

Dear Graduate Students,

As we approach the date of a vote on graduate student unionization, we write to urge you to continue to inform yourselves carefully about the consequences of this vote. Most importantly, whatever your position on unionization, please make your voice heard by casting a vote on Oct 17-18. Bear in mind that the outcome of this vote will affect not just you, but also future cohorts of students in the BSD and University for many years to come. It would be deeply disappointing if the training experience of future students is determined by just a small number of voters, so please get out and vote.

As you decide how to vote, we ask that you bear in mind that your graduate education represents a unique period of training in your scientific career. Your research training depends on a very personal interaction and relationship with your faculty mentor. Any third party, even one with good intentions, may alter this dynamic. While none of us can fully predict the outcomes positive or negative of unionization, it is especially important to consider the potential impact of a third party on your research training.

Of note, NYU is the only private university that has had experience with a graduate student union, and its United Auto Workers-represented bargaining unit specifically excludes "research assistants at Polytechnic Institute, research assistants in the Biology, Chemistry, Neural Science, Physics, Mathematics, Computer Science and Psychology departments," as well as graduate assistants at the School of Medicine. Similarly, NYU's earlier labor agreement with the UAW specifically excluded "those research assistants funded by external grants in the Physics, Biology, Chemistry and the Center for Neuroscience (CNS) Departments."

By contrast, the bargaining unit that the AFT-AAUP seeks to represent here at UChicago, specifically includes graduate student researchers in all these areas. Work hours are likely to be an important focus of collective bargaining for this union. Importantly, we do not believe that a third party, especially one without apparent experience in research, should play such an important role in determining something as vital as when and for how long you can pursue your research. Indeed, it is profoundly troubling to consider a future in which a third party with no experience in research would take on the legal role of serving as an intermediary between graduate students and their faculty mentors, representing and negotiating the "terms and conditions" of "work" for all current and future cohorts of graduate students who are training to become independent scientists.

As a community of researchers, it is our responsibility to protect BSD's future capacity for discovery. Given that the stakes for the BSD in the upcoming vote are particularly high, we urge you to cast a vote on Oct 17-18.

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