

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

March 6, 2024

Dear Members of the Boston University Community,

Following up on [my most recent letter](#), we have had additional negotiating sessions with the graduate students' union (BUGWU), and this letter will provide an update. We have also set up an [FAQ site](#) for graduate students and faculty to address questions related to the negotiations and expectations should a strike occur.

So far, our negotiating team has met 14 times with representatives of the union. We have listened to our students' concerns about cost of living, quality of life, and campus issues. Previously, we had offered an increase in the 12-month PhD student stipends to \$42,159 next year and an overall increase representing 13% over three years. We had also offered a commitment to raising the minimum hourly rate for students paid hourly (from \$15 to \$18). We have now also proposed:

- Moving PhD students currently on eight-month stipends to nine-month stipends. This will mean an increase in stipends for these students from the \$28,106 we initially proposed in year one of the contract to \$31,619.
- Covering 33% of the cost of MBTA passes for 12 months of the year for all our PhD students and other graduate students who are in the union.
- Creating a dental insurance plan for all graduate students for which they would pay the full premium (\$452/year), with PhD students receiving a \$100 subsidy toward this dental insurance premium.
- For full-time PhD students within the five-year funding guarantee, covering the annual cost of dependents that are added to the University's student health insurance plan (SHIP) for children six years old and under.
- Adding a Graduate Worker Help Fund of \$50,000 to help provide needs-based support during times of unforeseen crisis and emergencies and a no interest loan to help graduate workers with other financial exigencies who do not qualify for the Help Fund.

We believe this current package illustrates our deep concern for our students' wellbeing and that we are listening to what our students are telling us.

Outside of compensation and benefits, we have introduced additional contract articles seeking to improve the quality of our student workers' experience. We are committed to ensuring student

workers get regular performance reviews and that students in teaching roles learn of their assignments with sufficient advance notice to allow them to prepare for their responsibilities.

In sum, we support the professional and personal goals of our graduate students. We need to ensure they have a contract with details that are consistent and competitive with peers. We continue to listen to our students and to bargain in good faith, and we are confident that we will be able to bridge our remaining differences. As we work toward resolution, we want to keep the community apprised, and so we want to again call your attention to our [FAQ page](#), which will be continuously updated as negotiations proceed.

Although we hope to avoid a strike, we know that BUGWU is currently holding a strike authorization vote, and we must be ready. Should the union initiate a strike, we (the faculty and the administration) will need to ensure that the education of our students—undergraduate and graduate students—is not interrupted. As you know, we have tried to put in place a set of plans that will enable all of us to work together to achieve that end.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KL' followed by a stylized flourish.

Kenneth Lutchen
University Provost and Chief Academic Officer ad interim