Open letter to the Board of Regents of The University of Michigan

With all due respect, we, the undersigned faculty and graduate students of the University of Michigan wish to express our strong disagreement with your decision to recognize GSRAs as public employees, and we are deeply disappointed that you would take an action that is so detrimental to the University of Michigan and its faculty and students. In 1981 the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) determined that while graduate student instructors are considered public employees, GSRAs are not. The rationale underlying that decision was based on the fact that the primary role of GSRAs is to conduct research in support of attaining graduate degrees. That rationale and attendant role are equally true today in 2012 as they were in 1981.

1. Scientific and engineering research entails a complex, multi-step, often circuitous, process that might involve a mix of theoretical modeling, statistical sampling, computer simulations, and experimental measurements. The role of a student pursuing a graduate degree--regardless of whether he/she is a GSRA, an NSF Fellowship recipient, or a foreign student funded by his/her own country--is to learn the a-to-z of this process by carrying out a research project to answer an original question or to advance current technology capability to a higher level. The corresponding role of the faculty advisor is to guide and train the student in how to develop and execute the research process.

2. Faculty pursue research in narrowly defined specialties. The formation of a mentor/mentee relationship between a research advisor and a graduate student stems from their mutual interest in a specific research specialty. The guidance provided by the mentor and the training (apprenticeship) received by the mentee is the same whether or not the graduate student is a GSRA or not.

3. In most academic disciplines, completion of the PhD degree requires successful passage of examinations administered by faculty committees at three stages: (1) the Qualifying Exam, (2) the Preliminary Exam and (3) the Final Defense. These examinations are totally blind to the type of support received by a graduate student, thereby affirming that a GSRA is first and foremost a graduate

student whose progress and performance is judged by faculty committees on the basis of his/her academic development and research accomplishments, and such judgment is carried out uniformly for all graduate students, independently of their source of funding. In fact, in a typical group of graduate students pursuing research under the supervision of a faculty member, the group will include GSRAs and students supported by University and non-University Fellowships. There is no distinction between them in regards to the type of research carried out by them or the criteria for satisfactory progress.

4. It has been suggested that the Bayh-Dole Act has changed the role of GSRAs. Nothing is further from the truth. When an invention disclosure is filed, the only criterion for whose names should be on the disclosure is based on the degree of technical contribution. Those named in the disclosure may include faculty, post-docs, GSRAs, and graduate students supported by University or NSF Fellowships. Whether or not those graduate students are supported by funds from research grants and contracts or by funds from Fellowships administered by the University is irrelevant to both the disclosure process and the ownership of the associated intellectual property.

5. The preceding statements are equally true today as they were in 1981. Neither the role of the graduate student, nor the roles of the research advisor and faculty oversight committees have materially changed since 1981. MERC ruled in 1981 that a GSRA was not a public employee. None of the conditions or practices pertaining to that definition have changed since 1981.

In closing, we look forward to a ruling by Administrative Law Judge, the Honorable Julia Stern, that affirms the position stated above and relegates your ill-advised action in favor of GSRA unionization to history.

Sincerely,

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Gary D Luker, Assoc. Prof.
Johnathon Koglin, Cand.
Yuxuan Liu, Pre-Cand.
Efrain Hernandez-Rivera, GSRA
Geoffrey Greening, GSRA
Mitchell Young, GSRA
Thomas Saller, PhD Cand.
Anne Allene Campbell, GSRA
Michael Atzmon, Professor
Sara Pozzi, Assoc. Prof.
Mike McMurtrey, GSRA

Ophthalmology & Visual Sci.
Alon Kahana, Asst. Prof.
Thomas W. Gardner, Professor

Otolaryngology & Psychology
Josef M. Miller, Professor

Pathology
Arul Chinnaiyan, Professor
Alexey Nesvizhskii, Assoc Prof
Yali Dou, Asst. Prof.
Cory Hogaboam, Professor

Pediatrics
Sophie Paczesny, Asst. Prof.

Pediatrics/Pathology
Elizabeth R Lawlor, Assoc Prof

Periodontics and Oral Medicine
Renny T. Franceschi, Professor

Pharmacology
Leslie S. Satin, Professor
Kathryn Luderman, GSRA
Heather OMalley, Post-Doc.

Physics
Michael Slootsky, GSRA
Finn Larsen, Assoc. Prof.
Yifan Zhang, PhD Cand.
Junjie Zhu, Asst. Prof.
David Gerdes, Professor
Carl William Akerlof, Prof.
J. Keith Riles, Professor
Paul R. Berman, Professor
Robert Savit, Professor
Dragan Huterer, Asst. Prof.
Gregory Tarlé, Professor
Alan D Krisch, Emeritus Prof.
August Evrard, Professor
Meredith Henstridge, Grad St.
Gordon Kane, Professor
David W. Gidley, Professor
John C Vandervelde, Professor
Ctirad Uher, Professor
Jeff McMahon, Asst. Prof.
Lawrence W. Jones, Em. Prof.
Samuel Krimm, Professor
John Schaibley, PhD Cand.
Zhen Zhang, PhD Cand.
Timothy McKay, Professor

Physiology
Amy Sutton, Pre-Cand.

Political Science & Statistics
Walter Mebane, Professor

Program in Biomedical Sciences
Megan Greenwald-Yarnell, GSRA

Psychiatry
Shelly Flagel, Res. Asst. Prof
Huda Akil, Professor
Margit Burmeister, Professor

Psychology
Michael Shvartsman, Pre-Cand.
Terry Robinson, Professor
Stephen Maren, Professor
Joshua Berke, Assoc. Prof.
Martin Sarter, Professor
Anusari Dewasurendra, Res. Sci
Patricia Reuter-Lorenz, Prof.
John Jonides, Professor
Israel Liberzon, Professor
Toni Antonucci, Professor
Brenda Volling, Professor
Debra Levine, GSRA
Joseph Orr, PhD Cand.
Brandon Aragona, Asst. Prof.
Cheng Wang, GSRA
Phoebe C. Ellsworth, Professor
Albert C.Cain, Professor
Norbert Schwarz, Professor
John Schulenberg, Professor
Pamela Davis-Kean, Assoc. Prof.

Public Health
Lesli Kiedrowski, Cand.

School of Business
Michael J Pflug, MBA 2011
Bret Herzig, GSRA
Mike Palazzolo, GSRA
Christina Zafeiridou, Pre-Cand
Kim Cameron, Professor

School of Education
Patricio Herbst, Assoc. Prof.
Vilma Mesa, Asst. Prof.
Carla O'Connor, Assoc. Prof.

Social Work & Devel. Psychol.

Adriana Aldana, PhD Cand.

Statistics
Elizaveta Levina, Assoc. Prof.
Susan A. Murphy, Professor
Edward Ionides, Assoc. Prof.

Urology
Mark Day, Professor

Non-Academic
Andrea Fischer Newman, Regent
Andrew C. Richner, Regent

Total as of Feb. 16, 2012: 785

Total Faculty: **332**
Total Post-Docs: **13**
Total Graduate Students: **438**
Total Other: **2**