

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020- 2021



**RESIDENT &  
FELLOW  
PHYSICIAN  
UNION -  
NORTHWEST**

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RESIDENT & FELLOW PHYSICIAN UNION - NORTHWEST

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# ABOUT THE UNION

## WHO WE ARE

RFPU - NW is the independent labor union representing 1,400 residents and fellows at the University of Washington. RFPU - NW members represent approximately 20% of doctors in King County.

## MISSION

Advocate for the medical/dental trainees of the University of Washington and affiliated programs in matters of employment, professional development, and personal development during their training.

## VISION

Work collectively with members, the employer, and union siblings across the University of Washington to improve pay and working conditions for workers to keep our institution competitive and in line with cost of living.

# HISTORY OF UWHA/RFPU

RESIDENT & FELLOW PHYSICIAN UNION - NORTHWEST

1964 – The newly established UWHA took the lead in advocating for workplace improvements. We bargained collectively for a raise and increased benefits and were able to avoid a looming strike. We still lacked a contract, meaning that the conditions of our employment could change at any time.

1970s— During the course of many meetings, UWHA and UW crafted the “Blue Book,” the first draft contract for residents. In 1980, the advisory committee stopped meeting and the proposed grievance procedures faded away. The School of Medicine never publicized the Blue Book and we again found ourselves demoralized without a contract and without any legal basis for future negotiation.

1980s—The UW administration refused to recognize the UWHA as a representative of the residents and again refused to bargain. Once again we prepared to strike and we successfully negotiated a contract guaranteeing improvements in work conditions such as meals provided while on call, a grievance procedure, better pay, and fringe benefits. During the 1980-81 wave of resident activism, there was much discussion on the legal status of residents and their rights to negotiate collectively. At that time, under the law, residents were clearly defined as students without the power or legal backing to collectively bargain. It was only by threatening to strike, that University officials were forced to recognize us as a nonexclusive collective bargaining group and accede to some of their demands.

1990s–2000s – Following its successes in 1981, UWHA entered a state of dormancy over the next two decades. In 1999-2000, residents elected to the advisory committee were eager to improve the dialogue and discussion about resident working conditions environment in the UW system. We realized that restoring the UWHA was the best way to achieve these goals. We drafted new bylaws, elected officers, and resumed control of the Housestaff Association dues accounts. Over the next decade, the resuscitated UWHA achieved some improvements such as making residents eligible for civil and educational leave, enrolling residents in matched retirement accounts, and creation of the Safe Ride Home program.

2010s—A survey of residents clearly demonstrated low wages relative to the cost of living in Seattle and high educational debt burdens. Furthermore, despite the rising cost of living in Seattle, UW was paying us at or below the national average. The high cost of parking and childcare also placed a financial burden on residents.

# HISTORY OF UWHA/RFPU

CONTINUED...

We brought these issues to the University's attention but were met with heavy resistance. In 2014, after collecting hundreds of signatures from housestaff, we reorganized into a union. The University fought this assiduously. Despite an extensive campaign and legal challenges by the University, leading to the Washington state Supreme Court, in the fall of 2014 we won the right to unionize. We voted overwhelmingly (>75%) in favor of forming a union.

Negotiations between UWHA and UW began in 2015 and continued for almost two years. Initially, UW refused to offer any form of housing or parking funds, or increase salaries commensurate with the costs of living. After over 20 months of negotiations, we reached a new contract.

The new contract was brought to the housestaff, who voted overwhelmingly (>99%) to ratify it. Following ratification on November 1, 2016, the new contract went into effect. That year the UWHA administered childcare fund was established.

In 2017, we voted to change UWHA constitution (more than doubling the number of board members and officers), hiring the first part-time staff member, and the continued enthusiasm enabled the union to expand its role.

2019-2020—As bargaining of the second contract loomed, UW refused to bargain after clinic hours to ensure we could continue to care for patients. After seven months of battling, we agreed to begin bargaining sessions at 3:00pm. Around this time we hired our first full-time staff member.

Starting a month and a half after the contract expired, we began bargaining in July 2019. With little to no movement for months, we hosted our first large scale action, a 15-minute Unity Break - where over 500 of us walked out of four hospitals and multiple clinics (including in Boise, ID) and lead speeches at each location. This was the start to widespread media attention. In January 2020, we hosted our first Resident Wellness Day, where more than 200 residents used a sick day on the same day to prioritize their own wellness needs.

In early 2020, the first confirmed case of COVID19 was detected in Seattle, WA. Rates continued to grow exponentially, having a significant impact on our members, our patients, and the community. We came to a tentative agreement with UW Medicine in June 2020 after 11 months of bargaining with significant wins, including a fourth week of vacation, fully-subsidized public transportation, \$600 increase to the annual housing stipend, exemptions for pregnant residents from 24-hour & overnight call, doubling of professional development days, and more.

In September 2020, we rebranded to Resident & Fellow Physician Union - Northwest (RFPU - NW) to better reflect membership and center the organization's role as a labor union.

# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

RESIDENT & FELLOW PHYSICIAN UNION - NORTHWEST

To all Resident & Fellow Physician - Northwest general members:

The last two and a half years in union leadership has been an incredibly rewarding experience and privilege. I've been fortunate to work with so many dedicated individuals, and connect with many of you and hear your stories.

The progress we've made is astounding. In 2018, we had a handful of board members, one part time employee, and limited engagement. Today, we have two full time professional staff, over 20 members running for competitive board positions, and have expanded our capacity remarkably. I'm beyond grateful to our executive director, Brenna Stroup, for her dedication to our members and leadership in growing the strength of our union, and to our newest staff member, Madison Eggerding, for all her amazing contributions in such a short time.

Together, we successfully fought for the next iteration of our contract, boosting salary, vacation time, and other benefits and protections. We expanded our political influence through endorsements, and made our voice heard through numerous media stories and op-eds. We won several grievances to enforce our contract, and supported our members in countless situations. We advocated for UW trainees to be protected and valued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. We partnered with other labor unions to advocate for marginalized workers in Washington. We've worked to center social justice issues and advanced work in the care and health of incarcerated patients. We've encouraged and inspired many groups of residents around the country to organize and stand up for themselves.

Still, we have a long way to go until the University of Washington is a place where residents and fellows are fairly compensated, where the training environment doesn't compromise their well being and strain their mental, physical, and financial health, and where our physicians and institutional leaders represent the diversity of our communities.

Remember that RFPU-NW is your labor union, here to fight for you to be valued, respected, and protected. Importantly: as general members, you are the union, and you are your best advocate. The board is here to organize and lead, but it takes all of us working together to accomplish our goals and make progress.

(Continued on next page)

# MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

CONTINUED...

So stay engaged, and take ownership in the process. Trust the organizational experience that so many have built in the past several years. Examine closely what you have normalized in our training and healthcare systems. Recognize your value and the power you have with your colleagues to make a difference.

Our future is limited only by our imagination and our courage.

In solidarity,

Brandon Peplinski  
President | Resident & Fellow Physician Union - Northwest

# PROGRAMS

RESIDENT & FELLOW PHYSICIAN UNION - NORTHWEST

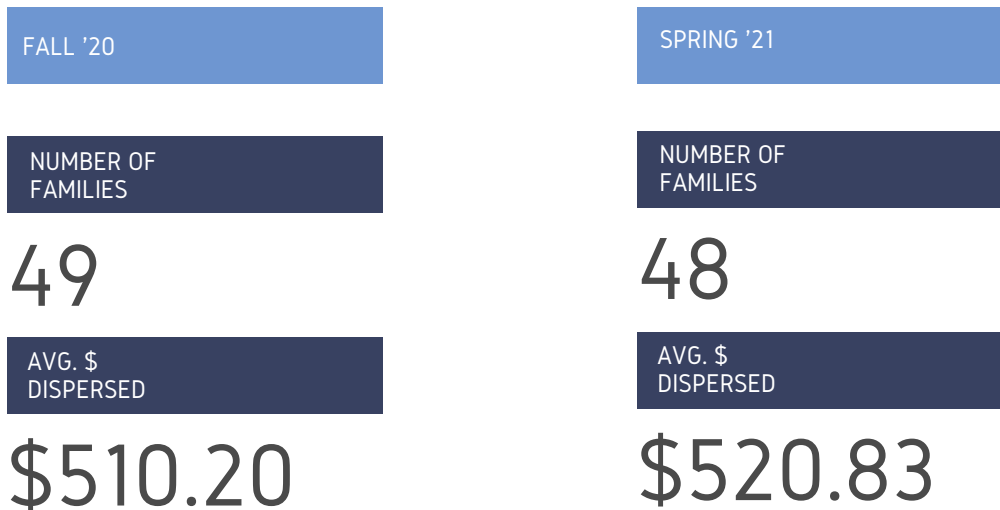
## CHILDCARE PROGRAM

The childcare fund provides \$50,000 annually to residents to offset the high cost of childcare in Seattle. Based on eligibility, the lump sum is distributed among eligible residents after stratification (i.e. number of children, age, and number of residents in the family). Half of the fund (\$25,000) is disbursed in the fall, and the remaining \$25,000 is disbursed in the spring.

Moreover, the CBA provides childcare benefits such as, priority enrollment at Bright Horizons, and backup childcare at Bright Horizons and KinderCare. In addition, waitlist fees are partially reimbursed by GME.

Though we are pleased to have won this fund through negotiation during the first and second contract, this amount is insufficient, as the childcare costs in Seattle are typically at least \$1800/month-- potentially more depending on the number of children and their ages. More assistance is needed to help offset these staggering costs, and RFPU - NW will continue to fight for increased financial support for this fund in the next round of bargaining.

Look for emails each fall and spring with a link to a survey that serves as the application. This benefit is open to all dues-paying union members.





# PROGRAMS

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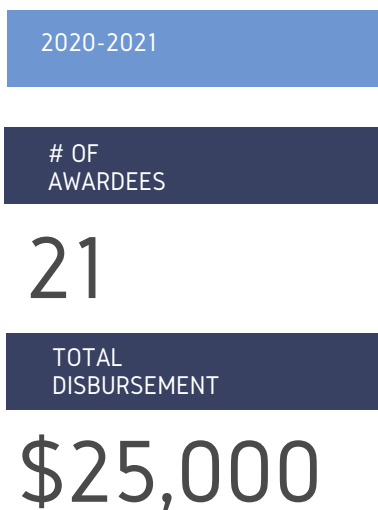
## GRANT PROGRAM

The RFPU - NW Grant Program supports high quality housestaff research and scholarship. Previously, this fund supported travel costs for presenting research at conferences. Due to COVID, the fund was adapted again this year to fund basic, translational, and clinical research, in addition to virtual conference costs. All proposals are reviewed by at least two reviewers and scored using a common rubric according to five characteristics: Quality, Practicality, Importance, Mentor/Facilities, Budget.

Reviewers receive scoring training to ensure fairness to all applicants and minimize the likelihood of extreme outlier scores. Reviewers score the applicants anonymously.

RFPU - NW hosts the Grant Awardee Spotlight each year to share the work of awardees via social media and our newsletter.

This benefit is open to all dues-paying union members.

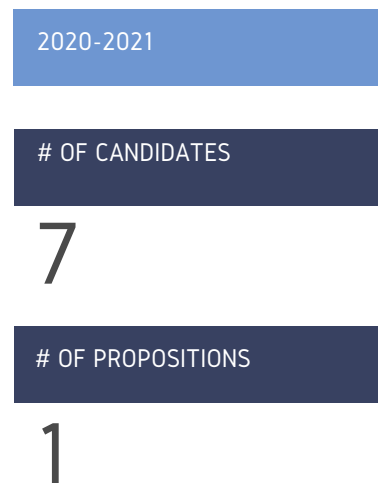


## ENDORSEMENT PROGRAM

RFPU - NW ran our first annual endorsement process for elected officials in late Summer of 2020. We are proud to have endorsed seven candidates for office and one proposition. Four of the seven candidates went on to win their races.

Local elections are critical to seeing progress (or setbacks) in our local labor movement, and various issues that intersect with healthcare accessibility. RFPU - NW is committed to supporting candidates who will fight to make Seattle and our region equitable for those who live here (including our patients).

Members of the Political Advocacy Working Group put together a questionnaire for candidates to submit. These questionnaires are reviewed by the working group, and then democratically vote for who to recommend to membership. All dues-paying members of RFPU - NW are eligible to vote to confirm or deny the recommendations.



# GRIEVANCE UPDATE

RESIDENT & FELLOW PHYSICIAN UNION - NORTHWEST

## **Overnight and Weekend Parking #2 (Originally settled in June 2020, Resettled)**

Last year, RFPU-NW won a hard-earned settlement for gross violations of the parking benefits in Article 25. UW immediately began violating that agreement, and RFPU-NW promptly filed a grievance in July and took the issue to almost arbitration. UW, likely recognizing how poorly their persistent duplicity would be received, settled before arbitration and has reimbursed those members who paid for parking when they should have received free parking.

## **Psychiatry Chief Stipends (Won)**

All Chief Residents are guaranteed \$175 per month in recognition of their work. The Psychiatry program attempted to create new Chief positions with an arbitrary FTE status that prevented payment of this stipend. RFPU-NW filed a grievance for this violation of Article 22 and secured agreement with UW and the Psychiatry program that all Chief Residents will receive the stipend. This is not the first issue with Chief Resident stipends for this program, and RFPU-NW's constant and aggressive defense of your contract is critical to ensure members received the benefits they have earned. The fight is never over!

## **Step III Reimbursement (In-Progress)**

All RFPU-NW members are to be reimbursed for USMLE/COMLEX Step III, but Residents who did their intern year elsewhere were refused reimbursement, in violation of Article 21. RFPU-NW took this grievance to mediation and UW agreed to reimburse nearly all members (certain visa requirements excepted) for USMLE/COMLEX Step III, regardless of when it was taken, going forward. There were still disagreements of retroactively paying residents for the current year. RFPU - NW then agreed to accept UW's last proposal; however, UW has yet to accept their own proposal at the time of publication of the annual report, so this grievance will be moving on to arbitration.

## **Neurology Chief Stipends (Won)**

The Neurology program, as directed by the GME Office, was paying Chief Residents for only part of the year. This was despite Chiefs doing this work the entire year. RFPU contacted Neurology and GME and secured back pay for these Chiefs and a guarantee of payment going forward.

## **Otolaryngology Chief Stipends (Won)**

Chief Residents in the Otolaryngology program were only being paid the Chief Resident stipend when working at UWMC: Montlake. RFPU-NW contacted the program and quickly secured both back pay and a promise to pay the stipend going forward for Chief Residents at all sites.

## **Scheduling Notice (Won)**

Multiple programs were not notifying RFPU-NW members of their schedules (including days off) 30 days before a block, a requirement of the CBA. In some cases, programs were notifying residents the day before a day off, which was absolutely unacceptable. Last-minute notice of days off devalues Residents and Fellows and contributes to poor work-life balance and mental health. RFPU-NW contacted every affected program and secured pledges to provide schedules 30 days in advance, in some cases completely changing how those programs prepared schedules. You deserve the right to know when you are working, in advance.

# FINANCIAL REPORT

RESIDENT & FELLOW PHYSICIAN UNION - NORTHWEST

RFPU - NW strives to be transparent on the allocation of dues. Please contact us if you have questions or concerns regarding the collection or use of dues. Below are charts detailing expenses for 2020 and 2021 (7/1/20 - 5/28/21). RFPU - NW's fiscal year runs from July 1 through June 30. Due to COVID19 and being in an off-negotiation year, our expenses for meetings, social events, etc. were significantly less - which will better prepare us for negotiations starting in 2022.

**Payroll** continues to be the most significant expense. Our employees are critical to the function of RFPU - NW as they manage all administrative work, communications, board relations, and guide our long-term strategy.

**Professional Services** are related to our lawyer and accounting services. In an off-negotiations year, most of this category reflects legal review of contract proposals and grievances filed on your behalf.

**Advocacy and Social initiatives** bring members together across UW's training programs. Due to COVID, RFPU - NW has not hosted any in-person activities this academic year; however, the union increased our advocacy work exponentially, and hired racial equity consultants to work with our staff and RFPU - NW leaders to examine our internal practices and integrate racial equity into all aspects of our work.

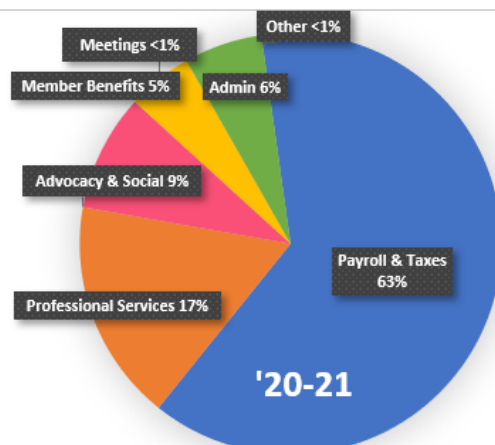
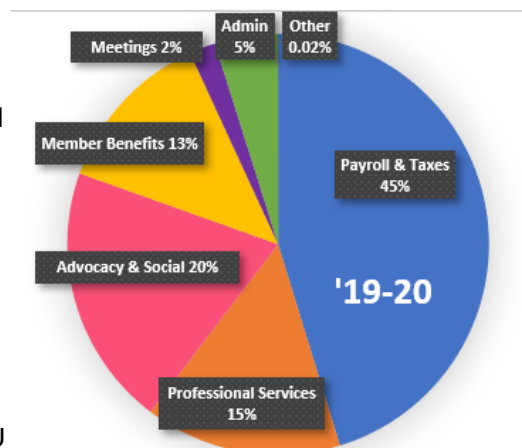
**Member Benefits** include the grant program, RFPU - NW's supplemental Safe Ride Home program, and contract review services. We adjusted our guidelines for grants to allow members to use funding for research, instead of just conference travel costs; however, most awardees still spent less than expected, and we extended the reimbursements till Dec. 2021, most awardees will use their funds later in the calendar year. UW, unlike its peers, lacks support of resident research, making member-driven support of resident research a critical part of RFPU's mission. Other benefits, particularly the Safe Ride Home program, supplement inadequate benefits from UW.

**Meetings** are expenses for meals, parking, and resources for internal RFPU board meetings, contract bargaining sessions, meetings with UW GME, and public RFPU meetings to solicit input from our members. Many of these were virtual this year, keeping the overall proportion of expenses low.

**Administration** expenses include website costs, software platforms, licensing, business taxes, and other related expenses to keep the union operating smoothly.

**Other** expenses are rare, such as fees which do not fit in other categories.

RFPU - NW's efforts will continue, re-shifting towards Advocacy & Social, Meetings, and Member Benefits as COVID numbers decrease and you your colleagues get closer to bargaining in 2022.



# LEADERSHIP

RESIDENT & FELLOW PHYSICIAN UNION - NORTHWEST

## RFPU - NW BOARD ELECTIONS

The 2021-2022 Board Elections closed on May 8, 2021. Please see the website for more information.

## DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES

Each year, RFPU - NW has expanded the Department Representative program to better serve members. This year, RFPU - NW had **39 representatives from 22 programs (in addition to the 17 Board Members)**. The department reps are the RFPU - NW's familiar face and a first-line resource for union information, with vital updates, reminders and soliciting member needs.

### 2020-2021 Department Representatives

**Anesthesia:** Cristina Londono, Eric Exner, Daniel Barron

**Dermatology:** Lauren Bonomo

**Diagnostic Radiology:** Andrew Kim, Diana Christensen

**Endocrinology:** Rakesh Popli

**Emergency Medicine:** Zach Wettstein

**Family Medicine:** Andrew Stine-Rowe, Kami Veltri

**Geriatrics:** Heidi Reich

**Internal Medicine - WA:** Mallette Asmuth, Nicholas Wang

**Neuroradiology:** Jorge Alchammas

**Neurology:** Amy Steinberg, George Plummer, Kasra Sarhadi

**Obstetrics and Gynecology:** Andrea Sanchez, Sanika Gadkari

**Ophthalmology:** Kellie Satterfield (immediate Past President)

**Oral and Maxillofacial Surgery:** Aparna Bhat, Kanvar Panesar

**Orthopaedic Surgery:** Brian Vasquez, Eli Bunzel

**Otolaryngology:** Ricardo Pulido

**Pathology and Lab Medicine:** Isaac Miller

**Pediatrics:** Bob Sun, Sara Drescher, Tara Sardesai

**Plastic Surgery:** Vanessa Leonhard

**Physical Medicine and Rehabilitation:** Jami Montagnino, Nora Li

**Psychiatry - WA:** Carol Barnes, Joellyn Sheehy, McKenzie Momany, Nazin Sedehi, Nicola Park

**Radiology:** Shamus Moran

**Vascular Surgery:** Amit Punjari

**General Surgery, Internal Medicine - ID, Psychiatry - ID, Urology:** vacant

## MEMBERSHIP ENGAGEMENT

At the time this report was published, 80% of represented residents and fellows were dues-paying members of RFPU - NW.

# RFPU - NW BOARD AND STAFF BIOS

RESIDENT & FELLOW PHYSICIAN UNION - NORTHWEST



**Brandon Peplinski (he/him), President**, is a third year internal medicine resident and proud to have served on the general board as an intern and as collective action lead during the last contract negotiations. Next year he will be working as an academic hospitalist in Houston, Texas.



**Lola Mudgistratova (she/her), Vice President**, is a fourth year emergency medicine resident. She has been involved in the union for the past two years and is passionate about advocating for reducing the financial burden of residency as a way to ensure greater diversity throughout training programs. Upon graduating in June, she will be an attending physician at Valley Medical Center in Renton.



**Alex Adami (he/him), Lead Negotiator**, is a third year internal medicine resident. This is his third year on the board. He helps guide the team overseeing grievances and works closely with RFPU staff to ensure members receive the benefits they have earned and deserve.



**Amanda Wise (she/her), Social Ambassador**, is a fourth year physical medicine and rehabilitation resident. She is a passionate advocate for resident and fellow physician wellness. Upon graduation from residency, she will continue her training as a Sports Medicine fellow at New York University Langone Health medical center.



**Eve Champaloux (she/her), Treasurer**, is a third year otolaryngology resident. She is passionate about finding ways to engage all residents including those in procedural specialties, and advocate for those with unique needs like residents with children or disabilities.



**Tim Kelly (he/him), Secretary**, is a second year psychiatry resident. He has been involved with the union for the past two years and hopes to continue that work with next year's board. He is passionate about advocating for residents, reducing the financial burden residents face, and improving the working conditions of resident physicians. He has been actively involved in the political advocacy subcommittee and has spent significant time advocating for increased diversity among medical trainees.

# RFPU - NW BOARD AND STAFF BIOS

CONTINUED...



**Alicia Seeds (she/her), General Board**, is a second year physical medicine and rehabilitation resident. She looks forward to upcoming negotiations to continue advocating for residents & fellows to ensure they feel valued and supported during their rigorous medical training. She also looking forward to continuing to address systemic racism in our institution and improving opportunities and experience for BIPOC residents, faculty, and patients.



**Allison Cummings (she/her), General Board**, is a graduating third year resident in family medicine. She has been an active member of the union since her intern year, and strongly believes that collective action has the capacity to catalyze needed systems transformation. Next year she plans to work as an attending physician at the UWMC Shoreline clinic.



**Amy Zhang (she/her), General Board**, is a third year anesthesiology resident. She is passionate about advocating for residents, especially those from low-income backgrounds, AAPI & BIPOC, and those in procedural specialties. As the child of low-income immigrants, she has a unique perspective on how fair treatment of resident physicians is necessary for equity, diversity, & inclusion, and for the health and wellbeing of ourselves and our families.



**Andrew Wilmington (he/him), General Board**, is a third year internal medicine resident. He is primarily involved with the membership engagement and political advocacy subcommittees. Next year he will enter his final year of residency and plans to continue involvement with RFPU and advancing the interests/goals of RFPU members heading into the next round of contract negotiations.



**Heather Barnett (she/her), General Board**, is a fourth year rehabilitation medicine resident. She has been active with the political advocacy working group and the new Task Force for Care of Patients who are Incarcerated, in collaboration with HQSC & NURF. Next year, she will be a fellow in spinal cord injury medicine and hopes to continue to advocacy work for residents, patients, and staff.

# RFPU - NW BOARD AND STAFF BIOS

CONTINUED...



**Kevin Steehler (they/them), General Board**, is a first year internal medicine resident, Primary Care track. They are planning to become an HIV primary care doctor and joined the board after watching contract negotiations via Zoom before moving from Atlanta in 2020. During their time on the board, they worked on the grievance team and met with newly elected state representative, Kirsten Harris Talley, to advocate for residents & fellows. They will be on the executive board this upcoming year as the Lead Negotiator.



**Nic Baddour (he/him), General Board**, is a second year internal medicine resident. He is passionate about organizing with fellow physicians to improve their working conditions and to advocate for patients. He will continue this work this upcoming year on the general board.



**Ryan Clodfelter (he/him), General Board**, is a third-year internal medicine resident. He became a board member after watching negotiations take place during the beginning of his residency and seeing how important RFPU is in advocating for housestaff. He will be concluding residency this year to work as a hospitalist at the University of Washington where he hopes to continue serving as a resident advocate in his role as an attending.

**Axel Adams, Hasib Yousufzai, Kellie Satterfield, and Sheryl-vi Rico** were also Board members in the 20-21 academic year.



**Madison Eggerding, Administrative Assistant**, is an RFPU Staff member with a background in social work, nonprofit administration, and member engagement work. She is passionate about disability justice, the power of collective organizing, and making healthcare more community focused. She has been involved with the Union since January, and is ready to fight for better working conditions for residents and fellows in order to make becoming a physician more accessible to people of all backgrounds and abilities.



**Brenna Stroup, Executive Director**, oversees long-term strategy and management of day-to-day activities of the union. Brenna has been an organizer on various progressive issues, and worked in DC for both Senator Patty Murray (WA) and in government relations for a national nonprofit. Her experience organizing her last workplace, catapulted her passion for labor organizing and motivated her move back to Seattle. Brenna does this work because she believes UW should be an accessible and equitable training center for all current and future residents, including their patients.

# WEINGARTEN RIGHTS

RESIDENT & FELLOW PHYSICIAN UNION - NORTHWEST

You have the right to union representation at investigatory interviews. Investigatory interviews occur when a supervisor questions an employee to determine a basis for discipline or to allow an employee to defend his or her actions. If an employee suspects the results of the interview may lead to disciplinary actions, he or she may invoke his or her Weingarten rights. These rights are upheld by the US Supreme Court. During an investigatory interview the following rules apply:

*"If this discussion could in any way lead to my being disciplined or terminated, or affect my personal working condition, I respectfully request that my union representative or steward be present at the meeting. Without representation, I choose not to answer any questions."*

**Rule 1:** The employee must make a clear request for union representation before or during the interview. The employee cannot be punished for making this request.

**Rule 2:** After the employee makes the request, the employer must choose from among three options. The employer must: Grant the request and delay questioning until the union representative arrives and has a chance to consult privately with the employee; or Deny the request and end the interview immediately; or Give the employee a choice of: (1) having the interview without representation or (2) ending the interview.

**Rule 3:** If the supervisor denies the request for union representation and continues to ask questions, he or she commits an unfair labor practice and the employee has the right to refuse to answer. The supervisor cannot discipline the employee for such a refusal.

Contact: [admin@rfpu.org](mailto:admin@rfpu.org), a Board Member, or Department Representative if you believe you may need union representation.



