



# Guide to the Graduate Students Union Records, 2013-2018

---

This collection guide was produced in **January 2019**.

This PDF version was created on **April 3, 2026**.

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

Durham 27708

[askRL@duke.edu](mailto:askRL@duke.edu)

URL: <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/>

---

## Table of Contents

---

<a href="#">Summary</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Background</a> .....	3
<a href="#">Administrative Information</a> .....	4
<a href="#">Names and Subjects</a> .....	5
<a href="#">Collection Inventory</a> .....	5

## Summary

---

**Collection Title:**

Duke Graduate Students Union Records, 2013-2018 (bulk 2016-2017)

**Creator:**

Duke Graduate Students Union

**Abstract:**

The Duke Graduate Students Union is a student organization partnered with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) to create a labor union representing graduate student workers at Duke University. Records cover the campaign to form a collective bargaining union as well as subsequent efforts to organize as a direct-action, direct-join union.

**Extent:**

2 Gigabytes  
.1 Linear Feet

**Language:**

Materials in English.

**Collection ID:**

UA.31.10.0005

**Permalink:**

<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/m16t3j>

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Duke Graduate Students Union records, Duke University Archives, David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library, Duke University.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Background

---

**Scope and Content**

The Duke Graduate Students Union records span 2013-2018, with the bulk of the material from 2016-2017. Records include correspondence with University administration, the Graduate and Professional Student Council (GPSC), DGSU membership, and University listserves, as well as solidarity letters from other

labor entities. Also included are promotional materials such as presentations and advertisements, collected anti-union organizing materials, meeting notes, legal documents filed with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) related to the petition to unionize, media coverage, and photographs of events held by DGSU during their campaign.

## **Biographical/Historical**

The Duke Graduate Students Union (DGSU) formed in early 2016, when graduate student workers partnered with the Service Employees International Union (SEIU). These two organizations campaigned to form a majority union and petitioned the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The election in March 2017 was inconclusive: although the tabulated votes indicated the vote would fail, enough ballots remained contested by SEIU and the University to tip the vote in either direction. SEIU, acting on behalf of DGSU, withdrew the petition to unionize from the NLRB. Since spring 2017, DGSU exists as a direct-action, direct-join union and is active on campus advocating for increased benefits for graduate student workers, as well as organizing alongside other employee labor groups at Duke University.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## **Administrative Information**

---

### **Publication Statement**

David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library

411 Chapel Drive

Duke University

Durham 27708

[askRL@duke.edu](mailto:askRL@duke.edu)

URL: <https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/>

### **Access Restrictions**

Access copies of electronic records must be requested through the collection guide and accessed in our reading room. Contact Research Services with questions.

### **Use Restrictions**

The copyright interests in this collection have not been transferred to Duke University. For more information, consult the copyright section of

the Regulations and Procedures of the David M. Rubenstein Rare Book & Manuscript Library.

## Acquisition Information

The Duke Graduate Students Union records were received by the Duke University Archives as a transfer in 2017 and 2018.

## Processing Information

Processed by Matthew Farrell and Tracy Jackson, December 2018, January 2019, and October 2021. Accessions described in this collection guide: UA2017-0033 and UA2018-0090, and UA2021-0032.

[Return to Table of Contents](#)

---

## Names and Subjects

---

- Labor movement
- Labor unions -- North Carolina
- Graduate students -- North Carolina -- Durham
- Duke University -- Administration

---

## Collection Inventory

---

Administration Correspondence, 2016-2017  
(online item available)

Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-  
SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 13 document files (PDF format); approximately 6 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Administration Correspondence, 2016-2017](#)

Advertisements, 2016 (online item available)

Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-  
SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 1 document file (PDF format); less than 1 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Advertisements, 2016](#)

Anti-Union Organizing Efforts, 2016-2017 (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 11 document and image files (predominantly PDF format); approximately 5 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Anti-Union Organizing Efforts, 2016-2017](#)

---

Continuation Fees, 2015 and undated (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 3 document files (PDF and DOCX formats); less than 1 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Continuation Fees, 2015 and undated](#)

---

E-mail Blasts, 2016-2017 (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 21 document files (PDF format); approximately 9 MB.

**Digital Object:** [E-mail Blasts, 2016-2017](#)

---

Fliers and Other DGSU Publications, 2016-2017 (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 9 document and image files (predominately PDF format); approximately 6 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Fliers and Other DGSU Publications, 2016-2017](#)

---

GPSC Correspondence, 2016 (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 2 document files (PDF format); approximately 1 MB.

**Digital Object:** [GPSC Correspondence, 2016](#)

---

Graduate Workers Forward pin Folder 1

---

Intra-Department Listserves on Grad Union, 2016-2017 (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 17 document files (PDF and DOCX formats); approximately 9 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Intra-Department Listserves on Grad Union, 2016-2017](#)

Media Coverage, 2016-2017 (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 38 document files (PDF format); approximately 23 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Media Coverage, 2016-2017](#)

---

Meeting Notes Folder 1

---

Miscellaneous, 2017 (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 2 document files (PDF format); approximately 3 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Miscellaneous, 2017](#)

---

NLRB Legal Documents, 2016-2017 (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 15 document files (PDF format); approximately 20 MB.

**Digital Object:** [NLRB Legal Documents, 2016-2017](#)

---

Photos, 2016-2017 and undated (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 531 still image and video files (predominantly JPEG and MPEG-4 formats); approximately 2 GB.

**Digital Object:** [Photos, 2016-2017 and undated](#)

---

Presentations, undated (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 1 document file (PDF format); less than 1 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Presentations, undated](#)

---

Sample Grad Student Contracts and Work Assignment Letters, 2013-2016 (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 4 document files (PDF and DOCX formats); less than 1 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Sample Grad Student Contracts and Work Assignment Letters, 2013-2016](#)

Solidarity Letters, 2016-2017 (online item available) Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0001

**Physical Description:** 5 document files (predominantly PDF format); approximately 2 MB.

**Digital Object:** [Solidarity Letters, 2016-2017](#)

---

Handwritten meeting notes, 2016 Folder 2

**Scope and Contents**

Michael Becker's handwritten notes: "these notes are from a July 30, 2016 training on university endowments and financing sponsored by SEIU for Duke, UNC, and local community college adjunct faculty, graduate student workers and undergraduate labor solidarity activists. Presenters were from the whistleblowing / activist-research groups LittleSis and Hedge Clippers. This training was part of developing a deeper analysis of Duke's finances to make a case for the financial feasibility of the changes to graduate student funding, benefits, and other measures we were making and to develop messaging to our fellow graduate student workers."

---

Union sign-up cards and mailings, circa 2016 Folder 2

Flyer, Frequently Asked Questions, articles, agendas, and other materials, 2016 Folder 2

Flyers, agendas, notes, pamphlets, and SEIU Southern Region membership packets, 2018 Folder 3

DGSU Fall Disorientation Guide, 2017 Digital-materials UA31-10-0005-SET-0002