



Professor Jean Morrison, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer

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September 23, 2022

Dear Boston University Graduate Students,

Several years ago, we made a strong and affirmative commitment to provide more resources to improve the learning environment and quality of life of our graduate students, regardless of their program of study. Through the direct engagement of many of you, as well as intentional and sustained efforts over time, we were able to significantly strengthen support in the specific areas of concern that many of you identified as essential for your academic success and well-being. You can find a listing of some of the highlights of what we offer to our graduate students in the [FAQs posted on our website](#), which will be regularly updated based on additional questions that you may have or new information.

### **Particular Interests**

Recently, graduate student union organizing has increased on our campus. We understand that there are some who do not believe that BU has done enough for certain segments of our graduate students or their particular interests. However, we would like to explain why we continue to oppose a graduate student union at Boston University.

We believe that our graduate and professional students are first and foremost *students*, whose teaching and research activities (often supported by stipends as part of funding packages) are integrally related to their scholarly and professional development and whose life and experience at the University is, and should be, very different from an employee in a typical workplace. The organization that seeks to motivate graduate students to unionize treats ‘labor’ in a generic way and will not provide the same kind of relationship that you have with faculty in the academic graduate learning environment. I truly believe that representation by an outside, non-academic third party in our University community would change the fundamental relationship that currently benefits our students. Furthermore, unionization at BU may necessitate changes to how the University distributes the funds that are available for graduate education in ways that could negatively impact some of our graduate student cohorts. This would be unfortunate, as we have worked hard to maximize support for our programs and have enjoyed partnering with our current graduate students toward this goal.

If a union election is held and a majority of graduate students vote to be represented by a union, the union would work to create a “one-size-fits-all” model of graduate student experience and programming here. This, I believe, is not a sustainable model for our large and highly complex University.

### **Better than “One Size Fits All”**

I believe that you deserve more than a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting your academic experience and success. We are proud to support a wide variety of graduate academic programming at BU, and to offer programs and supports tailored to the specific needs and experiences of our many different student populations. A one-size-fits-all union model is fundamentally incompatible with an intellectually diverse and academically complex university. Right now, you have your own voice and agency. We ask that you use it to speak and work with us directly. Unfortunately, if a third party becomes involved, forward momentum on our work together around some aspects of graduate student programming could become stalled as the University would no longer be free to work directly and collaboratively with you, making changes based on your ideas and feedback.

### **Let’s BU Together**

I respectfully ask that you consider all these factors carefully before signing a union petition or union authorization card. To those who have not been engaged in this discussion, I ask that you take the time to learn about what union representation would mean for your experience here at BU. If you or your fellow students vote for a union, it could dramatically impact *your* graduate educational experience here at BU. Please make sure that your perspective is known and counted, should an election be held.

We are far stronger together as a community as we work collaboratively and directly with each other to continue our forward progress and momentum. Our efforts, together, will continue to make our graduate programs and experiences the best for current and future students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jean Morrison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jean Morrison  
University Provost and Chief Academic Officer