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Article I: Name

The name of this organization shall be the Teaching Assistants Union (TAU), AFT-MI Local 1729, AFL-CIO.

## Article II: Vision Statement

The Teaching Assistants Union is a labor union comprised of all graduate teaching assistants at Western Michigan University. We collectively defend and preserve the rights of all teaching assistants, ensuring the fair enforcement of our contract. Through a participatory model of democratic self-governance, we empower each other in order to fulfill the responsibilities we owe to our fellow members, our university, and our society. We are committed to justice and solidarity, and we collaborate as researchers, educators, and union members in pursuit of these ideals on campus and in the broader community.

Created and adopted by the TAU Organizing Committee May, 2015

### Article III: Affiliations

In the interest of solidarity and empowerment, TAU shall be affiliated with, and remain in good standing with:

the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO;

AFT Michigan, AFL-CIO;

the South-Central Michigan AFL-CIO Labor Council.

The President of TAU shall serve as a delegate and representative to the aforementioned organizations.

## Article IV: Membership Requirements

### Section 1: Nondiscrimination

This organization shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, marital status, age, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, able-bodiedness, citizenship status, parental or pregnancy status, familial status, veteran status, membership in any social or political group or organization, prior criminal record, height, or weight.

### Section 2: Membership Types

*Full Members:* All teaching assistant employees of Western Michigan University shall be eligible for full membership in TAU. Full members in good standing (where “good standing” is defined as a member who is current in payment of dues) are eligible to serve as Executive Officers, vote in all elections and membership issues, join and chair committees, and attend all membership meetings and events. Membership dues are determined by membership vote and shall be deducted per the TAU contract.

*Associate Members:* All graduate students of Western Michigan University who are not teaching assistants shall be eligible for associate membership in TAU. Associate members in good standing shall be eligible to vote in all elections and membership issues (except contract ratification), join and chair committees as appropriate, and attend all membership meetings and events. Associate membership dues are determined by membership vote.

Associate membership may be extended to non-graduate students with approval by the Executive Board.

## Article V: Organizational Structure

All activities of all Union structures, officers, staff, and members shall be governed by this Constitution and all by-laws.

### Section 1: Definitions

*Standing Committees:* permanent committees established in this Constitution. There are two standing committees: the Organizing Committee, chaired by the President, and the Information Committee, chaired by the Communications Officer.

*Latent Committees:* potential committees which may be called into existence by the appropriate Officer without approval of the Organizing Committee. There are two latent committees: the Contract Protection Committee, chaired by the Vice President, and the Finance Committee, chaired by the Treasurer.

*Select Committees:* temporary committees formed as-needed to address specific issues and require approval by the Organizing Committee. The Organizing Committee shall establish the purpose, scope, duration, size, etc. of a select committee. These may be chaired by any Organizing Committee member.

### Section 2: Committees

The union shall be comprised of three types of committees: standing committees, latent committees, and select committees. All committees require a minimum of four members, including a Committee Chair. It shall be the duty of the Committee Chair to recruit committee members. Any dues-paying member in good standing may self-select to be a member of any committee, so long as committee membership does not create a conflict of interest. The rules of each committee shall be established by the Committee Chair in accordance with this Constitution and all by-laws.

#### Organizing Committee

The governing body of the Union shall be the Organizing Committee.

*Members:* The Organizing Committee shall be open to any dues-paying member in good standing and chaired by the President. In the event that the President is unable to chair an Organizing Committee meeting, the Vice President shall assume this role. A committee chair

must be present to hold a legitimate Organizing Committee meeting. All elected Officers and staff are expected to attend the Organizing Committee meetings.

*Purpose:* Through a deliberative form a decision-making, the Organizing Committee shall give direction to the Executive Board. The Organizing Committee shall collectively establish the goals of the Union and the methods of pursuing those goals.

*Meeting Frequency:* The Organizing Committee shall endeavor to meet every other week during the academic year. Meeting dates, times, and locations must be publicized and readily available for member access. A quorum for Organizing Committee requires at least four dues-paying members in good standing, including the Committee Chair.

The Organizing Committee may, at its discretion, establish meeting ground rules, processes, and practices for meetings. The Organizing Committee shall pursue consensus through discussion, debate, and deliberation. Formal roll call votes are required for the following issues: dues changes; changes to by-laws; proposal of constitutional amendments; annual budget approval; endorsement of political candidates; and creation/elimination of non-executive or Executive Officer positions. In addition, formal roll call votes may be taken at the President's discretion, or at the request of any member in attendance. Votes shall be decided by a simple majority and results shall be recorded by the Communications Officer.

### Section 3: Executive Board

*Members:* The Executive Board shall be comprised of four elected Officers: the President, the Vice President, the Communications Officer, and the Treasurer. Any full member in good standing shall be eligible to serve as an Executive Officer. Candidates are required to have been a Union member for a minimum of three months prior to the call for officers.

*Purpose:* The Executive Board shall take direction from the Organizing Committee. The Officers shall act in an advisory capacity to the Organizing Committee and endeavor to faithfully execute the decisions made by the Organizing Committee. During academic breaks when the Organizing Committee is not assembled, the Executive Board shall be vested with discretionary power. In addition to their regular duties, Officers shall mentor incoming Officers-Elect.

*Meeting Frequency:* The Executive Board shall meet monthly throughout the calendar year. An Executive Board meeting quorum requires the presence of at least two officers.

### Section 4: Executive Officers

Each Executive Officer shall be elected to serve a period of one year. The term shall begin on May 1 and end on April 30. In the interest of creating a functioning and well-maintained organization, there shall be an overlap period of two months during which the sitting Executive Officers shall mentor Officers-Elect on the duties, processes, and procedures of the Executive Board in general and the specific position. Sitting Officers shall retain all their duties and responsibilities during this two month overlap.

### *President*

The President shall:

serve as Chair of the Organizing Committee. As Chair, s/he is responsible for developing and implementing agendas. The President shall also be an ex-officio member of all standing and latent committees, and all select committees as appropriate;

solely be vested with the power to convene non-scheduled meetings of the Organizing Committee with a 48-hour notice to members, including the first meeting of the semester;

serve as the Chief Representative to the Union in all its dealings with other entities both on- and off-campus;

in the interest of solidarity and openness, maintain relationships with the Presidents of the other local Unions;

serve as Chief Executive of all Union employees;

serve as one of the financial Officers of the Union and shall be an authorized signatory of financial documents;

have the power to delegate duties to other Officers and Union staff;

be a delegate to the state AFL-CIO body, and a delegate to the AFT body, in accordance with the Union's affiliations with these entities;

be vested with discretionary decision-making powers.

### *Vice President*

The Vice President shall:

serve as Chair of the Contract Protection Committee;

serve as the grievance officer and shall follow the appropriate processes in the event of a grievance;

in the interest of solidarity and openness, maintain relationships with the grievance officers of the other campus Unions;

be the contact person for the University's Director of Labor Relations;

assume the duties of the President if s/he is unable to perform them;

be responsible for other duties delegated by the President.

### *Communications Officer*

The Communications Officer shall:

serve as Chair of the Information Committee;

take minutes at all Organizing Committee meetings and Executive Board meetings;

maintain non-financial records and make them readily available to members as appropriate;

notify the membership of regularly scheduled Organizing Committee meetings, as well as any emergency meetings;

maintain the Union's website and social media accounts;

assist the President in member correspondence;

be responsible for other duties delegated by the President.

### *Treasurer*

The Treasurer shall:

serve as Chair of the Finance Committee;

maintain all financial records;

receive, deposit, and disburse all funds;

maintain membership records;

arrange for an annual audit, in accordance with AFT and legal requirements;

propose an annual budget;

be responsible for other duties delegated by the President.

## Article VI: Elections

Elections shall be conducted in accordance with the AFT Constitution and the standards established in the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act.

### Section 1: Eligibility

Any full dues-paying member in good standing shall be eligible for elected office after three months of continuous TAU membership prior to the call for Officer nominations.

### Section 2: Electoral Process

*Elections Officer:* The Elections Officer(s) shall be selected by the Organizing Committee in January. The Elections Officer shall serve for the duration of the electoral process and may not be an Officer candidate or a sitting Officer. The Organizing Committee shall select an Elections Officer(s) to oversee special votes as necessary. The Elections Officer(s) shall have access to any information necessary to complete his/her duties.

*Call for Nominations:* The Elections Officer must issue a call for Executive Officer nominations no later than February 1. This call must include: officer titles, constitutional duties, relevant electoral dates, and information on the nomination procedure. Nominees must submit a petition containing the following: name, contact information, position, and five signatures of dues-paying members in good standing. No member may run for more than one office simultaneously. The nomination period shall be open for two weeks.

*Voting:* Within one week of the close of the nomination period, the Elections Officer shall publish and disseminate candidate information to the membership and open the voting period. Voting shall be open to all dues-paying members in good standing for a period of no less than seven days. Voting shall be conducted through a secure web-based voting site, approved by the Elections Officer.

*Results:* The candidate who receives a simple majority of the votes shall be declared the winner. In the event of a tie, the winner shall be determined by coin toss. Results shall be disseminated within seven days.

### Section 3: Overlap Period

Officers-Elect shall begin training for their duties no later than March 1. Sitting Officers shall mentor incoming officers through the end of their term. Officers-Elect shall assume complete responsibility on May 1.

It shall be the responsibility of all account signers to change contact information, as well as assist in the update of new account signatures with the organization's financial institution after each election. In addition, it is each outgoing Officer's responsibility to compile and present to his/her replacement all information, documents, and items pertinent to the office and necessary for the new Officer to fulfill the duties of his/her elected position.

#### Section 4: Vacancies

In the event of a vacancy of any Executive Officer position except the President, the President may determine whether to delegate the position's duties to the remaining Officers or to appoint a replacement Officer. In the event of the latter, the Organizing Committee must approve the President's appointment at the next regularly scheduled Organizing Committee meeting. The Organizing Committee may either approve the appointment or reject it.

In the event of a Presidential vacancy, the Vice President shall assume the duties of the President until the next regularly scheduled Organizing Committee meeting. The Organizing Committee shall determine whether to hold a special election or whether to appoint an interim President.

In the event of a Presidential and Vice-Presidential vacancy, the Organizing Committee shall appoint an interim President and shall determine whether to hold a special election to fill the vacancy.

In the event that the entire Executive Board is vacant and no Organizing Committee meeting is scheduled within 30 days, then any member may circulate a petition to be signed by fifteen members for the purpose of convening a special Organizing Committee meeting and shall be considered legitimate if convened in good faith based on the affirmation of the members present that they are members in good standing. The original petitioner shall chair the meeting. This meeting shall be for the sole purpose of appointing an Elections Officer. The Elections Officer shall then hold an election pursuant to Article VI, Section 2 to fill the vacancies.

#### Section 5: Officer Removal

In order to initiate proceedings for the involuntary removal of an Executive Officer, a written petition must be submitted to the Organizing Committee which is signed by either all other Executive Officers or five members in good standing. The Organizing Committee shall formally

vote to either dismiss the petition or hold a special vote open to all members in good standing. If the approval receives a simple majority from the Organizing Committee, then the Executive Board shall, within seven days, hold an online vote open to all members. The voting period shall be open for seven days. If the Executive Officer is removed, the vacancy procedures shall be invoked in accordance with Article IV Section 4.

## Article VII: Finances

### Section 1: Membership Dues

At any time, the Executive Board may recommend to the Organizing Committee that each member pay such membership dues as reasonably necessary to ensure the financial health of the Union and meet the Union's goals. Upon a majority vote of the Organizing Committee approving such a recommendation, the recommendation must then be presented to the entire membership for a vote to approve or reject the recommendation through an online vote open to all members. The poll must be open for seven days. Upon a majority vote of the votes cast by the members, the recommendation shall be approved. Each member shall be responsible for paying such dues as established under this section pursuant to any procedures the Treasurer establishes.

### Section 2: Budget

*Proposal:* The Executive Board shall present a budget proposal to the Organizing Committee by the last day of February. The Organizing Committee shall consider the budget proposal for a minimum of 14 days and maximum of 30 days. Upon approval of the budget proposal by the Organizing Committee, an online vote open to all members must be initiated within seven days and the poll must be open for seven days. Upon a simple majority vote of the votes cast by the members, the budget shall be approved.

*Unbudgeted Expenditures:* The budget proposal shall include two limitations on unbudgeted expenditures:

1. a proposed limit on the total amount of all annual unbudgeted expenditures that the Executive Board may approve without consulting the Organizing Committee or the membership;
2. a proposed limit on the total amount of all annual unbudgeted expenditures that the Organizing Committee may approve without consulting the membership.

New expenditures that would cause total annual unbudgeted expenditures to exceed both of the above limits must be approved by the Organizing Committee and then presented to the entire membership through an online vote open to all members. The poll must be open for seven days. Upon a majority vote of the votes cast by the membership, the expenditure shall be approved.

### Section 3: Financial Authority

For the protection of the Union and its Officers, it is required that two authorized persons approve all monetary transactions. Only Executive Officers or Union staff may be designated signatories. Organizational funds may not be used for anything violating University rules or local, state, and federal laws.

#### Section 4: Annual Audit

An annual financial audit shall be arranged by the Treasurer, in accordance with AFT guidelines and all state and federal laws.

## Article VIII: Constitutional Amendments and By-Laws

### Section 1: Amendments

A written proposal to amend this Constitution may be submitted to the Organizing Committee by either any dues-paying member in good standing along with the supporting signatures of five members, or the Executive Board. The Organizing Committee shall vote whether to approve the proposal for consideration by the full membership. If the approval receives a simple majority from the Organizing Committee, then the Executive Board shall, within seven days, hold an online vote open to all members. The voting period shall be open for seven days. The amendment shall be adopted if 2/3 of the votes cast approve it. Results of the vote shall be disseminated to the membership within seven days.

### Section 2: By-Laws

All proposed by-laws must be consistent with this Constitution and its Amendments.

A written proposal to alter the by-laws may be submitted to the Organizing Committee by either any dues-paying member in good standing along with the supporting signatures of five members, or the Executive Board. The Organizing Committee shall vote whether to approve the petition for consideration. If the approval receives a simple majority, then the Organizing Committee shall, at its next meeting, vote whether to pass the proposed by-law. Adoption of the by-law requires a simple majority of the Organizing Committee.

## Article IX: Ratification

### Section 1: Ratification

This Constitution shall be submitted for consideration to the Organizing Committee. The Organizing Committee shall vote whether to approve this Constitution for consideration by the full membership. If the approval receives a simple majority from the Organizing Committee, then the Executive Board shall, within seven days, hold an online vote open to all members. The voting period shall be open for seven days. This Constitution shall be adopted if 2/3 of the voting membership approve it. Results of the vote shall be disseminated to the membership within seven days.

### Section 2: Rescindment

A written proposal to rescind this Constitution may be submitted to the Organizing Committee by either any dues-paying member in good standing along with the supporting signatures of five members, or the Executive Board. The Organizing Committee shall vote whether to approve the petition for consideration by the full membership. If the approval receives a simple majority from the Organizing Committee, then the Executive Board shall hold an online vote open to all members within seven days. The voting period shall be open for seven days. The proposal shall be adopted if 2/3 of the voting population approve it. Results of the vote shall be disseminated to the membership within seven days.

Notwithstanding the above, this Constitution and its amendments and by-laws shall be the governing documents of this Union until such a time as a new Constitution is approved by the membership in accordance with Article IX Section 1.