

TEACHING ASSISTANT LABOR ORGANIZATION (TALO) CONSTITUTION

Ratified 12/15/2023

Article I – Name

This organization shall be known as Teaching Assistant Labor Organization (TALO) as a bargaining unit within AFT/RIFTHP Local 6516. This organization shall be referred to throughout this document interchangeably as TALO, the union, and the organization.

Article II – Purpose

The purpose of this organization shall be:

Section 1. Member Welfare

- a. To support the rights of everyone working as an undergraduate academic worker at Brown University to organize and engage in collective bargaining;
- b. To promote the welfare of the membership and to provide members a voice in the determination of the terms and conditions of their employment.

Section 2. Building Union Power

- a. To promote and advance its growth through conversation with members and with undergraduate academic workers who have not yet become members;
- b. To foster community among members by building a culture of mutual empowerment and mutual respect.

Section 3. Democracy, Transparency, Accountability, Equity

- a. To encourage all undergraduate academic workers to share in the full benefits of the organization, in accordance with the principles of inclusion and non-discrimination set forth in Article III, Section 2;
- b. To build a democratic organization whose leadership is accountable to its members and regularly solicits and considers rank-and-file perspectives on union matters.

Section 4. Promoting the Work of Education and Research

- a. To support practitioners of teaching, learning, and research at Brown, in Providence, across the United States, and around the world;
- b. To expand and improve primary, secondary, and higher education for all to enjoy.

Section 5. Solidarity and Social Justice

- a. To support the efforts of movements that pursue social justice, including but not limited to:
gender and sexuality equity, racial justice, anti-imperialism and international solidarity, disability justice, and equity for international student workers and undocumented people;

- b. To support the efforts of all workers to organize and engage in collective bargaining;
- c. To organize for the mutual aid, protection, and benefit of all;
- d. To promote the mutual interests of all working people through collaboration and cooperation with other people and groups on campus and beyond.

Article III – Membership

Section 1. Anyone who is working or has worked as a student employee in the CS TA or student advocate program at Brown University is eligible for membership in this organization.

- a. Members who are currently performing bargaining unit work shall be considered Bargaining Unit Members;
- b. Members who are not currently performing bargaining unit work, but have formerly performed bargaining unit work shall be considered Non-Bargaining Unit Members;
- c. Non-Bargaining Unit Members have all the rights and privileges associated with Bargaining Unit Membership given they remain “in good standing,” as defined in Section 3 below.
- d. Unless otherwise specified, “members” and “membership” refer to both Bargaining Unit and Non-Bargaining Unit Members.

Section 2. No person shall be denied membership, nor shall this organization ever discriminate against individual members or applicants for membership, on the basis of race, color, caste, ethnicity, religion, height, weight, age, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, health, disability, relationship or marital status, veteran status, pregnancy or parental status, number of dependents, native language, national origin, political affiliation, or socio-economic status.

Section 3. All members may attend general membership meetings. Good standing status is among the requirements to run for office, serve as a steward, vote for officers and delegates, or vote in referenda.

Section 4. Good standing status is conferred on any Bargaining Unit Member who is currently in payment of dues to the organization, in accordance with Article X. Good standing status is conferred on any Non-Bargaining Unit Member who 1) is an active member of a TALO committee, or 2) attends a General Members Meeting once per semester and has had an organizing conversation with a member of the Organizing Committee.

Section 5. In accordance with AFT guidelines, alumni membership is an option available to graduated members of the union. This membership is purely an expression of solidarity, and the organization has no duty to represent and no responsibility to these members. Alumni members pay dues in accordance with Article X, Section 4.

Article IV – Election of Officers and Delegates

Section 1. Elections shall be conducted in accordance with the AFT Constitution and the standards set out by the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act (LMRDA).

Section 2. For all elections officers shall be elected in December of every year, creating a one-year term of office.

Section 3. The organization will, concurrently with the procedures named in Section 2 of this article, elect delegates to conventions of the affiliated organizations, per Article XI, Section 3.

Section 4. The organization will elect the following officers which shall comprise the Executive Board:

- a. President;
- b. Coordinator for Organizing;
- c. Coordinator for Communications;
- d. Coordinator for Events;
- e. Treasurer

Section 5. To be eligible for office, a person must be a member of the organization in good standing.

Section 6. The Elections Committee shall conduct all elections and referenda of the organization.

- a. The Elections Committee shall consist of three members in good standing selected by the Organizing Committee at its first meeting of the year (operating year determined by the Executive Board).
- b. Any member of the Elections Committee who is seeking office or who accepts a nomination for office must vacate their position and be replaced by a member nominated by the President and approved by the Executive Board.

Section 7. Elections process:

- a. Thirty-five (35) days prior to the date of the election, the Elections Committee shall notify all members of the opening of nominations for officers, the offices to be filled, and the date of the election by electronic-mail. This notice will also inform the member that good standing status is required to vote for officers and will also inform the member of eligibility requirements to run for office or delegate.
- b. To nominate oneself or a colleague for President, Coordinator for Organizing, Coordinator for Communications, and Coordinator for Events: submit to the Elections Committee a petition containing the signatures of at least five (5) members. Said petitions must be submitted no later than fifteen (15) days following the notice of the opening of nominations.
- c. The Elections Committee shall determine whether nominations were timely and if the nominees are eligible for office. The Elections Committee will then ask eligible nominees

if they affirmatively accept their nomination, and only those nominees who accept their nomination will appear on the ballot.

Section 8. Uncontested seats shall be elected by acclamation. Write-in candidates are not permitted. For contested seats, at least fifteen (15) days prior to the date of the election, the Elections Committee shall notify all members of the election date and candidates for office, by communication methods chosen at the discretion of the Elections Committee.

Section 9. At least fifteen (15) days prior to the date of the election, the Elections Committee shall prepare electronic voting ballots for all members in good standing as of the date twenty (20) days prior to the date of the election.

Section 10. The Elections Committee shall tabulate the ballots at the closing of the vote, and a majority of the ballots cast shall be sufficient for a candidate to take office. Candidates will assume office at the next regularly scheduled general membership meeting.

Section 11. For offices in which no candidate earns a majority of votes cast, the Elections Committee shall conduct a run-off election between the two candidates who have received the most votes for the office in question using the same electronic balloting procedure above. Candidates elected by run-off election shall assume office within thirty (30) days of the run-off count.

Section 12. Challenges and objections to an election must be submitted in writing, with a statement of supporting reasons that includes specific facts as well as any documentation, to the Elections Committee within five (5) days of the count. The Elections Committee shall issue its written opinion regarding the objections no later than ten (10) days after receipt of such objections.

Section 13. The election results will be published and distributed to the membership within thirty (30) days of a count.

Section 14. With the exception of the President, or in case of a recall, the Executive Board will have the power to fill vacancies in its membership until the next general election of officers.

Section 15. An elected officer may be removed from office, and a new special election held, due to specific cause, generally limited to violation of the Constitution, misconduct, improper election, or abuse of the powers of office. A petition signed by 20% of eligible voters of the membership shall be sufficient to require a recall election for any sitting officer. The Elections Committee shall supervise the recall election and subsequent special election.

Article V – Duties of Officers

Section 1. The President shall:

- a. Be the principal executive officer of the organization;
- b. Be the presiding officer at all general membership meetings and executive board meetings;
- c. Be an ex-officio member of all standing committees except the Elections Committee;
- d. Appoint, with the approval of the Executive Board, members to serve on all standing and special committees except the Elections Committee;
- e. Receive, report, and respond to correspondence of the organization;
- f. Supervise all employees of the organization;
- g. Be one of the responsible financial officers of the organization and shall be authorized to co-sign financial instruments and make regular and usual disbursements of funds;
- h. Represent the organization before the public and before Brown University management;
- i. Be, by office, a delegate to the Providence Central Labor Council, the Rhode Island AFLCIO, the convention of the American Federation of Teachers, and meetings or conventions of the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals;
- j. Make an annual report to the organization's membership;
- k. Sign all official documents of the Organization;
- l. Be able to delegate the responsibilities of the office except where otherwise specified by the Constitution.

Section 2: The Coordinator for Organizing shall:

- a. Commit to follow and implement consciously anti-racist, feminist, and anti-exclusionary organizing practices within the organization.
- b. Be the chair of the Organizing Committee;
- c. Ensure all organizers are trained and supported;
- d. Communicate with the Treasurer to ensure up-to-date information about bargaining unit members and membership in all constituencies;
- e. Manage internal organizing data.

Section 3. The Coordinator for Communications shall:

- a. Be the chair of the Communications Committee;
- b. Assist the President in handling the incoming correspondence of the organization;
- c. Oversee all mass communications to membership and the public.

Section 4. The Coordinator for Events shall:

- a. Be the chair of the Events Committee;
- b. Lead the planning for General Memberships Meetings;
- c. Lead the planning for any other events deemed important or desirable for the well-functioning and growth of the Organization;
- d. Work with the other Committees, as necessary.

Section 5. Treasurer

- a. Serve as a representative for the TALO bargaining unit in the Local 6516 Treasury Committee. In doing so, the Treasurer helps track TALO's finances (including dues and expenses) and corresponds with the treasurer of Local 6516;

- b. Be one of the responsible financial officers of the organization and shall be authorized to co-sign financial instruments and make regular and usual disbursements of funds

Article VI – Executive Board

Section 1. The Executive Board, which consists of the officers enumerated in Article IV, Section 4, shall meet every two weeks during the academic year and once per month during the summer, or at the call of the President, for the purpose of initiating, overseeing, or revising the program of the organization and to conduct other business of the organization that is within its authority. A quorum for the Executive Board shall be at least one-half of its members. The President shall notify Executive Board members in advance of each meeting.

Section 2. The Executive Board shall be responsible for adherence to and enforcement of the Constitution of the organization.

Section 3. The Executive Board shall approve the chairperson and membership of all special committees of the organization. The Executive Board shall also receive regular reports from standing and special committees.

Section 4. Five absences from an Executive Board meeting within a calendar year, counted from the date of assumption of office, shall be grounds for a vote of the Executive Board to decide if that Executive Board member should be replaced. Pursuant to Article IV, Section 14, the Executive Board shall have the authority to appoint an eligible member to take the seat of an Executive Board member who was suspended or replaced under the terms of this section.

Article VII – Committees

Section 1. The standing committees of the organization shall be:

- a. Elections;
- b. Grievance;
- c. Communications;
- d. Organizing;
- e. Events.

Section 2. The Executive Board may form special committees on its own initiative or at the direction of the Organizing Committee.

Section 3. The chairs of the standing committees, except the Elections Committee, shall be the appropriate officers of the Executive Board, pursuant to Article V.

Section 4. The Organizing Committee:

- a. Is chaired by the Coordinator for Organizing;

- b. Is responsible for the planning, preparation, and execution of union campaigns;
- c. Shall appoint members of the Elections Committee in accordance with Article IV, Section 6.a; initiate referenda in accordance with Article XIV; and initiate and take other such actions as the body deems necessary in accordance with relevant articles of this Constitution.
- d. The Coordinator for Organizing and Stewards are ex-officio members of the Organizing Committee. They are endowed with voting rights in cases where the Elections Committee or Bargaining Committee are being formed, referenda are called, including strike authorization votes, or in other decision-making processes.
- e. Any member in good standing can join the Organizing Committee, but only the aforementioned elected members are endowed with voting rights.

Section 5. The Elections Committee shall be responsible for elections, pursuant to Article IV.

Section 6. The Grievance Committee:

- a. The Grievance committee shall be composed of the members of the Organizing Committee.
- b. Shall work with Stewards and officers in the resolution of contractual and non-contractual disputes between graduate employees and the University;
- c. Shall be responsible for the processing of grievances and disputes beyond the immediate work location;
- d. The grievant may appeal the final decisions of the Grievance Committee to the Executive Board. The Executive Board shall develop and adopt a policy that governs how it shall approach grievances not referred to arbitration or mediation, as well as other litigation and/or administrative appeals. The Grievance Committee shall follow this policy.

Section 7. The Bargaining Committee:

- a. In advance of any and all contract negotiations a special committee called the Bargaining Committee (BC) shall be formed. The BC shall represent and advocate for the diverse interests of membership at the negotiation table;
- b. TALO is committed to prioritizing open bargaining throughout negotiations. Members shall be encouraged to join bargaining sessions. TALO's elected leadership shall regularly engage members throughout the negotiation and ratification process.
- c. The BC shall consist of Bargaining Unit Members in good standing.
- d. Every effort shall be made to ensure representation of diverse interests and backgrounds on the BC, particularly with respect to the identities and categories named in Article III, Section 2.
- e. The BC shall have a Chair or two (2) Co-Chairs, to be selected by the BC;
- f. At least monthly, the BC shall provide the Coordinator for Communications with updates to be shared with the membership;
- g. A member of the BC who is absent for six (6) meetings or four (4) consecutive meetings shall be eligible for replacement by an eligible member selected by the Coordinator for Organizer, subject to approval of the BC Chair or Co-Chairs.

- h. In the event of an impasse in contract bargaining, the BC shall be responsible for initiating strike authorization votes, per Article XV.

Article VIII – Stewards

Section 1. The duties of Stewards shall be:

- a. Organizing members of the worksite that they have been elected to represent, in coordination with the Coordinator for Organizing;
- b. Mobilizing members to become active in the union;
- c. Monitoring potential contract abuses and grievances in the worksite and reporting grievances in their constituency to the Lead Organizer and the Vice President;
- d. Attending meetings that pertain to active grievances;
- e. Assisting or representing a worker on work-related matters, including disputes and, when appropriate, formal grievances, when so requested by a worker;
- f. Posting and circulating notices, minutes, information fliers, and other communications from the organization and its affiliate organizations;
- g. Maintaining the union's bulletin board in the worksite;
- h. Attending Organizing Committee meetings as de facto members of the Organizing Committee at least once a month;
- i. Attending General Membership meetings and mandatory trainings;
- j. Gathering member input via one-on-one conversations and surveys in order to represent the members in their worksite at Organizing Committee meetings.

Section 2. There shall be elected as many as one Steward per twenty-five (25) workers. Any member in good standing is eligible to serve as a Steward for their worksite.

Section 3. Supervision of Steward Elections:

- a. Every year, the Executive Board shall call for a period of Steward Elections to be overseen by the Elections Committee.
- b. Nominees must accept or reject their nomination in writing within 7 days of notice of nomination and submit nomination petitions to the Elections Committee with no less than ten (10) members as signatories;
- c. A petition signed by ten (10) members is sufficient to elect a steward for that worksite if no other petitions are submitted;
- d. Uncontested steward seats shall be elected by acclamation;
- e. The Election Committee shall settle any challenges and objections associated with this procedure;
- f. A Steward may be removed from their position, and a new election held, due to specific cause, generally limited to violation of the Constitution, misconduct, improper election, or abuse of power. A petition signed by a majority of the worksite membership shall be sufficient to require a recall election. The Elections Committee shall supervise the recall election.

Article IX – General Membership Meetings

Section 1. Regular Meetings

- a. The regular membership meetings of this organization shall be at least twice per academic semester. Regular meetings will be at a time and place scheduled by the Executive Board.
- b. Any member may request an item on the agenda of a General Membership Meeting by submitting that item to the Executive Board before the meeting. Additional agenda items may only be added with approval of the Executive Board prior to the meeting. Meetings shall feature a period of up to 15 minutes for brief questions, comments, and suggestions from members.

Section 2. Special Meetings

- a. The Executive Board, using the procedures outlined in Article XII, or by petition of twenty-five (25) members in good standing, may call a special meeting with at least seven (7) days' notice to the members.
- b. The agenda for a special meeting will be limited to the specific subject or purpose for which the meeting was called. Announcements of such meetings shall be sent to members, and the meeting agenda shall be included.

Article X – Revenues

Section 1. Dues shall be collected from all members. Dues will be assessed at 1.65% of monthly stipend.

Section 2. Bargaining Unit Member dues shall be collected in a manner described in the Membership Dues policy, and the dues rate may be amended by a referendum of Bargaining Unit Members pursuant to Article XIV.

Section 3. Non-Bargaining Unit Members shall not pay dues.

Section 4. Fair share fees shall be determined by a formula based on the percentage of annual union expenditures for bargaining unit representation. Fair share fees shall be adjusted within 45 calendar days of completion after each audit of the organization's finances.

Article XI – Affiliations

Section 1. This organization shall maintain affiliation with, and wherever possible, send delegates to the following organizations: The American Federation of Teachers, The Rhode Island, Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, The Rhode Island AFL CIO, and The

Providence Central Labor Council. The organization, to the best of its ability, shall be active in the affairs of affiliated organizations.

Section 2. The number of delegates and alternates to be elected must be determined by the Executive Board in advance of the election for those delegates and alternates.

Section 3. Candidates for delegates and alternates will be ranked according to the number of votes received, with the exception of the President who shall be the highest ranking delegate. The highest ranked candidates will be delegates, and the next highest ranked candidates will be alternates, according to the number of delegates and alternates previously determined by the Executive Board.

Section 4. The Elections Committee shall certify the election and promptly forward the credentials of all delegates and alternates to the convention authorities.

Section 5. Delegates shall provide a report to the Executive Board on meetings attended.

Article XII – Accountability

Section 1. Two or more members of the local may bring a specific and detailed accounting, including any documentation, of allegations that another member has engaged in actions that violate union values or severely harm the membership, such as harassment. The Union Local's Social Justice and Accountability Committee (combined with GLO) shall then pursue a transformative justice process with the consent of all involved parties.

If the members who brought forth the allegation and/or the accused are not satisfied with the outcome of the transformative justice process or do not want to engage in the transformative justice process, the Executive Board will provide a copy of the initial documentation to the parties involved and the Local's Coordinator for Social Justice and Accountability shall conduct a preliminary investigation in order to determine whether the claims warrant action. The Coordinator for Social Justice and Accountability shall produce a report on the outcome of the preliminary investigation and submit it to the Executive Board. Upon review of the preliminary investigation report, the Executive Board shall vote on the question of whether a disciplinary hearing should be held. Executive Board members shall recuse themselves from this vote and from all further disciplinary steps if they are one of the parties involved, or if they have personal bias against any involved party. If a majority of the Executive Board members who have not recused themselves vote to hold a hearing, the parties involved shall be given at least ten (10) days written notice of the hearing.

The President, Coordinator for Organizing, Coordinator for Communications, Coordinator for Events, and Union Local Coordinator for Social Justice and Accountability shall hold the disciplinary hearing and make a decision based on a preponderance of evidence. The purpose of this hearing will be to assess the best path forward prioritizing the safety and rights of TALO

members and is in no way a substitute for a Title IX hearing or court proceeding. The parties involved may request the presence of their worksite's steward or another member in good standing at the hearing. A majority vote of the officers holding the hearing shall be required to implement suspension from meetings, expulsion from membership, recall from office, or probation that could result in expulsion.

A disciplined member may then appeal the decision to the full Executive Board, where a two thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote is required to uphold the expulsion or probation. If the members who brought forth the allegation are not satisfied with the final outcome, the Executive Board will direct the parties to conflict resolution and transformative justice groups so that the members who brought forth the allegation may continue pursuing justice.

Section 2. Any member whose acts allegedly bring the Union into disrepute, or allegedly do the Union and the cause of union labor definite harm, such as acts of egregious strikebreaking by members, may be grounds for suspension or expulsion, at the discretion of the executive board.

Article XIII – Availability of this Constitution

Section 1. The President shall submit one (1) digital copy of this Constitution and all subsequent amendments to the office of the Secretary-Treasurer of the American Federation of Teachers, and to the similar officer of each organization with which this organization is affiliated.

Section 2. The President shall maintain a digital copy accessible to the public.

Article XIV – Referenda

Section 1. Procedures

- a. A referendum may be called on any matter pertaining to the union, including but not limited to amendment of this document, contract ratification, dues, and policy, through a vote of the Executive Board, Organizing Committee, or through a petition signed by at least twenty-five percent of membership.
- b. The Elections Committee shall oversee voting on referenda and shall set the timeline for elections. The Elections Committee shall determine the manner and delivery of secret ballots in such a way that, to the extent feasible, every eligible voter is able to participate.
- c. The Elections Committee and Communications Committee shall make every effort to communicate the nature and timing of the referendum to eligible voters.
- d. Eligibility to vote in a referendum shall be an exclusive right of members in good standing.
 - i. The electorate for the referendum shall be limited exclusively to Bargaining Unit Members in cases of contract ratification, strike authorization, and any other cases of referenda which the Elections Committee determines must be limited to Bargaining Unit Members in order to comply with prevailing U.S. labor regulations.

- ii. In cases where the Executive Board or a petition of membership calls a referendum for a topic not covered in Section 1.d.i. above, the Executive Board shall have the authority to define the electorate for a referendum.
 - iii. In cases where the Organizing Committee calls a referendum for a topic not covered in Section 1.d.i. above, the Organizing Committee shall have the authority to define the electorate for a referendum.
- e. A referendum shall pass if it receives a majority of votes in support and at least 20% of eligible voters participate. The sole exceptions to this standard shall be as follows:
 - i. An amendment to this document shall pass if it receives at least 70% of votes in support and at least 25% participation.
 - ii. Strike authorization votes, which shall pass in accordance with Article XV.

Article XV – Strike Actions

Section 1. In order to begin or end a strike during contract negotiations, the Bargaining Committee must first call for an authorization vote. This vote will be put forth to all Executive Board and Organizing Committee members for approval. Once approved by a simple majority, a strike authorization vote will be put forth to the membership. A strike authorization vote requires a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) majority of all voters and at least 25% participation. Ending a strike requires a simple majority of all voters.