

Petition to Improve Health and Safety in the William Black Medical Research Building and Other  
CUMC Facilities

To: Dean Goldman

After numerous individual attempts urging Columbia to address chronic issues in building maintenance in the William Black Medical Research building, we are joining with our colleagues to demand urgent action to make improvements to the building and to address the institutional shortcomings that have prevented even the most basic laboratory needs from being met. We seek to improve the quality of our research and protect our health and safety. We also expect that Columbia recognize that it has neglected basic expectations and has fallen far short of the standards anyone would expect for an elite research institution. Graduate students' persistent requests have been mostly ignored, but if there were a union contract in place, there would be a clear grievance procedure and enforcement mechanism that grad workers could utilize to ensure that requests are addressed promptly. Short- and long-term failures in facilities management have cost researchers, conservatively, thousands of dollars and hundreds of man-hours.

The deteriorating infrastructure in the William Black Medical Research Building is not only inadequate for sound scientific research; it threatens workers' health and safety. We demand that the administration take the following immediate action:

1. Allow an inspection by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) of black soot in air vents, share the results with workers, and implement the recommendations of the OSHA inspection.
2. Repair and/or replace pipes that cause costly leaks on high-tech equipment.
3. Install reliable temperature controls in labs.
4. Remove bathroom locks that prevent female workers and guests from being able to access bathrooms.
5. Address water quality issues that include removing algae and solvents from the water supply.
6. Ensure sanitary cleaning of hallways, common areas, and bathrooms.

A detailed list of known issues is attached.