PRINCETON UNIVERSITY
OFFICE OF THE DEAN OF THE FACULTY

November 13, 2026

Dear Postdocs and Associate Research Scholars,

You are receiving this note because as a Postdoc or Associate Research Scholar, you are a member of the PUPS-UAW bargaining unit (i.e., union). PUPS-UAW has announced it intends to hold a vote next week to authorize its bargaining committee to call a strike at the committee's discretion. **According to UAW's constitution, a strike authorization vote can pass with a vote of two-thirds of the bargaining unit members who decide to vote.** In other words, if only 18 members vote, 12 "yes" votes would be sufficient to authorize a strike on behalf of roughly 1,000 Postdocs and Associate Research Scholars.

Make sure your voice is heard. Before voting, you should be fully informed about the current bargaining situation, the implications of the strike authorization vote, and a potential strike.

What a Strike Authorization Vote Means

Each member of the bargaining unit should make their own decision about voting to authorize a strike, or to participate in a strike. Simply being a member of the PUPS-UAW bargaining unit does not obligate you to vote to authorize a strike, or to strike. You cannot be penalized for exercising your individual right to strike or not strike.

A strike authorization vote is a serious decision — a "yes" vote does not automatically start a strike, but it gives the union leadership authority to call one at its discretion. Your voice can only be heard if you participate in the vote.

How a Strike May Impact You

You are not required to strike. If a strike is called, the decision to participate is up to each individual. It is important to understand the implications of deciding to stop working.

Choosing to strike means that:

- you will not be paid;
- if the strike extends for more than 30 days, you will be billed for all benefits premiums and will need to pay those premiums to preserve your coverage for the duration of the strike, as payroll deductions will not be available;
- you may not have access to your workspace or work materials; and,
- to maintain continuity during a strike, the University may employ others to perform your duties, including teaching for those who have lecturer appointments.

Individuals with personal research funding or fellowships from public or private sponsors should also consider whether they would be able to meet the obligations of their funding or fellowship agreements while on strike.

Updates on Collective Bargaining

The University is not an obstacle to a fair contract

The University's representatives have consistently come to the negotiating table prepared to meet, discuss proposals in good faith, and move negotiations forward. Over the summer, the University

proposed to utilize the assistance of a federal mediator, which the Union accepted. Since then, the parties have made significant progress with the mediator's help. Approximately 70% of the articles of the proposed contract have been settled. On important articles covering issues like layoffs and appointment terms, the parties need only finalize language that affects less than 10% of Postdocs and Associate Research Scholars.

In October 2024, the union stated that it wanted to sign a contract within six months; however, the union did not make its first compensation proposal for over one year. Additionally, the union has insisted on (and continues to insist on) proposals that are either outside the scope of Postdocs' terms and conditions of employment or would be unlawful to implement. Proposals like these waste bargaining time and resources and do nothing to help us reach a contract.

The University has proposed a generous compensation package

The University has proposed generous market adjustments to Postdoc and Associate Research Scholar salaries that would be implemented upon ratification of the contract. For new Ph.D. graduates, minimum Postdoc salaries would begin at $70,000 in year one of the contract, increasing to $74,000 in year three. The University has proposed comparable increases to minimum salaries for more experienced Postdocs and Associate Research Scholars. In addition, the University has offered yearly salary increases of 2.5% beginning July 1, 2027 and July 1, 2028.

The University believes in equitable access to healthcare for all benefits-eligible employees

The University's position with respect to health benefits is straightforward: all employees in the same salary range, who participate in the same health insurance plan, pay the same rates regardless of their job title. This is how Princeton benefits have operated for years; all other unionized Princeton employees (including service workers, first responders, and other employees who keep the University running every day) pay the same rates and are afforded the same benefits. As a principle, we offer the same excellent benefit packages to all benefits-eligible employees. You also may have heard that PUPS-UAW has filed an unfair labor practice charge regarding the University's updates to 2027 benefits—the University has acted lawfully and consistent with long-standing NLRB precedent and is defending against the charge.

The University believes in fair, robust, and lawful procedures for addressing discrimination and harassment.

Princeton has robust complaint procedures for anyone who believes that they have experienced discrimination or harassment. These procedures are designed to follow federal and state law. Additionally, our Title IX procedures provide that hearings are managed by, and findings are made by, independent, external decisionmakers specially trained in sexual harassment cases.

PUPS-UAW insists on a special carve-out for complaints by bargaining unit members to be heard by labor arbitrators, who may have little experience with campus life, academic research, or sexual harassment cases. Agreeing to such a proposal would be inadvisable, inconsistent with established policies applicable to all members of the University community, and, most importantly, incompatible with federal and state law. While the union claims that other universities have been able to implement arbitration proposals, when asked, they could not identify a single instance of a Title IX complaint being resolved through arbitration, further demonstrating the union's proposal is not viable.

Your Participation is Important

Each member of the bargaining unit should make their own decision about voting to authorize a strike or participating in a strike. A decision as significant as strike authorization should reflect the views of the entire bargaining unit, not just those who are the most vocal or most active in the process. **Make sure your voice is heard.**