Q. I heard the Tufts part-time faculty are engaging in a one-day walk-out on October 11. What is going on?

A. Since March, the University and the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Local 509, the union that represents the School of Arts and Sciences (A&S) part-time lecturers at Tufts, have been engaged in good faith collective bargaining towards a second contract (the first contract was ratified in October 2014). Although there is a mediation session scheduled for October 17, 2017, the university understands that the union has authorized a one-day walk-out (strike) on Wednesday October 11, 2017. The University expects that if the union proceeds as planned that no part-time lecturer will engage in any work on behalf of the School of Arts and Sciences on October 11, 2017. In preparation for this walk-out, the University is providing some information through this FAQ to its community on what to expect.

Q. I thought the part-time lecturers’ contract prohibited strike activity?

A. It does. However, the current part-time lecturers’ contract expires on October 6, 2017, and the union has declined to further extend the contract despite the University’s requests. When the contract expires, the contract provisions will not be in effect and the union will have the right to strike.

Q. Are the part-time faculty engaging in this activity because the University has engaged in bad faith bargaining?

No. The university has been negotiating in good faith, and has had a productive and respectful relationship with its part-time faculty in the labor negotiations process, which is ongoing. It is proud of the first agreement it reached with the A&S part-time faculty and the SEIU in 2014 -- which the SEIU has held up as a model for pay, benefits, and job security for part-time faculty, as well as an example of union-university cooperation. The terms in this agreement, including the pay, benefits, and job security continue to lead the relevant market in the Boston area, and in New England.

To date, our negotiations with the SEIU have been characterized by the spirit of professionalism and cooperation that has been central to our relationship. We have a mediation date scheduled for October 17 – three working days after this walk-out—and
we have reached compromises in most areas of the contract, which makes the union's plan to engage in a job action affecting students both surprising and saddening.

The university understands that the A&S part-time lecturers are interested in higher wages and enhanced job security, and the university has responded with meaningful proposals which have addressed these issues. The university has not accepted proposals that do not support fundamental principles it follows in determining pay, including internal equity and market principles. The university remains committed to continuing to negotiate in good faith and remains hopeful that an agreement will be reached soon.

Q. What are the points of tension with the university and the union? Why can't the university accommodate the union's demands?

A. Simply put, the central disagreement in the negotiations right now between the University and the union relates to compensation. Tufts part-time lecturers are the highest paid unionized part-time faculty in the Boston area and, based on what the administration has offered in negotiations, would remain so with this new contract. However, the union has rejected the University’s various competitive compensation offers.

The University has a compensation philosophy that it applies to all faculty and staff. This philosophy generally includes an interest in compensating faculty and staff with attention to the relevant external market and internal equity, among other factors. The University seeks to adhere to its principles in fairness to all. The university is not obligated to agree to the Union’s proposals simply because the union demands them; it is obligated to negotiate in good faith. The university has and will continue to engage in good faith bargaining.

For Students:

Q. Does this mean classes are cancelled on October 11?

A. No. The University will be open and all undergraduate and graduate students will be expected to attend classes that day.

Q. What if I want to skip class and support the part-time lecturers?

A. Students will be expected to attend class on October 11. Students who do not attend class may be held to their instructor’s attendance and other course related requirements.
Q: What if I go to class and my instructor is not there? Will I nonetheless be required to keep up with assignments?

A: Please wait for at least ten (10) minutes and if your instructor or someone from the department does not appear or otherwise leave notice for you about plans for that day’s class, you may leave. If your class does not meet, you will be expected to keep up with the syllabus and related assignments unless you hear otherwise from your instructor. Your instructor will likely inform you either before or after October 11 of their plans for your completion of course requirements.

Q: People are protesting outside my classroom building. Can I still enter the building?

A: Students may enter University buildings as they normally would and have the right to attend classes and to continue to participate in their educational and other campus activities. Similarly, those who choose to participate in the walk-out and any protest related activity are entitled to do so under university policy but they should not engage in intimidation, threats, coercion, or other activities that would prevent students from participating in any regular campus activities.

Q: Can I express my views on this walk-out either in support or not?

A: Yes. All students may express themselves with regards to the walk-out.

Q: If I express my views on this walk-out, will there be repercussions for my doing so?

Whether you support the walk-out or not (or if you choose not to express your views at all), you should not be treated differently or otherwise be impacted by the expression of your views. You should not be intimidated, coerced, or threatened into holding one view, or another.

For Full-time Faculty and All Staff

Q: I am a staff member, will I be expected to report to work on October 11?

A: Yes. All staff scheduled to work on October 11 will be expected to come to work on October 11 unless authorized time off has been granted ahead of time consistent with applicable University policies.

Q: I’m a full-time faculty member, will I be expected to report to work on October 11?

A: Yes. All tenured and tenure track faculty will be expected to report to work on October 11, as will full-time lecturers. Although full-time lecturers are also represented by the SEIU, their current contract prohibits strike or sympathy strike activity. Full time lecturers should refer to their contract, Article 21, Section 1: http://as.tufts.edu/documents/CBAfullTimeLecturers.pdf
Q. There are people outside my building encouraging me not to cross the picket line. Can I still enter my building?

A. Yes. All staff are expected to come to work as usual and cannot be intimidated, coerced, or threatened for attempting to do so.

Q. Can I express my views on this walk-out either in support or not?

A. Yes. All employees may express themselves with regards to the walk-out.

Q. If I express my views on this walk-out, will there be repercussions for my doing so?

No. Whether you support the walk-out or not (or if you choose not to express your views at all), you should not be treated differently or otherwise be impacted by the expression of your views. You should not be intimidated, coerced, or threatened into holding one view, or another.

Q. Can I ask the part-time lecturers whether they intend to work or walk-out, or ask questions about how many people intend to walk-out? Can I encourage them to teach instead?

A. If you are a manager (this includes Department Chairs, Program Directors, and all tenured faculty members), the answer is no. Part-time lecturers opting to walk-out are afforded these rights under the labor law and should not be asked about their intentions or obligations in this regard. University managers should refrain from any actions that may be perceived as interfering with the part-time lecturers’ right to strike.

For Part-Time Lecturers

Q. Are part-time lecturers required by the union to participate in the walk-out on October 11 regardless of whether they support this action or not? What about part-time lecturers who are not members of the union (i.e., pay an agency fee)?

A. We don’t know. Any part-time lecturers unsure of their obligations to the union should inquire of the union if they have any questions about their union obligations.