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News

## GEU-UAW demands UConn retract new protest policies

By **Pierce Colfer** October 4, 2024

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Students gathered around to demonstrate their support for Palestine during the pro-Palestinian encampment from April 25-30. Photo by Kiki Katsumata-Smith/The Daily Campus

On Sept. 25, the University of Connecticut Graduate Employee and Postdoc Union released a statement regarding the new protest policies that the UConn administration enacted at the beginning of the 2024-2025 academic year. In the statement, the GEU-UAW called for UConn to retract the policies that were passed and to release 26 students who were arrested following a pro-Palestinian protest and encampment that was held earlier this year.

GEU-UAW condemned the reason for the enactment of these policies, saying, “we see these changes as a punitive response to student protests; an escalation of the biased repression of Palestinian and pro-Palestinian community members; and an attack on the free speech and right to protest of our entire UConn community—including the labor movement.” They went on to say that “free speech and the right to protest must be respected everywhere, especially at public universities such as ours.”

These policies came in the wake of a pro-Palestinian encampment that was held by Dove Tower between April 25 and April 30. The five-day protest called for UConn to divest from and cut ties with

the industries that profit from the war in Israel and Palestine. This protest culminated in [the](#) arrest of 26 students after they refused to disburse from the encampment.

GEU-AUW, having previously spoken out about the arrests when they initially happened, condemned the response to the encampment in their statement once again.

“Rather than engage with the students’ cries to end the complicity of their university in the violence, UConn’s administration responded with an aggressive police mobilization, arresting 26 protesters on charges of trespassing,” GEU-AUW said. “We reiterate our earlier condemnation of these arrests and call on the university to ask the State’s Attorney to drop the charges.”

The policies enacted by UConn administration, which can be found at [UConn’s policy website](#), include additional restrictions on amplified sound, outdoor gatherings and postering and flyerling. GEU-UAW talked about how “these policies disproportionately impact pro-Palestinian demonstrators and place undue burden on them through lengthy and unnecessary disciplinary processes.”

“We are the future of higher education and see these policies as contributing to broader, troubling attacks on academic freedom. It is our right to advocate, critique, dissent, and organize for causes that are meaningful to us, whether or not they align with the University’s current financial arrangements or the personal politics of its administrators,” GEU-UAW said. “While it is obvious that these changes are a response to the anti-genocide protests of April 2024, we, organized workers at this university, understand that these rules are intended to have a chilling effect on all campus organizing, including the labor movement and our fight for worker rights.”

At the end of their statement, GEU-UAW called on other unions, student constituencies and progressive organizations to “to demand that these policies be retracted and fight for our right to protest and organize at UConn and beyond.”

GEU-UAW was founded in 2013 and is a union that consists of graduate employees and postdocs. According to [their website](#), the union fights for the rights of their workers at a local, state and federal level. For more information about the organization reach out to [uconngradunion@gmail.com](mailto:uconngradunion@gmail.com).