

Dear Colleagues:

Attached you will find a letter that concerns the process of communications about graduate student unionization that will unfold during the coming months, and the agreement that would guide an election should federal law change. This process focuses on respectful discussion of all the associated issues. The letter is jointly signed by Katryn Evinson (Cornell Graduate Students United Administrative Liaison), Mary Opperman (Vice President, Human Resources), and Barbara Knuth (Senior Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School).

I urge you to become familiar with this important issue.

A message from Dean Knuth to the faculty is included below.

Best regards



Acting Dean of the Faculty
Associate Professor of Classics

Dear Cornell Faculty Colleagues:

Cornell administration has been in discussions with Cornell Graduate Students United/American Federation of Teachers/NY State United Teachers regarding an agreement on rules and procedures for union-university conduct and a possible recognition election if federal law changes to determine that graduate students at private universities may be considered employees. This agreement is not recognition of a graduate student union; it is a guide to behaviors for all parties, based on the principle of fostering an open and respectful environment in which graduate students are free to learn about the union and reach an informed decision should there be an opportunity for them to participate in a union election (if federal law changes).

The attached joint letter from Cornell and the union groups is being sent to all students enrolled in the Graduate School, with a link to the full Agreement (<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/assets/docs/union-university-conduct-rules.pdf>). I encourage you to read the letter and the Agreement. Questions have been asked regarding which students would be included in a potential bargaining unit should the law change and a union be duly elected. If an election is held, eligible voters (and potential bargaining unit members) will be all graduate students enrolled in the Graduate School in Ithaca and Geneva campus-based programs who hold titles under University Policy 1.3 (TAs, GRAs, RAs, GAs). If an election is held in the future, please encourage all eligible graduate students to vote so that their voices may be heard.

Please let me know if you have questions.

Warm regards,

Barb
Barbara A. Knuth
Senior Vice Provost and Dean



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Dear Cornell Community:

Cornell Graduate Students United (CGSU) with its affiliates (NYSUT-AFT), and Cornell University write to announce to students, staff, and faculty that we have come to an agreement to guide a union campaign and election, should current federal labor law change to deem graduate students at private universities employees (<http://cuinfo.cornell.edu/assets/docs/union-university-conduct-rules.pdf>). This joint communication serves to inform the Cornell community of what it should expect in the near future, and to outline resources for anyone who would like more information.

The National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), the federal agency responsible for governing relationships between private employers and unions, is currently considering cases involving Columbia University and the New School. At these universities, graduate teaching and research assistants and their unions are advocating for the Board to rule that graduate assistants at private universities have status as employees. An NLRB decision is expected before fall.

Should current federal law change, Cornell and CGSU are committed to ensuring that graduate assistants are able to make their own decisions about whether to join the union or not in a free and open environment, one that ensures dignity and respect for all parties involved. We believe this agreement provides a fair and expeditious process to determine whether a majority of graduate assistants wishes to unionize and select CGSU as its collective bargaining representative should federal labor law change. If an election is held, eligible voters will be all graduate students enrolled in the Graduate School in Ithaca and Geneva campus-based programs who hold titles under University Policy 1.3 (TAs, GRAs, RAs, and GAs). Should graduate students choose unionization, Cornell agrees to recognize that decision and will enter into good faith negotiations with the union to reach a collective bargaining agreement.

The campaign and election agreement includes guidelines for administrators, faculty, students, and CGSU to help maintain fairness throughout this process. It also creates election procedures, voter eligibility guidelines and dispute resolution processes. In addition, a Union-Management Committee (UMC), made up of representatives from both Cornell and CGSU, will be formed as a resource to answer inquiries from Cornell community members. It will provide a space for engaging in any necessary problem solving.

We encourage the Cornell community to watch for more information, and utilize all available educational resources.

Sincerely,

Katryn Evinson, Cornell Graduate Students United Administrative Liaison

Mary Opperman, Vice President, Cornell University

Barbara Knuth, Senior Vice Provost and Dean, Cornell University