

Dear Faculty Colleagues,

Faculty have asked for clearer guidance on communicating with graduate students about the current graduate unionization effort underway at Cornell.

As a faculty member, you have the academic freedom to express your own views:

- You should feel free to discuss graduate student unionization with other Cornell faculty and staff subject to the limitations listed below.
- You may initiate conversations with students, as long as you do so in a way that is not intimidating, coercive, or requires them to engage with you. See the examples below.
- All graduate students should have the ability to hear all points of view as they consider and formulate their own opinions regarding graduate student unionization.
- When talking with students, remember to avoid comments, behaviors, or body language that may be perceived as coercive, intimidating, or threatening, and avoid making promises, interrogating or surveilling students.
- Offer any facts, examples, or your own opinions. Make it clear you are expressing your own views and not necessarily the views of the University.
- Refrain from asking students questions about their feelings toward the union. Make statements to students about your opinion instead, when invited.

Examples for Initiating Conversations with Students:

- With an individual student, choose a public area (not your private office), and begin the conversation by saying something like, “I’d like to share my thoughts about graduate student unionization with you.” or “Just let me know if you ever have questions on unions or this particular graduate student unionization effort.” If the student shows no interest or says s/he is not interested, drop the subject and continue with a different topic.
- With a group of students, remember that you may not convene a meeting specifically to advise graduate students on joining or supporting the Union, the benefits or disadvantages of union representation, or to discourage protected concerted activity.
 - o If you are attending, holding, or leading a group meeting that has been scheduled for some other purpose and the topic of unionization is raised by a student at the meeting, you are free to share your personal views with the group in response to a student question or comment.

§ You may want to add, “Remember that the Graduate School has on their website a FAQ about union representation. If you have any questions I can try to answer them for you or help you find the right resources to get answers.”

General Comments:

Students may ask you to respond to issues they have heard from others. They may want you to provide factual information regarding their current stipends, benefits or other matters. If you have the facts, feel free to share them. If you hear information that you know is inaccurate, you can and should correct it, just as you would in response to any other inaccurate information. If you do not know the answer to a question, refer the matter to someone who has the information or obtain the information yourself and then respond to the question.

The Graduate School has information posted and periodically updated on union representation<<http://gradschool.cornell.edu/union-representation>> and on policies for graduate students<<http://gradschool.cornell.edu/academics/policies/policies-procedures-requirements>> and on resources for graduate students<<http://gradschool.cornell.edu/resources>>.

The Dean of Faculty has an information site on graduate student unionization<<http://theuniversityfaculty.cornell.edu/news/graduate-students-united/>>.

Please feel free to refer student or faculty questions to the Graduate School at dean_gradschool@cornell.edu<mailto:dean_gradschool@cornell.edu> or to contact us to help you find the information you need.

Thank you for your assistance and for supporting an appropriate climate for these discussions at Cornell.

Charlie and Barb



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