

The Scarlet Newsletter



News and events from Boston's unionized contingent faculty

The Boston chapter of Higher Education Labor United (HELU) is proud to announce the first issue of our news letter bringing tidings of faculty organizing and community events.

October 2025 Issue

Austerity at Brandeis

Greetings! We are a group of union stewards and others from across the university concerned about the austerity we are all facing. When we say 'austerity', we are talking about decisions by Brandeis leadership that aim to cut university costs and increase revenue. These can include things like raising tuition, increasing the enrollment minimum that results in course cancellations, expanding staff workload, "negative wage increases" that do not meet inflation, and decreasing support for staff and faculty.

Brandeis has long had financial challenges, including deferred maintenance, but the current fiscal crisis is intense, and it is occurring as our university is undergoing a profound and unprecedented reorganization. We created this short survey to learn more about how austerity measures at Brandeis are impacting all of us in our campus community. The aims of the Town Hall are to draw attention to ways the ongoing austerity is affecting us, increase our understanding of differential impacts, and think together about what we can do.

Monday October 20th from 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm, in-person in Schwartz Hall, Room 110, Waltham, MA.

Zoom will be available, email Sarah Lupis for link: psychobabblellc@gmail.com

Survey of Contingent Faculty Working Conditions

In solidarity with contingent faculty across Boston, Higher Education Labor United is gathering data on the working conditions of adjunct and other non-tenure track faculty. By building a public website sharing this data, we aim to empower faculty with the knowledge they need to bargain for improved wages, better working conditions, and less isolation in our work..

Please share your working conditions using the following QR code:



Get Involved with HELU!

Join the Higher Ed Labor United meetings on:

- October 22nd, 6-8pm
at Lockheart, 102 Central St, Wellesley, MA

-December 3rd, 6-8pm
at the Salty Pig, 130 Dartmouth St, Boston, MA.

Keep an eye out for a link to our zoom meeting to be scheduled for late January!

Contact Anne Balay at abalay@seiu509.org for more information, to be added to our mailing list, submit articles for this newsletter, or to otherwise get more involved!

Continue reading on back for contract wins from Wellesley and Tufts!.....>>>

Contract wins from contingent faculty unions across the greater Boston Area!

Report from Wellesley Organized Academic Workers:

WOAW-UAW voted to ratify our first contract with a 98.11% YES vote on September 5th, 2025. Our first contract raises the bar for everyone: we won a 14.7% raise in the base salary, better job security protections, and eliminated workload tiers from our contract. Job security was an important issue for many union members. Thanks to this contract, union employees cannot have their salary or workload reduced mid-contract. Additionally, after two reappointments, union employees have a “presumption of reappointment” which sets a just cause standard against arbitrary discipline and termination.

Our protections against harassment and discrimination article offers more flexibility and autonomy to employees with longer timelines for reporting and greater control over the supportive measures offered. Finally, we have a strong health and safety article which outlines timelines for reporting safety issues, a first ever faculty child care benefit, rent control for faculty housing, and titles that better reflect our work as teaching faculty. Read more about our contract here: <https://www.wellesleyorganizedacademicworkers.org/ta-highlights>

Winning this historic contract was a lot of work. We were on strike for 29 days last April, which demonstrated our commitment to securing better working conditions. Although we ended the strike without a contract, the strike was incredibly disruptive to the end of the academic year. It was clear that the administration wanted to avoid another strike. The College and WOAW entered mediation over the summer and successfully found some common ground before the fall semester began. Another crucial element in securing this contract was support from our students and our on-campus union siblings. Our students understand that “our working conditions are student learning conditions” and advocated for us to the administration, stood on the picket line with us, and even cooked us wonderful food.

-- WOAW Organizing Committee



Faculty on strike at WOAW-UAW picket line. Image from WOAW-UAW Instagram, photo credit Henry Berman.

Report from Tufts Teaching Professors Union:

In June the Teaching Professors Union (formerly Full-time Lecturers) won our third contract (for 2025-2029). We ratified a contract that included 1) a change to our titles (from Lecturers to Teaching Professors), 2) strengthening of control over workload through department policies that codify course equivalencies or overage pay for all of facets of our work, and 3) 3% annual raises for entire unit, with increases in minimum salaries of at least 16% (for each of our 3 promotion levels). These were significant wins to make our workloads more sustainable and get us closer to livable salaries. We could not have achieved these gains if our members had not stepped up over the 14 months of negotiations. We rallied, built coalitions with our sister union units, and built a strong base of support from students, their families, and the broader community. At end of January 2025, we conducted a 2-day walkout that was the first ever strike action taken by teachers at Tufts. Most importantly, we developed stronger relationships and solidarity amongst the 120+ members of our unit.

-- Penn Loh, Teaching Professor, Dept of Urban & Environmental Policy & Planning, at Tufts full-time since 2009 and member of the Contract Action Team and Bargaining Committee