

Frequently Asked Questions Petition to Organize a Bargaining Unit

As you may be aware, the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT) recently filed a petition with the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board (IELRB) seeking to organize certain specialized faculty (non-tenure track faculty) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus into a bargaining unit. Questions have been posed about this petition and the process. This communication is intended to help answer some of those questions and provide resources to help keep you informed.

What does it mean that the IFT filed a petition?

Illinois law allows for certification of a bargaining unit through an election or by demonstration of a majority interest of employees to form the bargaining unit. A showing of majority interest is demonstrated by the union's collection of signed cards from a majority of employees in the proposed bargaining unit. After collecting a majority, the union files a Majority Interest Petition with the IELRB and submits the signed cards as proof. IFT has filed their Majority Interest Petition with the IELRB to form a bargaining unit of specialized faculty (non-tenure track faculty) that includes:

Included: All full-time (i.e., employees who have .51 or greater appointment as a faculty member) non tenure track faculty with respect to educational employees employed at the Urbana-Champaign campus or employed in units located outside Urbana-Champaign which report administratively to the Urbana-Champaign campus.

Excluded: All faulty members of the College of Law and the College of Veterinary Medicine. All supervisory, managerial, confidential and short-term employees as defined under the IELRA.

What is the next step?

The University may file an answer to the petition if it wishes to challenge the appropriateness of the bargaining unit, challenge that the union actually has a majority, or allege (if applicable) fraud or coercion in the collection of the cards from employees.

Is the University opposed to unions?

No. The University has a long history of working with unions representing employees. There are currently 17 civil service and two academic bargaining units representing employees on the Urbana-Champaign campus. The University abides by all requirements of the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act, and supports its employees' right to organize.

I think I signed a union card but did not realize I was signing to actually form a bargaining unit. Can I revoke my card? What can I do?

Upon the filing of a Majority Interest Petition with the IELRB, the cards filed with the petition become irrevocable. If you have concerns about the methods used to procure your signature, you may contact Karen McLaughlin, Assistant Director of Labor and Employee Relations for Academic HR, or Sharon Reynolds, Associate Director of Labor and Employee Relations for Academic HR at 217-333-0033 with your concerns.

I did not sign a card and I am opposed to the union. If the bargaining unit is formed, am I required to join the union?

No. Employees who wish to join the union may do so and will be assessed union dues. Those who do not wish to join are not required to do so, but may be assessed a “fair share” fee that goes to the union. The fair share fee is based on the fact that the union represents *all* employees under certain job titles, not just those who have actively joined.

I have other questions or concerns. Whom should I contact?

Please direct any questions or concerns about this process to Karen McLaughlin, karenmcl@illinois.edu or Sharon Reynolds, sreynlds@illinois.edu , Academic Human Resources, Labor & Employee Relations at 217-333-0033.