

Dr. Gloria Waters, University Provost and Chief Academic Officer

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August 7, 2024

Dear Faculty and Staff Colleagues,

As I begin my tenure as University Provost, I want to affirm my commitment to providing high quality graduate education and to our graduate students. Therefore, with the fall semester nearly upon us, the University has decided to make a substantial proposal to reach a contract with the BU Graduate Workers Union (BUGWU).

I attended the bargaining session with our students this afternoon and personally presented a final [comprehensive package](#) designed to address the critical concerns of our graduate students. You can read more about the proposal and negotiations in in [BU Today](#). The package includes:

- 1) PhD stipends during the funding guarantee **at a minimum rate of \$45,000 for 12 months;**
- 2) A five-year total contract **with annual stipend increases of 3% per year** – which brings the PhD minimum stipend rate **to \$50,647 in year five of the contract;**
- 3) Minimum hourly wages of up to **\$20/hour in year 1** and going up 3% per year thereafter;
- 4) **14 weeks of paid childcare leave for full-time stipended graduate students** who are new parents, along with a **\$3,500 per year childcare subsidy;**
- 5) **An annual help fund of \$200,000** to support graduate students with a variety of emergency needs;
- 6) **A substantial benefit package which is described in more detail below.**

We will continue to cover the tuition of all PhD students within the five-year funding guarantee, which currently amounts to \$64,000 annually. We will also continue to cover health insurance for our PhD students with no premium share, now valued between \$3,400 and \$4,500 per year. As part of the contract, we have offered to cover the cost of adding dependents ages 0-6 to the Student Health Services plan, as well as offering a \$100 subsidy toward the purchase of dental insurance for each full-time stipended student. We will now offer commuting benefits to all bargaining unit members, including either a 50% MBTA subsidy or bicycle commuter reimbursement benefits.

Our proposal offers significant benefits for our students. For instance, students who are now on 8-month contracts with stipends of \$28,000 would receive 12-month contracts of \$45,000 – a **61% increase** in their stipend support – along with other expanded benefits.

I hope the new package shows our students that we are listening, value their contributions to BU, and want to reach a fair contract with BUGWU. Our offer represents substantial movement in response to the concerns raised by BUGWU's negotiating team over the past year of negotiations. It puts us in line with our peers, and, at the same time, recognizes the constraints on the University budget. We need to balance what we offer to our graduate workers with the salaries of our staff, and our commitment to [affordableBU](#), which provides substantial financial support to our undergraduates.

In putting this new and final proposal on the table, my goal is to get to a signed and ratified contract before the academic year begins. If we can reach agreement, our graduate students will get the benefits of the agreement as soon as it is ratified. If we do not, the students will not see the benefits of the contract for the full academic year. I urged the union and its allies to join us, get the contract done, and move for a ratification vote on our proposal before the fall semester begins.

In sharing this information with the wider University community, it is my hope that everyone will understand and appreciate the significant offer this represents and recognize that the University is doing everything it can to come to an agreement that reflects our deep commitment to our graduate student workers. And that commitment will continue even after the contract is signed. As we begin the academic year, we will also put in place many of the recommendations of the [Task Force on the Future of PhD Education](#) which completed its work last year and provides numerous [recommendations](#) to enhance the quality of graduate education at BU.

I thank you all for your efforts to support our students and look forward to a successful fall semester.

Sincerely,

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

Gloria Waters, PhD  
University Provost and Chief Academic Officer