

The Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations will conduct a secret-ballot election on April 27, 2023 in which you will be eligible to vote whether or not you want the American Federation of Teachers to represent you for purposes of collective bargaining.

The election details are as follows:

Who Can Vote in the Election?

The following categories of graduate students are eligible to vote in the election:

- Teaching Assistants
- Teaching Fellows
- Instructional Assistants
- Studio Assistants
- Clinical Assistants
- Research Assistants
- Distinguished Doctoral Fellows
- Distinguished Art Fellows
- Doctoral Fellows
- Graduate Researchers
- Graduate Assistants
- Hourly-paid graduate students appointed for a minimum of 1 semester

Where will the election be held?

The election will be held at the Grand Reading Room at the Library, between 12:00 PM and 6:00 PM.

Eligible voters can appear at the voting place at any time during that period. You must present your Massachusetts Automobile Driver's License or another form of picture identification.

The voting will be by secret ballot.

A majority of the eligible graduate students who vote will determine the outcome of the election for everyone. That means **it is important that everyone cast their vote. If you don't vote, you will not have a say in the outcome of the election.**

Will there be transportation from New Bedford to the campus?

Yes, the regular bus between the Star Store and campus will be running. The following is the schedule:

2022 - 2023 Academic Year

Not in service: Saturdays, Holidays, snow days, winter break, spring break

Monday–Friday

DEPART Campus Center	DEPART Hidden Brook	DEPART Star Store
7:00am		7:25am
7:55am	8:45am	8:30am
9:05am		9:35am
10:05am		10:35am
11:05am	10:45am	11:35am
12:05pm		12:35pm
1:05pm	12:45pm	1:35pm
2:05pm		2:35pm
3:05pm	2:45pm	3:35pm
4:05pm		4:35pm
5:05pm	4:45pm	5:35pm
6:05pm		6:35pm
7:05pm	6:45pm	7:35pm
8:05pm		8:35pm
9:20pm	9:35pm	

Do I have to vote for the union if I signed a union authorization card?

No. You are free to vote against the union even if you signed a card.

Are there any special arrangements that have been made with the union?

Yes. The union entered into an agreement with the University to restrict collective bargaining in the event the union wins an election. Why? Because the University has certain questions about what can be bargained, and whether graduate students are “employees” under the law.

The union agreed to the following:

In the event the Union is certified following the election, the parties agree that:

- a. During negotiations for any collective bargaining agreement, the parties will not negotiate over academic matters and policies;
- b. Any collective bargaining agreement negotiated by the parties will specifically state that “The hours of work required to complete academic requirements are not subject to bargaining.”
- c. The grievance and arbitration clause will contain the following language:

The arbitrator shall be without authority to add to, subtract from or modify the terms of this Agreement. Furthermore, the arbitrator shall be without authority to consider or render decisions concerning any academic matters or any aspect of a bargaining unit member’s status as a student.”

What does this agreement mean?

This agreement means that if you choose to be represented by the AFT, the union will not be able to bargain with the University about academic matters affecting graduate students. Academic matters include topics such as who is admitted to a program; what courses are offered; what degree requirements are established; who is selected to receive a funded position; how research is conducted; who teaches particular courses; how students are graded and evaluated; the amount of financial aid that is awarded, and similar academic matters.

In addition, if you choose to be represented by the AFT and you are a Research Assistant or a Graduate Researcher, you will not be able to bargain about the number of hours of work required to complete your dissertation. Those hours are purely an academic matter, and the work is in pursuit of an academic degree.

What will we be able to bargain about?

If you choose to be represented by the AFT, you will only be able to bargain about terms and conditions of your employment when you are performing work, as opposed to pursuing academic matters. There may be some disagreements between the University and the union as to whether a particular subject is an academic matter or a work matter, and any unresolved dispute would potentially be resolved by the Massachusetts Department of Labor Relations.

Is there any guarantee that the union would get you better stipends and benefits than you now have?

No. There is never any guarantee in collective bargaining. Bargaining is a give and take process, and neither side is required to agree to a proposal submitted by the other side. The parties are obliged to bargain in good faith, and the outcome might be that current terms and conditions are improved, are reduced, or remain the same.

Who decides on the proposals that the union submits during bargaining?

That is entirely up to the union. We do not know who would make those decisions or who

would be on the union's bargaining team. Those are questions you might want to pose to the union before you cast your vote.

How would a contract be ratified?

We do not know. The ratification process is determined by the union. You may want to ask about it.

If we choose a union and do not like the University's contract proposals, can we go on strike?

No. Our graduate students are public employees and public employees cannot strike in Massachusetts.