TO: Western University Undergraduate Students  
FROM: Janice Deakin, Provost and Vice-President (Academic)  
RE: Potential labour action involving Graduate Teaching Assistants  

March 19, 2018  

Dear students,  

The University has been in negotiations with the Graduate Teaching Assistants (GTAs) who are members of Public Service Alliance of Canada Local 610, since last fall, and we meet next with the union on March 27. That meeting notwithstanding, the union is preparing for a strike vote today through March 22.  

A strike vote does not mean that there will be a strike, and we remain hopeful that we can reach a settlement. We appreciate that the potential for a labour disruption could lead you to worry about coursework, deadlines and upcoming exams, and we want to provide you with both reassurance and context:  

The University is committed to ensuring undergraduate students finish this term. Grading papers and assignments, exam-writing and convocation will take place as scheduled.  

We encourage you to complete your assignments, lab reports, essays and other coursework as you ordinarily would, and to work towards assigned deadlines as usual.  

We recognize many of you have regular, important connections with Teaching Assistants in lectures, tutorials, labs, exams and other areas. Please know that the University, too, values the important contributions the GTAs make to the quality of undergraduate education at Western.  

Western is committed to achieving a contract that is mutually agreeable and fiscally responsible with the union representing the approximately 2,000 TAs. These teaching assistants currently receive $43.61 an hour and are guaranteed a maximum of 140 hours per term.  

Currently, Western GTAs earn $2.77 more per hour than Ontario GTAs receive on average. Only four universities, three of them in Toronto, provide higher rates to their GTAs. Our offer on the table is also in line with contracts recently negotiated with other employee groups at Western.  

If labour action does take place, we will notify you as soon as possible. We would expect minimal disruption to your daily routine: libraries, classrooms, residences and other facilities and services would remain open and accessible. Exams and marking would take place – including accommodations for those who need them – and convocation would proceed as scheduled.  

We recognize you may have other questions, and we expect we will have more answers in the next week or so.
Please watch the University’s Contract Negotiations website for the latest information.

We ask for and appreciate your patience during this time. We’ll stay in touch.

Thank you,

Janice Deakin, Ph.D.
Provost and Vice-President (Academic)