

## Guidelines for Faculty on Graduate Student Unionization

Many faculty have questions about unionization and have asked what they can do and say about the ongoing graduate student organizing effort. An overview of Boston College's position on the unionization effort as well as general descriptions of unions, the NLRB, and the unionization/election process is available at <http://www.bc.edu/nlrbruling>

### LEGAL GUIDANCE

During a union organizing campaign and election, employers are required to adhere to certain conduct guidelines established by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Anyone who holds a supervisory role is also subject to these guidelines. In the context of the current organizing campaign, the NLRB considers deans, department chairs, graduate program directors, and faculty members who direct graduate students as "supervisors". While supervisors may freely express their views about graduate student unionization, the NLRB offers the acronym TIPS to indicate that supervisors may not:

- Make **Threats** of harm or adverse consequences (economic, academic, or other) to graduate students who support or oppose the union;
- **Interrogate** or question graduate students about whether they support the union. Students are free to share their views with faculty voluntarily, and faculty may share their own views;
- Make **Promises** of benefit to graduate students for supporting or opposing the union; or
- **Spy** on or place under surveillance graduate students or union meetings or otherwise conduct themselves so as to give the impression that they are watching graduate students to find out about their union activities.

In addition, and related to the above list, supervisors may not:

1. Require or request that a graduate student come to his or her office to talk about union organizing;
2. Ask a graduate student to report on union activities;
3. Make changes in wages, hours, and working conditions, unless such changes are in accordance with customary practice;
4. Discipline a graduate student because of his or her union membership or activities. The University may, however, enforce its rules impartially and in accordance with customary action, irrespective of a graduate student's union membership or activity.

## PERMISSIBLE BEHAVIOR

Outside of the legally prohibited activities described above, supervisors are free to discuss unionization with graduate students. Specifically, it is permissible and advisable for supervisors to:

1. Keep the lines of communication open with graduate students so they can come to their supervisor when they have questions or concerns. When students raise concerns, supervisors should address them or share them with someone who can. For questions that a supervisor cannot answer, he or she may direct the graduate student to [gradstudentinfo@bc.edu](mailto:gradstudentinfo@bc.edu).
2. Share personal opinion of and experience with unions.
3. Encourage graduate students to be informed about everything a union might mean for them.
4. Discuss the financial obligations, such as dues, which graduate students would have to assume if they were represented by the union.
5. Inform graduate students that in collective bargaining neither side is required to agree to what the other side wants, although the parties must bargain in good faith.
6. Tell graduate students that if a majority of graduate students *who choose to vote* votes for the union, Boston College will be required by law to deal with the UAW rather than each student individually, even with respect to individual problems concerning wages, hours, and other conditions of employment.
7. Discuss the secret ballot election process that may be conducted by the NLRB and that even those graduate students who signed union authorization cards are under no legal or moral obligation to vote for the union.
8. Emphasize the importance of voting in the election and point out that the matter will be decided by a majority of those *who actually vote*.
9. Correct inaccurate or misleading union statements and campaign materials.
10. Stress the importance of the academic relationship between faculty members and students and talk about what he or she values in his or her relationships with graduate students.