

AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE ABOUT FACULTY UNIONIZATION

*A letter from Ana Mari Cauce and Jerry Baldasty
September 10*



Dear Colleagues,

We hope this letter finds you eagerly anticipating the start of another academic year. We know this is a busy time and along with the anticipation, there is also much preparation and hard work.

We are writing to you about a topic of critical importance to the University. As some of you may be aware, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 925 this summer launched a campaign called “Faculty Forward” to organize UW faculty into a labor union.

The University of Washington unequivocally respects the right of all people to decide whether to be represented in collective bargaining. This belief is central to our identity as an institution. More than 15,000 of our staff are represented in collective bargaining that while occasionally is difficult and tense has always ended constructively. Both of us come from families with deep ties to unions, and we appreciate the benefits that unions have provided to workers in this country.

With regard to faculty, however, we believe that the concept and process of shared governance is different from that of a management-employee relationship, and we have grave reservations about the effect collective bargaining would have on our shared governance process. We also have serious concerns about its impact on the freedom we as faculty enjoy to pursue excellence in teaching, research and scholarship, the cornerstones of our success as a university.

We strongly believe that shared governance between the faculty and the administration is essential to our mission and to our status as a world-class university. Our strong partnership with a highly effective faculty senate has led to significant improvements on faculty issues. We have made clear and steady progress toward creating more predictable career paths for our instructors, toward refreshing our classrooms with the technology needed for more effective teaching, and toward increasing salaries

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(Ana Mari Cauce and Jerry Baldasty letter continued)

without unduly decreasing the size of our faculty or increasing teaching loads in a way that would diminish the ability of faculty to carry out the cutting-edge scholarship and research that is changing our world for the better. We believe that collective bargaining over such matters as evaluation, promotion and tenure would not only affect the excellence of the University but would diminish the voice of the faculty, sideline the Faculty Senate and eclipse the collaborative approach we have worked on for generations.

The ultimate decision about unionization will be yours. It is imperative that you have as much information as possible about the unionization process and what having a union would mean. For example, we have talked to faculty who do not understand that an election will be held if only thirty percent of the faculty sign cards indicating their preference for a union. Indeed, some of our faculty have been sent requests to sign union cards with little or no explanation of what that will mean for you or for the University. Moreover, it is NOT the case that a majority of the entire faculty is required to vote affirmatively for us to be represented by a union. Rather, only a simple majority of those who actually vote is required, no matter how few they are. It is also important to be aware that if a union is voted in, there is no option for an individual to opt out of any contract that results, and that payment of union dues could become mandatory.

Before you sign a union card, please make sure that you are fully informed about what this means.

We will communicate with you in the weeks and months ahead through direct conversations, print materials and a special purpose webpage to share facts and information. We will be active participants in this discussion.

We look forward to hearing your perspectives. With that in mind, we encourage you to send your thoughts and questions to us by email to uwpres@uw.edu. We both will have access to that account.

Thank you for your careful consideration of this matter and for your many contributions to the University's success. The issue before us is critical for the UW, and we hope you will take the time to become informed and engaged.

Sincerely,

The image shows two handwritten signatures in black ink. The signature on the left is 'Ana Mari Cauce' and the signature on the right is 'Jerry Baldasty'. Both are written in a cursive, flowing style.