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INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA – UAW

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GARY R. JONES, *PRESIDENT*

RAY CURRY, *SECRETARY-TREASURER*

September 18, 2018

CC: President Lee Bollinger, Provost John Coastworth, Secretary Jerome Davis

Dear Columbia University Trustees,

As a new semester dawns, we renew our request to meet with you as soon as possible. Given your fiduciary and other responsibilities for governing the university, we earnestly seek your help urging the administration to start bargaining with Graduate Workers of Columbia-UAW Local 2110 (GWC-UAW).

Columbia University has become a glaring outlier against a clear, growing tide of history. Three more major private universities, including Harvard, have already agreed to respect graduate worker union rights since we first reached out to you in mid-April. In fact, an unprecedented nine private universities have now either commenced bargaining or have agreed to bargain if a majority of graduate student workers vote for unionization: Harvard, Brown, Cornell, NYU, The New School, Brandeis, Tufts, American and Georgetown.

Columbia's refusal to bargain has profound consequences not only for the graduate workers but also for the university's reputation. The ability to negotiate stronger recourse in instances of sexual harassment was among the many reasons graduate workers voted by 72 percent in favor of unionization. Unfortunately, it remains a pressing issue today as well. Since our last communication to you at the end of May, the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine [released a major report](#) saying academia ranks second only to the military in the pervasiveness of sexual harassment. By refusing to bargain, Columbia -- with its checkered history on this problem -- prevents us from negotiating fair recourse and advancing gender equity in the academic workforce. As we have not had the opportunity to sit down and discuss such issues with you, we invite you to read more about this one issue in the document we have enclosed.

While graduate workers would prefer to avoid further strike action, our resolve has only grown as the number of other universities who have agreed to bargain increases and support for GWC-UAW among faculty, students, alums, and local elected and community leaders continues to expand. The strength of our strike in April, and its widespread coverage in the [New York Times](#), [Washington Post](#), [New Republic](#), and National Public Radio, give graduate workers further resolve. We will be forced to take action until Columbia respects our vote and starts bargaining.

Please consider our request and let us know when you would be available to meet. We can be reached at [columbiagradunion@gmail.com](mailto:columbiagradunion@gmail.com).

Sincerely,

Beverley Brakeman, Director, UAW Region 9A  
Maida Rosenstein, President, UAW Local 2110  
Graduate Workers of Columbia – UAW Local 2110, Bargaining Committee  
Tania Bhattacharyya, History  
Ian Bradley-Perrin, Sociomedical Sciences

BB/MR  
OPEIU

Olga Brudastova, Civil Engineering and Engineering Mechanics  
Noura Farra, Computer Science  
Trevor Hull, Chemistry  
Kate Jackson, Political Science  
Rosalie Ray, Urban Planning  
Justin Steinfeld, Integrated Program  
Takaya Uchida, Earth and Environmental Sciences  
Angela Woodall, Communications



# Why is Columbia blocking justice for graduate workers on sexual assault and harassment?

THE CHRONICLE  
of Higher Education

## Two Movements Converge: #MeToo and Graduate-Student Unionization

MAY 18, 2018



## Grad Students are Unionizing to Fight Campus Sexual Assault

JUNE 21, 2017

The Washington Post

## Columbia Graduate Students Strike Over University's Refusal to Negotiate a Contract

APRIL 24, 2018



By refusing to follow the law and bargain with the Graduate Workers of Columbia-UAW, Columbia's administration is denying its employees a proven path to justice for graduate student workers who experience sexual harassment and assault. A recent National Academies report says academia ranks **second only to the military** in the pervasiveness of sexual harassment. In just the past year, three major cases of harassment and assault involving graduate students have emerged at the university, illustrating Columbia's longstanding failure to prevent and address the problem.

With models of success at other universities, such as the University of Connecticut and University of California, graduate workers at Columbia and elsewhere look increasingly to unionization as a vehicle to address sexual harassment, one of the major barriers to gender equity in the academy. Unionized graduate workers have made real progress by negotiating stronger protections against assault and harassment in their contracts. Just days after a contract was ratified at the University of Connecticut, for example, a worker who complained of harassment and assault by her boss used the union's grievance procedure to secure a settlement that preserved her ability to work, study, complete her PhD and pursue a fair chance at an academic career.

For good reason, workers, especially those who are women, are rising up and organizing unions to help address persistent harassment and assault in the workplace. It's time for Columbia to respect the law and bargain with its graduate workers, so they may have some measure of recourse and access this path to justice.