

Dear Faculty Colleagues:

We have reached a critical point in contract negotiations with the United Autoworkers Union (“UAW”) which represents stipended graduate Teaching Assistants and Research Assistants, as well as hourly graduate students performing teaching or research services on the Boston, Burlington, and Nahant campuses.

#### Negotiations since September 2024

My last update in September 2024 summarized the first 9 months of negotiations with the Union. Since then, we have continued attempts to find areas of compromise with the Union that include agreeing to expanded protections for Health/Safety, Discrimination and Harassment, and Workload, and enhanced benefits for Leaves of Absence, Vacation, Sick Time, Holidays and Personal Time. The University also embarked on its own to reconfigure Concur to allow graduate students an easier path for reimbursements.

In November 2024, we increased our economic package offer to provide fully covered dental insurance for PhD students and dependent healthcare insurance for their children, set a minimum \$43,000 stipend with guaranteed minimum annual increases of 2.5% during the contract, and student EAP benefits for PhD and hourly Master’s students that offers many resources, including free access to legal advice. The Union rejected our offer three months later in February 2025, announcing that it would continue to insist on terms that include a \$60,000 minimum PhD stipend, a minimum hourly rate of \$66.57, 5% annual increases, retirement benefits for students, \$600/student for tax preparation, tuition/fee waivers and free health insurance for all hourly Master’s students, a \$6,000 moving stipend for PhD students, annual emergency assistance of \$5,000 per student and other demands such as \$5,000 annually per child, free parking or transit, housing subsidies, a \$5,000 adoption stipend and access to free meals.

In exchanges over critical language issues, the Union has continually insisted on contract terms that the University has repeatedly rejected, such as the right to challenge and arbitrate academic workloads, the right to require faculty, students and staff to wear masks on demand “by verbal announcement at any time, without justification,” academic freedom for students in teaching and research that allows them to challenge and arbitrate faculty supervisor expectations and directives, rights for Union representatives to determine what safety equipment and materials should be available to students, the right to challenge and arbitrate faculty determinations concerning remote work, and the right to bring discrimination and harassment claims against faculty for actions that state and federal law do not recognize, such as excluding graduate students from meetings and “public reprimands” of students.

#### University proposal of a final package

The University expressed to the Union in negotiations on April 11th that the parties had made significant progress, but that further compromise had likely reached an end because the Union

continued to press demands that had been rejected and repeatedly deleted language important to University's compromise proposals. Discussions remained stalled during both April meetings and it has become clear that bargaining is no longer productive. The University communicated its final package offer to the Union today, which includes the current November 2024 economic offer and other University counterproposals that have been developed over 17 months of bargaining. This offer will remain on the table for 30 days, expiring on June 5th, with the University reserving its right to thereafter amend the package offer in light of the new financial landscape that has changed so drastically for research universities like Northeastern.

We hope the Union and graduate students recognize this opportunity and accept the offer. I encourage you to view our bargaining update page where you can see the University final package offer and read more about the negotiations: [Graduate Student Union Negotiations – Northeastern Provost](#).

Regards,

David Madigan  
Provost and Senior Vice President for Academic Affairs