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INTERNATIONAL UNION, UNITED AUTOMOBILE, AEROSPACE & AGRICULTURAL IMPLEMENT WORKERS OF AMERICA – UAW

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UNITED POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS OF ROCKEFELLER
UPROR
™

February 17, 2026

To President Lifton,

We, the undersigned postdoctoral researchers of The Rockefeller University, write to urge the University administration to reach a fair union contract without further delay.

We voted by an overwhelming 69% to unionize in September 2024 to address issues that undermine our ability to do world-class research. More than a year later, these issues have become more urgent due to unprecedented attacks on higher education. Yet the University administration has so far failed to reach agreements on many crucial non-economic rights that are increasingly standard among unionized postdocs. These include more stable and predictable appointments, strong and enforceable intellectual property rights, a fair grievance and arbitration procedure, provisions for effective union representation, and stronger protections against discrimination, harassment, and bullying, among others.

It is particularly concerning that the University's initial response on harassment and discrimination, which was provided more than six months after we gave the University our initial proposal, went far below protections won by other unionized postdocs in the city. We deserve a process that protects against discrimination and harassment, including bullying and abusive conduct, without restricting our options for navigating these issues. We should not be required to complete an internal investigation, appeal, and mediation before being able to file a grievance. This means workers could go without a clear resolution indefinitely, without an enforceable timeline. We should not be forced to use one process to deal with harassment and discrimination, or to waive our legal rights to other forms of recourse.

Sexual harassment and bullying are rampant in academia, and it is critical that our contract guarantees the right to pursue fair remedies without unnecessary delays. It should provide clear options and timelines for addressing discrimination and harassment. Workers should have choices for dealing with harassment and discrimination, including by going through a grievance procedure with timely access to neutral third-party arbitration. This would allow survivors to receive the immediate assistance they need alongside any internal investigation and complaint processes and any potential legal recourse.

We unionized in order to make working conditions at Rockefeller more equitable, inclusive, and competitive. It is our sincere hope that by working together with Rockefeller we can strengthen our world-class research environment and make campus a safer space for everyone, without risking further disruption to research.

Therefore, we urge the University's bargaining team to reach a fair agreement that:

- Ensures immediate access to a timely, neutral and enforceable grievance and arbitration procedure, including for cases of discrimination and harassment
- Allows access to alternative options for recourse, including legal recourse
- Protects against bullying and abusive conduct
- Matches or exceeds other basic rights and protections that are increasingly standard for unionized postdocs in New York City

Signed,