

Northeastern University

Office of the Provost

Dear Graduate Students:

As you may know, the United Autoworkers has been promoting its campaign to organize a graduate student union at Northeastern. Over the next several weeks, I will be sharing information that I'd ask you to keep in mind when considering whether to sign a union authorization card.

The Realities of Union Democracy and Local Control

The Autoworkers would like you to believe that the union organizers on campus are part of a grassroots organic movement, and that any union will be a locally controlled organization at Northeastern. The reality, however, is quite different.

The graduate union website was built by the United Autoworkers and, as with most graduate union organizing efforts, student organizers are likely paid by the Autoworkers to reach out and connect with students. You can also expect that any local union group here on campus will be subject to control by the International Autoworkers located in Detroit, or some regional "mega-local" affiliate of the International Union if they are successful in an election.

The Autoworkers has a practice of not granting a charter to local graduate unions which would otherwise give them independence and a stand-alone union local designation. For example, the graduate union at New York University is part of UAW Local 2110. The front page of the Local 2110 website does not even acknowledge graduate students as part of its membership, and instead highlights "teachers, secretaries, administrators, editors, computer operators, librarians, museum curators, typesetters and graphic artists, among many others."

The same is true at UMass Amherst, where graduate students are part of UAW Local 2322. Local 2322 is another "mega-local" that represents custodians, bus drivers, clerical workers, health care workers, mechanics, cooks and many other individuals in three states who have nothing to do with higher education.

What Does a Mega-Union Mean for You?

Being part of a large local union, or an International Union, means you can be subject to control by union officers and representatives who have no connection to Northeastern. You can expect that when it is time to negotiate a contract on your behalf, the representatives of the mega-local, and their lawyers, will be the people making the decisions.

With a large, university-wide group of graduate students from all disciplines under a single contract, your ability to advocate for your individual priorities can be lost. With a large mega-local making all the decisions, your individual concerns are marginalized even further.

It is worth considering why you should pay money to a mega-local to support the salaries of union executives and serve the needs of many other working populations when the Autoworkers will not give you local control.

More information on this and other matters important to you can be found on our [Student Graduate Assistant Union Organizing webpage](#).

Thank you for your consideration of this issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Phil He". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Phil He
Vice Provost for Graduate Education