage, and support that I received; especially when the going gets tough on a personal and professional level. I have personal knowledge and experience with the balancing act that is student life, and this is why I am committed to use my organizing, advocating, and professional skills to work collectively towards a better student life for all

graduate students at UMass Boston. As a GEO Organizing Member, my focus will include individual student grievances, family paid leave, and bringing back childcare options for students and their families among other things.

QUALIFICATIONS: I have been involved with UMass Boston since I was a young teen in the Urban Scholars Program in the late 1990's; not trying to date myself here :) Since then, I have maintained my involvement with UMass Boston in several ways, supporting our community of students and faculty. Most recently, as a PhD student since 2016, my involvement with UMass Boston has come full circle. My time and efforts have been invested in our community through advocating for students' rights such as supporting petitions, activities, and volunteering for the UHS health & wellness program within our campus. As a community member of Boston for the past 30 years, I have served many roles. For example, as a Boston Jamaica Plain Community Rep, a Fellow for the Office of Councilor Lydia Edwards, and a Local 12 Union Admin, I have experience advocating for individual and community rights, systemic city financial cuts, fee increases, and financing of early education programs. It will be my pleasure to put my skills and experience as student, mother, professional, and organizer to good use as a GEO Committee Member to support the GEO efforts to prevent further cuts, fee increases, program cuts, high faculty turnover, improving mental health program, and increasing student debt.



NAME: Julie LaBagnara

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PROGRAM: Sociology, PhD

BIO: Julie is a PhD student in the Sociology Department at the University of Massachusetts, Boston. She is originally from New Jersey and currently lives on the North Shore. Her research interests include mass incarceration, women's re-entry after incarceration, and human-animal studies. She graduated from Franklin & Marshall College in Lancaster, PA in 2002 with a major in Biological Foundations of Behavior with a concentration in Neuroscience and a minor in Sociology. She completed a Master of Science degree at the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey in 2009.

She has been working in clinical research/biotechnology since 2003, managing clinical trials of experimental drugs in various therapeutic areas, including Central Nervous System, Oncology, and Rare Disease. She currently works part-time at Dicerna Pharmaceuticals in Cambridge while pursuing her PhD at UMass Boston.

PLATFORM: I started the PhD program at UMB in Fall 2018. Returning to school full-time after years as a working professional was financially difficult and intimidating. Supporting a family, a mortgage, and general life obligations is nearly impossible on the current graduate student stipends. Parking fees and other school-related costs compound the financial strain. Therefore, I understand the challenges induced by balancing work, home life, school and myriad other challenges and responsibilities graduate students face. I am committed to making education attainable for individuals in all stages and circumstances of life. Being a part of the Graduate Employee Organization will allow me to represent the UMB graduate community, joining others in seeking to decrease student costs, increase graduate student stipends, and work towards an educational institution more accessible to all. Women are underrepresented on the GEO committee and as a gay female, I would provide representation for both women and the LGBTQIA+ student population on campus.

I formerly volunteered at New Beginnings Reentry Services, Inc in South Boston, where I currently serve on the board of directors. New Beginnings is a grassroots organization providing reentry services for formerly incarcerated women. New Beginnings joins other national social justice organizations fighting to end mass incarceration and seeking to improve the conditions inside correctional institutions. In addition to my commitment to social justice, as vice president of the GSSA, I am invested in being a leader within the UMB community for my remaining years at UMass Boston. I hope to have the privilege of representing the rights and needs of graduate students as a member of the GEO.