



Boston College Chapter
BCAAUP.org

10 September 2017

An open letter to the Boston College community:

The Boston College chapter of the American Association of University Professors endorses the unionization efforts of Boston College Graduate Employees Union-United Auto Workers. In solidarity with Faculty for Justice and BCGEU-UAW students, and in agreement with over a century of Catholic social teaching on organized labor and collective action, we urge BC administrators to accept the NLRB ruling that allows graduate student employees to hold a union certification election, to refrain from interference and maintain neutrality throughout the balloting process, and to respect the result of the election as valid.

The AAUP [has long maintained](#) that defending students' freedom of inquiry, expression, association, and collective advocacy is intrinsic to the cause of academic freedom and effective academic governance, and to promoting habits of collective deliberation and advocacy throughout our society and its institutions. The Boston College chapter of AAUP fully embraces the policies of the national organization; further, the clarity and consistency of Catholic social teaching on organized labor and collective action seems to provide reasonable grounds for expecting, at minimum, the University's agreement on the right of those graduate students who teach, conduct research, and variously serve the University as our assistants and junior colleagues, to determine for themselves whether to unionize. Whatever differences might exist in other areas, Catholic social teaching and AAUP policy on organized labor and collective action closely align. We understand Catholic social teaching to imply obligation not merely to accept the outcome of a democratic ballot, but to create and maintain general working conditions that are conducive to the formation and development of labor unions wherever they are needed. This suggests that the religious mission of Catholic universities should create natural alliances with labor organizers, and resistance to the anti-union, anti-collective tactics that other universities employ. We are, therefore, disappointed by BC's strong opposition to BCGEU-UAW, and dismayed by the problematic invocation of "religious mission" and "religious freedom" as justification. (See www.bcaaup.org for response to the [University's claims](#), as well as other resources.)

BC's expressed commitments to students' formation as citizens, to facilitating difficult conversations about the most urgent problems of our time, to the faithful presentation of Catholic heritage, and to leadership on ethical issues facing American universities, suggest that administrators already have ample justification for welcoming, rather than resisting, graduate students' efforts to unionize. We hope that administrators will perceive, as we do, valuable opportunities to mentor students through formative experiences in collective advocacy, to lead other universities in creating academic culture that assumes the value of organized labor and collective advocacy; and to do so in a way that highlights the Catholic Church's [unambiguous position on and contributions to American and international labor practices](#).

In solidarity,

The BCAAUP Executive Board

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