

To the Students and Faculty of the Graduate School:

I write to provide an important update on graduate student unionization at Yale.

As you know, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) ruled in August that graduate students who assist with teaching and research at private universities may be considered employees under the National Labor Relations Act, and may therefore seek to unionize.

On August 29, UNITE HERE-Local 33—formerly known as GESO—filed ten separate petitions for elections seeking separate bargaining units within each of ten (now nine) departments¹ in the Graduate School, an unprecedented approach in higher education. The NLRB held a 17-day-long hearing to consider the election petitions, which included testimony by Yale administrators and graduate students, as well as briefs filed by both the University and the union.

Today, the NLRB Regional Director in Boston issued a decision, approving Local 33’s election petitions and directing nine separate elections. The Regional Director found that the union’s proposed micro-units were appropriate under current Board law. The University has the right to file a Request for Review with the NLRB in Washington, D.C.

I continue to share the concerns of many graduate students that Local 33’s approach to these so-called departmental “micro-units” is insufficiently democratic, and contrary to the spirit of interdisciplinary collaboration that is such a hallmark of the Graduate School. Nevertheless, we assume that these nine independent elections will proceed.

In order to hold an election in each of the nine departments that the Regional Director approved, eligible students will receive additional voting instructions. The NLRB will oversee in-person, secret-ballot elections, in which eligible students will vote on whether or not they want UNITE HERE-Local 33 to represent them.

A simple majority of votes cast in each separate department will decide whether or not Local 33 becomes the bargaining representative for students teaching in that department. Additional information will follow concerning the election timing and process, as well as who is eligible to vote.

I look forward to keeping you updated on this important issue. As a reminder, you can view a number of frequently asked questions about graduate student unionization at the following link: <http://gsas.yale.edu/about-gsas/overview-graduate-student-education-yale-university>.

¹ GESO/Local 33 filed petitions in the following ten departments: Comparative Literature, East Asian Languages and Literatures, English, Geology and Geophysics, History, History of Art, Mathematics, Physics, Political Science, and Sociology. After the hearing concluded, Local 33 withdrew the petition for Comparative Literature.

Sincerely,

Lynn Cooley
Dean of the Graduate School