

**From:** Alan M. Garber

**Sent:** Wednesday, March 28, 2018 12:12 PM

**Subject:** Student Union Election – Guidelines for Faculty



**HARVARD**  
Office of the Provost

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Dear colleagues,

In just three weeks, approximately 5,000 students, drawn from all of Harvard's schools, will vote to decide whether they wish to be represented exclusively by the Harvard Graduate Students Union-United Auto Workers on matters related to their appointments in certain teaching and research positions at Harvard. As we approach this election, some of our colleagues have expressed uncertainty about the rules governing faculty speech during this time.

As a member of the faculty, you are considered to be a “supervisor” of student teaching and research assistants; as such, your interactions are governed by the NLRB’s [“Employer/Union Rights and Obligations.”](#) According to these guidelines, you are entitled to have and state an opinion on the topic, but you cannot demand that students share their views on unionization with you, monitor students in an effort to learn their views or plans to vote, or coerce students to vote for or against unionization by threatening them or promising a benefit for voting a particular way. I understand that students in support of and opposed to the proposed union have been asking faculty and administrators questions about this topic. **Should students seek your guidance, you should know that you are at liberty to express your opinion if you are comfortable doing so, with the understanding that students must remain free to make their own decisions.**

I hope that during the coming weeks, our students will again thoughtfully consider

and discuss the potential academic, financial, and personal impacts of unionization and will turn out in large numbers to cast informed votes. The important decision about whether to unionize will be made by those students who vote. As in other elections, the decision is made by those who come to the polls, but it is binding on all. Their votes will affect all students determined to be members of the bargaining unit, currently and into the future.

I hope that we will all encourage students to engage in an open and respectful discussion about the potential impacts of student unionization. **Most importantly, please urge your students to vote during the election and make it as easy as possible for them to do so.** You may also want to direct students to information on the [Student Vote](#) section of the Office of the Provost's website. A number of student-driven websites also address the issue, including: the [Harvard Graduate Students Union–United Auto Workers](#) (HGSU-UAW) site and associated [Facebook page](#), the [Graduate Student Unionization: A Critical Approach](#) site, and the [Against HGSU-UAW](#) Facebook page.

If you have any questions, please e-mail [studentvote@harvard.edu](mailto:studentvote@harvard.edu).

Sincerely,

Alan M. Garber AB '77, PhD '82  
Provost  
Harvard University

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