

Thursday, October 20, 2016

John J. Coatsworth, Provost  
Office of the Provost  
Columbia University in the City of New York  
205 Low Memorial Library, Mail Code 4313  
535 West 116th Street  
New York, NY 10027

Dear Provost Coatsworth,

The Graduate Workers of Columbia (GWC-UAW Local 2110) hereby invite you to participate in a town-hall format debate concerning the upcoming National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) election at Columbia.

We make this request out of respect for your encouragement of a “respectful and open conversation” on unionization. This invitation also recognizes that over the past six weeks, you and other administrators have been working against the union, attempting to persuade graduate workers to vote “no” on exercising our hard-won right to represent ourselves through GWC-UAW. As Columbia’s administration has declined repeated requests for an official commitment to neutrality, we feel the most appropriate way to promote the open conversation you have called for is to engage in a neutrally-moderated, structured debate on the issue of unionization, so that RAs and TAs can make a truly informed decision in the pending election.

Graduate workers deserve to hear their fellow student assistants’ arguments in favor of unionization, and the administration’s arguments against, in an open, serious, and high-minded conversation worthy of the academic environment of which we are all proud to be a part. To that end, we propose a ninety-minute debate between you and a graduate worker of GWC-UAW Local 2110, to take place no later than the second week of November, 2016. We anticipate a response from you by Wednesday, October 26; should you accept our invitation, we would meet with you by the end of that week. Together, we can determine a mutually agreeable date, moderator, and debate structure that ensures equal opportunity for both sides to explain their positions and answer questions.

We look forward to your response, and to what we hope will be a spirited and informative conversation.

Sincerely,

Graduate Workers of Columbia (GWC-UAW Local 2110) Organizing Committee  
columbiagradunion@gmail.com

