



March 13, 2020

CC: President Lee Bollinger, Provost Ira Katznelson, Jerome Davis

Dear Columbia University Board of Trustees:

As the elected representatives for roughly 1700 Postdoctoral and Associate Researchers at Columbia, we thank the Board for its ongoing support of the University's world-renowned research programs. We also ask for your support and more bargaining time from the administration as we work with them to reach agreement on our first union contract by April 6.

We care deeply about our work and proudly devote long hours day in and day out to groundbreaking research on cancer and other major diseases, climate change and clean energy, the challenges facing public transportation, and many other life-enhancing subjects. Our work drives Columbia's reputation as a leader in scientific and scholarly innovation and helps bring roughly \$1 Billion in research grant revenue to the University each year.

Postdoc and Associate Researchers voted overwhelmingly to unionize and participated in shaping our bargaining goals. We believe that improving our workplace rights, pay, and benefits will enhance our ability to focus on and produce quality research.

We seek competitive pay, equitable benefits, stronger protections against discrimination and harassment, and strong organizational rights for our Union comparable to other unions on campus. In short, as several of our colleagues wrote recently in "[Postdocs and the Price of Prestige at Columbia](#)," we seek a contract that reflects the value we bring to the university and will establish a meaningful long term voice for researchers through our Union.

After more than one year of negotiations, we believe it is in the interest of the University to agree to a fair contract. The improvements we seek will not only improve our lives, but will also help make the campus research community more equitable and inclusive and enhance Columbia's ability to recruit and retain the brightest researchers to sustain its position as a world leader in scientific and scholarly innovation.

We were encouraged when the Provost reiterated as recently as late January that all involved were "keen to achieve a fair and productive contract...during the no-strike window that extends to April 6, 2020." We have made clear to the administration that we are willing to put in as much time as necessary to achieve that goal either in person or virtually. However, as the administration team has not yet agreed to the kind of robust bargaining schedule necessary to reach a full and fair agreement by April 6, we hope you will urge them to commit the necessary time to reach our mutual goal as planned.

Thank you for your time and feel free to contact us if you have any further questions.

Sincerely,

Columbia Postdoctoral Workers-UAW Bargaining Committee

Melissa McKenzie, MD-PhD (PRS- Systems Biology)

Medini Annavaiahala, PhD (PRF- Department of Medicine – Infectious Diseases)

Steven Cook, PhD (PRF- Department of Biological Sciences)

Tulsi Patel, PhD (PRS- Department of Pathology and Cellular Biology)

Andrew Zaharia, PhD (PRS- Zuckerman Institute)

Ignacio Hernandez-Morato, PhD (ARS- Department of Otolaryngology Head and Neck Surgery)

Jozsef Meszaros, JD-PhD (PRS- Department of Psychiatry)

Pierre-Jacques Brun, PhD (ARS- Department of Medicine – Preventive Medicine)