GRADUATE EMPLOYEE ORGANIZATION (GEO) NOMINEES FOR SPRING 2025 ELECTIONS
Nominees are listed here in alphabetical order by first name.

NAME: Aria Vazquez-Young
EMAIL: Aria.young001@umb.edu
PROGRAM: Critical Ethnic and Community Studies (CECS)

BIO: Hi, everyone! My name is Aria and I have been a proud member of GEO since Fall of 2024. I'm a Dorchester native, born and raised, and have been a student and member of the UMB community since 2019. I have an infatuation with learning and teaching, in their reciprocal nature, and am currently studying in the Critical Ethnic & Community Studies program, with a focus in Anthropology, African Diaspora Archaeology, and Black studies. Outside of school, I work in the city as a bartender, maintaining relationships with other industry laborers in the city that keep it running. At home I love to cook and bake, and you can always catch me bringing yummy things to my friends and colleagues here on campus! Thank you for inviting me into this awesome community, I'm excited to be in this new year with you all.

PLATFORM: As a student that was drawn to UMass Boston for its alluring promise of affordability and inclusion, I can attest to the ways in which this institution is not accomplished in ensuring that every physical body is safe, and every voice is heard. I came to UMass Boston recovering from housing instability, and struggling constantly with food insecurity. The administration and student services departments here could/cannot account for many students like myself that slipped through the cracks, despite their claim of care. My experience as an undergraduate student showed me that we needed more than mass produced mission statements, emails, and web links to care for others, and to find a group that was committed to your health and safety.

Through the years, my time here at UMB with previous students and GEO members has provided me with a community that sheltered me and cared for me in more ways than I can describe. This was only possible because of their willingness to educate me, and invite me into spaces that would ensure my success and my survival. It is my goal to be able to provide vulnerable students and individuals with the level of care and attention that was given to me by faculty and friends.

I am running for the GEO Organizing Committee, because I believe that I can use these experiences to identify where the gaps are in student care and inclusion. I can put my skills and energy to use in promoting more engagement amongst the graduate students, and dispel stereotypes about what the union provides to the community at large. I have experience in managing social media sites and developing methods for community engagement for other organizations, student justice offices, and right here at UMass in the Anthropology department! I have always been committed to providing a safe space for others and sharing resources, and I feel that this role would provide me with the platform and a unanimous team to better fulfill those functions.

NAME: Brendan Lucas
EMAIL: Brendan.lucas001@umb.edu
PROGRAM: Computational Sciences, PhD

BIO: I have been in the UMass system, teaching, tutoring, and doing research, for over six years. My current research is in statistics, and I also teach chemistry here at UMB.

PLATFORM

We earned R1 designation, Next is R1 compensation!

✅ Yes to year-round pay above the poverty line of Boston
✅ Yes to transportation and parking fully covered
✅ Yes to free unlimited meal plan for all GEO members
🚫 No to skipped OR half paychecks
🚫 No to discrimination based on identity

We are all in this together! The union is its members!

NAME: Chengjie Zheng
EMAIL: Chengjie.zheng001@umb.edu
PROGRAM: Computer Science, PhD

BIO: I am a Computer Science PhD candidate at UMass Boston with a passion for fostering collaboration and innovation within the university community. As a core member of the Paul English Applied AI Institute (PEAAII) Student Advisory Council, I've worked closely with Paul English and the Provost Team to help establish the institute's management structure. My experience includes organizing AI talks and seminars that connect students with industry leaders, planning AI Hackathons that encourage creative problem-solving, and spearheading the development of an AI Incubator program to support student-led startups. I am eager to bring my leadership and advocacy experience to the GEO Bargaining Committee, ensuring that graduate employees' voices are heard and their needs are met.

PLATFORM: I am excited to run for a position on the GEO Organizing Committee because I believe that leveraging technology, particularly artificial intelligence (AI), can help graduate employees at UMass Boston work smarter, not harder. As a Computer Science PhD candidate and core member of the Paul English Applied AI Institute's Student Advisory Council, I have firsthand experience using AI to foster collaboration, innovation, and eLiciency. I want to bring this perspective to GEO to help improve the working conditions and future opportunities of all graduate assistants (GAs).

GAs are essential to the university's academic and research missions, yet many face heavy workloads that leave little time to plan for their future careers. By integrating AI tools into everyday tasks, we can streamline workflows, increase productivity, and reduce the time spent on repetitive tasks—allowing GAs to focus more on personal growth and career development. Moreover, using AI to enhance the university's operational eLiciency can help lower overall costs, creating opportunities to allocate more resources toward supporting GAs. This approach fosters a win-win situation: the university benefits from improved performance and reduced expenses, while GAs receive better compensation, lighter workloads, and more time to invest in their futures.

Beyond reducing workloads, developing AI skills equips GAs with valuable experience that gives them a competitive edge in the job market. As a member of the GEO Organizing Committee, I will advocate for initiatives that provide GAs with access to AI tools, training, and collaborative opportunities, ensuring that they are well-prepared to thrive in an increasingly tech-driven world.

I believe that fostering a community where GAs can exchange ideas, learn from one another, and develop practical skills is key to both individual and collective success. By promoting the responsible use of AI within our community, we can enhance the academic experience for GAs while helping UMass Boston remain a leader in innovation and education. I am committed to advocating for solutions that not only address the immediate needs of GAs but also empower them to build successful futures. I look forward to the opportunity to contribute my skills and experience to GEO, ensuring that every GA has the support, resources, and opportunities they need to thrive both during their time at UMass Boston and beyond.