



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

April 8, 2024

Dear Graduate Student Colleagues,

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

We understand that this has been a stressful period for many students, whether directly affected by the strike or not. We want to support you during this time. For those participating in the strike, we respect your right to strike and will not retaliate. We are committed to working toward a fair contract as quickly as possible.

The University is doing everything it can to move toward labor peace with BUGWU. It is important that our community – faculty, students, and staff – 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 contract articles addressing personnel records, performance evaluations, and payday. We believe we are close to agreement on several other 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 counterproposal to BUGWU in February, and a revised proposal in which we increased our 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 BUGWU members discussed this issue on April 1 and 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 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 \$62,400.

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 BUGWU's 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. Indeed, we were surprised that union members voted to continue the strike with only 400 out of a total membership of over 3,000 voting in favor.

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

Strike Data

During the payroll week of March 25, **66% of stipended students and 88% of hourly paid students have reported that they are working** by submitting student or faculty attestations or hourly timesheets.

As the strike enters its third week, we have received reports describing the actions 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. It is concerning that the actions of a select few are contributing to escalating tensions within our community.

This process will shape graduate education at BU for the years to come. I hope you will remain engaged in learning more about what is happening on our campus. I will keep you informed of any key changes in the status of the strike and our negotiations, including any new counterproposals we receive or offers that we make.

Sincerely,



Kenneth Lutchen
University Provost and Chief Academic Officer ad interim