

First-Year Report Card On Graduate Student Assistants Unionization

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Last fall, the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) re-opened the door to [unionization by graduate student assistants](#). The NLRB overturned 12 years of precedent and ruled that graduate assistants at Columbia were employees eligible to unionize under the NLRA. An entire school year has passed since that ruling in August 2016, so we wanted to provide a progress report on graduate student unionization. At [Columbia](#), the university at issue in the August NLRB case, graduate students voted overwhelmingly in favor of unionization last December by a vote of 1,602 to 623. The UAW now represents approximately 3,500 graduate students working as teaching and research assistants at the school. Unions got passing grades from graduate students at other universities, such as: [Tufts](#), [Loyola University Chicago](#) and [Brandeis](#). Unions received a failing grade at [Duke University](#), where the union first filed a petition for election with the NLRB, but later withdrew it when the vote neared. Unions received incomplete grades at several other institutions, as the schools continue to fight through the legal process, perhaps in hopes that new appointments to the NLRB by President Trump will reverse course again and deny graduate students the right to organize. Those schools include [Harvard](#) and [Yale](#).

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