

Dear Graduate Students:

As we move forward into a new school year, I am writing to share that the United Autoworkers Union (“UAW”) has been calling on graduate students who perform teaching or research services on the Boston, Burlington and Nahant campuses to support a strike. You are receiving this update because you are part of this unionized group of Northeastern students who may be asked to be part of a UAW strike—whether you support a strike or not.

The status of graduate union negotiations

The University and UAW reached a stalemate in April after 17 months of negotiations for a graduate union contract. Among the Union demands rejected by the University is a requirement that all graduate students pay Union dues or fees. The University sent the Union a final contract offer on May 5th and asked that it present the offer to you and other students for a vote.

University’s May 5th final offer and warning to the Union that the offer might change

The University’s final offer contained a minimum PhD stipend of \$43,000, and a 2.5% increase for those already receiving more than \$43,000, with a 2.5% increase in hourly rates and increases of 2.5% in the 2nd and 3rd years of the contract. The University also offered full dental coverage for PhDs, health coverage for PhD children and assistance benefits for PhD and hourly Master’s students that included free access to legal advice. The offer included many other benefits, including vacation, holidays, sick and personal time, as well as paid parental leave and visa leave for PhDs, and many provisions offering protections against discrimination, harassment and retaliation, and expanded language addressing health and safety, work hours, assignments and many other issues.

The University offer contained economic terms from November 2024 that were no longer realistic as of May 2025 given the new political and economic climate that is impacting Northeastern and other research universities. The University said it would honor the November 2024 terms if the Union wanted to take May 5th offer, but that the offer would

expire after 30 days if not accepted. The University asked the Union bargaining team to present the offer to you and other graduate students for a vote. Rather than doing so, the Union immediately rejected the offer on social media and picketed commencement.

The University's revised final offer package and Union strike threats

The University took steps to rebalance its economic offer after the 30-day acceptance period expired, and sent the Union a new final offer on July 17th that removed guaranteed stipend and hourly increases for September 1, 2025, and reduced minimum increases in the final two years of the contract from 2.5% to 2%. All other aspects of the May 5th final offer remained intact. The University revised final offer and a comprehensive summary of negotiations can be found here: [Graduate Student Union Negotiations – Northeastern Provost](#).

On August 20th, the Union presented its own package proposal that continued to push demands the University had repeatedly rejected, including mandatory Union dues or fees for graduate students. The University responded that bargaining was no longer productive and the parties had reached impasse.

The Union has been soliciting student support for a strike and may ask you to refuse to perform your research or teaching responsibilities this fall as part of a strike action.

Are you required to strike?

No. Taking part in a strike is always voluntary and the UAW cannot force you to strike. If the UAW calls for a strike, all graduate students may choose to continue working instead of sacrificing stipends or hourly pay. BU graduate students went on strike without stipends or hourly pay for 6 months last year before ultimately taking the university's package offer.

What happens now?

The path to a contract remains open if the Union decides to accept the University's revised offer. We hope that happens, but the Union is showing no willingness to agree and has been soliciting student support for a strike, and posting on social media that students must take "collective action" to "force" the University to meet its demands.

We certainly hope that the UAW does not call a strike, but Northeastern schools and colleges will be ready if that happens because we must assure educational and research continuity.

It is unfortunate that we have reached this place. Graduate students could have had a contract by now with better terms if the Union had not abruptly rejected the University's economic offer in May.

I encourage you to view the University's package offer and review the bargaining history at [Graduate Student Union Negotiations – Northeastern Provost](#). If you have questions, you may email gradunioninfo@northeastern.edu.

I hope you enjoy the fall semester and that these issues are resolved soon.

Kind regards,

Thomas Sheahan
Executive Vice Provost