



Vision Statement of the SUNY ESF Research Assistants Union

We, the graduate student Research Assistants of the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, have decided to organize ourselves into a union under the Communication Workers of America as ESF Research Assistants Union (RAU). Through our union, we aim to ensure that the needs of our diverse student population are addressed. Only when these needs are met can we fully dedicate ourselves to the unique and important research being carried out at ESF.

As Research Assistants we occupy the roles of both student and employee, each of us with unique challenges and perspectives. This position is inherently precarious as we find ourselves simultaneously expected to perform at a high professional level whilst being saddled with severe economic hardship with little to no influence over the often poor conditions in which we work. Through collective bargaining, we will amplify our voices at the decision-making table to negotiate the following:

- Raise Research Assistant base pay, which is below a living and minimum wage in Syracuse
- Reduce or eliminate student fees and ensure transparency for how existing fees are spent
- Improve means of communication with SUNY-RF officials
- Obtain affordable health insurance that includes dental, vision, and mental health services
- Secure insurance coverage without interruptions due to appointment changes, such as over summer periods when many research assistants lose their benefits
- Provide effective legal protection and recourse against overwork, workplace harassment, and other workplace issues
- Provide legal protection and financial support (ie. SEVIS fees) for international graduate Research Assistants
- Ensure reasonable accommodations for those of us who are parents and caretakers and establish a framework to support childcare
- Ensure the security of our positions through a formalized grievance procedure

Collective bargaining is the only way for Research Assistants at ESF to institute concrete changes, address our current challenges, and build the framework for improving future workplace conditions. This union will create a structure of support and representation for current and future graduate Research Assistants at ESF. Realizing these objectives will allow us to better serve our ESF and off-campus community and to fulfill our common mission of improving our world.

Signed,

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