

Dr. Kenneth Lutchen, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer ad interim

One Silber Way
Boston, Massachusetts 02215
T 617-353-2230 F 617-353-6580
www.bu.edu/provost

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Dear Faculty and Staff Colleagues,

I am writing you to provide an update on the graduate student strike and our ongoing negotiations with BUGWU, the graduate student union. As you are aware, the graduate students have been on strike since March 25.

I want to acknowledge that this has been a stressful period for all of us – particularly for those faculty who are navigating relationships with our graduate students while simultaneously trying to balance how best to support *all* of our students during this time. Many of you have stepped up in extraordinary ways to ensure that our undergraduate students continue to receive the education they deserve. I am deeply appreciative of all of your efforts.

Please know that the University is doing everything it can to move toward labor peace with our graduate students. It is important that our community understand the status at the bargaining table and current information about the number of students who are participating in the strike.

The Status of the Bargaining Table

To date, we have had 19 bargaining sessions with BUGWU. The parties have come to agreement on several matters, including articles addressing personnel records, performance evaluations, and payday. We believe we are close to agreement on several other contract articles, including how to handle worker grievances and commuter benefits. We are not, however, making progress on the issues that matter most and that will lead to resolution of a contract: benefits and compensation.

Here are the facts:

BU provided a compensation proposal to BUGWU in February, and a revised proposal in which it increased its compensation offer to BUGWU on March 5. *We have held five bargaining sessions since March 5, and BUGWU has repeatedly declined to offer a counter on compensation, even in the middle of a strike period that is affecting our entire community.*

We also understand that their membership discussed this issue on April 1 and again voted against providing a counteroffer on compensation. Their current proposal asks us to pay students on a 12-month appointment over \$62,000 annually – *more than \$10,000 higher per year than what our aspirational peers Harvard and MIT currently pay – and substantially beyond the mid-\$40,000 level where many of our peers are landing.* Some of these institutions include 9-month and 12-month rates,

others only 12 months. We stand prepared to continue negotiations on stipends with the union and discuss reasonable and competitive proposals. However, the union negotiators have refused to discuss stipend levels with us other than their original demand of \$62,440.

Further, BUGWU owes a response to the University on **over 20** other contract articles – including our benefits proposal.

BUGWU has also repeatedly declined our offer to pursue federal labor mediation. We have requested they agree to a mediator, hoping that a third party could help facilitate constructive dialogue and progress at the bargaining table.

We respect the students' legal right to strike. We do not understand, however, the lack of urgency on their part with respect to moving expeditiously to resolve this contract.

We remain committed to doing everything we can to resolve this matter as quickly as possible and will continue to work with BUGWU expeditiously to move toward resolution.

For more information, please review updates from [our bargaining sessions](#).

Strike Data

A large number of our students have chosen to continue to work during the strike period. During the payroll week of March 25, **66% of our stipended students and 88% of our hourly paid students reported they are working** by submitting student or faculty attestations or hourly timesheets.

As the strike enters its third week, we have received numerous reports of students who have allegedly engaged in disruptive behavior that goes far beyond what is protected by the labor laws – students who have disrupted classes, attempted to sabotage our pay attestation system, and intentionally erased or otherwise destroyed course data and student materials prior to leaving on strike.

We want to assure any faculty or staff who have been subjected to these types of disruptions that these are not activities protected by labor law, and that we reserve all rights to investigate any violations of our student code of conduct in accordance with our processes. Should you wish to confer with someone about such incidents, please email provost@bu.edu, and we will get back to you.

This is a difficult period, and I ask for your patience and leadership during this time. I will continue to keep you apprised of any key changes in the status of the strike and our negotiations, including any new counterproposals we receive or offers that we make.

With great appreciation,



Kenneth Lutchen
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