

FACULTY UNIONIZATION PROCESS

A letter from Ana Mari Cauce and Jerry Baldasty

October 1



Dear Colleagues,

Recently, we wrote to you about the campaign launched by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) to unionize the UW faculty. In that message, we said that we would communicate with you about this effort and provide information so that you can make an informed decision on the question of unionization. We cannot emphasize strongly enough that the question of whether or not the UW faculty chooses to unionize is perhaps the most consequential decision our faculty will ever make. Unionization is not something that can be done on a trial basis to see if you like it and if not you can reverse the decision. Once a union is established, it is difficult to vote it out.

Working directly and in collaboration with faculty members in the governance of the University is essential to who we are and what we do. Shared governance is not just about the Faculty Senate. It is also about your college/school councils and the many college/school and departmental committees that are all part of how we work together. We believe that this direct relationship with an independent faculty at all levels of the University is the best way to advance our commitment to academic excellence, our duty to educate students and our legacy of more than 150 years as one of the finest universities in the world. Whether at the department, school, college or University-wide level, in our view the most successful way to address the legitimate workplace concerns you may have is to work side-by-side with you, without an intermediary. The best universities – including the UW – are organized and managed in this way.

Today, we'd like to highlight some basic information about the process of unionization and address in the Q & A that follows some of the questions that you may have about it. Many of you have already been approached by organizers or received emails from them asking you to sign a membership card.

(Ana Mari Cauce and Jerry Baldasty letter continued)

The union is attempting to gather enough signatures to show the state Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) that there is sufficient interest at the UW to hold an election and form a faculty union. PERC is the Washington state agency responsible for governing union organizing efforts and is responsible for conducting union elections among public employees.

Let us emphasize one other point. Power at the University does not reside solely with the administration but exists throughout our academic personnel system among faculty colleagues. Senior faculty all play a critical role in decisions such as appointment, tenure, promotion, and merit increases for their junior colleagues and for each other. It is critical that everyone—regardless of where one might stand on this matter—feels comfortable expressing her or his views to colleagues without fear of consequence or retaliation of any kind. All of us have an obligation to ensure that this discussion occurs freely and openly and that everyone who wishes to express a view can do so. No one should feel that his or her job, career, promotion, or working conditions will be affected by expressing opinions on this issue.

In this Q&A you'll find important information about the process of union organizing, which touches upon your rights and responsibilities as a faculty member. We welcome your comments and input at uwpres@uw.edu.

Sincerely,

Ana Mari Cauce *Jerry Baldasty*