Dear Colleagues,

I understand this is a busy time of year, and I hope you are finding joy and meaning as you reorient yourselves from the bustle of the fall semester to the fullness of December’s many celebrations to the relative quiet of winter break.

I write to you today because I understand that a group called Princeton University Postdocs and Scholars is currently conducting an organizing drive, or card drive, to unionize in affiliation with the United Auto Workers (UAW).

Together with our colleagues in the Office of the Dean of the Faculty, I respect your right to make an informed decision about unionization and to choose whether you should join this effort. With this in mind, I am sharing information in this letter that I hope you will find useful as you consider this decision.

As I have said before, the University recognizes the vital role that you play in our campus community and in contributing to Princeton’s academic mission. Princeton is, therefore, committed to sustaining excellent pay, benefits and services competitive with those of other Ivy League universities and research institutions, as well as providing holistic support and an environment where all of our scholarly populations can thrive. This commitment will continue regardless of whether our postdoctoral researchers and scholars choose to unionize.

Indeed, within the past year, Princeton has worked productively with the postdoctoral community to increase support for postdoctoral research by creating a position for assistant dean of postdoctoral affairs, improving access to professional development opportunities, making quality of life improvements, and raising the minimum salary for postdocs nearly 20% over the federal requirement. For associate research scholars, the University has revised the policy related to their appointments to require that the length of their appointments be three-year terms.

On the Office of the Dean of the Faculty website, you can find “Frequently Asked Questions” about unionization and its potential impact on your employment at Princeton. I encourage you to review these questions and answers as you think about what unionization might mean for you. I also understand that many of you may have questions about what benefits and programs Princeton currently provides to its postdoctoral researchers and scholars; you will also find attached a summary of many of the benefits to which you are entitled.

Our postdoctoral researchers and scholars should form their own opinions about unionization without pressure from the institution, from its constituents (including anyone for or against unionization), or from the faculty. We caution against intimidation or coercion from any member of our community toward another member regarding their position on unionization.
My office will continue to offer updates and other opportunities for communication in the coming weeks and months. We are eager to speak with you about this and other issues that are of importance to you. Please feel free to reach out at any time to Karen Haskin, associate dean for academic affairs, and Tithi Basu Mallik, assistant dean for postdoctoral affairs. They are available to answer any questions you may have about your employment at Princeton, as well as about the many benefits and opportunities we offer at Princeton to enrich your life and advance your career.

I wish you the best as we enter the holiday season.

Take care,

GJ

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Gene Andrew Jarrett
Dean of the Faculty
William S. Tod Professor of English
Princeton University