



July 30, 2015

Subject: Faculty Union Information

Faculty colleagues,

The Faculty Senate office has received a number of inquiries regarding the UW Faculty Forward campaign to form a faculty union at the University of Washington. The Senate did not consider the topic of unionization during the last academic year, and so the Senate and Senate leadership have no position on this unionization campaign and are neither promoting nor hindering the campaign. Most inquiries to the Senate office have concerned the effect of signatures on confidential union membership cards and authorization forms. We have compiled the following information about faculty unionization from sources governing the process:

The Washington State Public Employment Relations Commission (PERC) is responsible for decisions regarding union representation and would be in charge of conducting signature checks and authorization votes. [Here](#) is their webpage regarding public employee union representation, which includes an explanation of the confidential membership cards and other information on timing, rulings, and elections. The page includes what happens at different thresholds of verified membership card support from the bargaining unit.

For example, if 30% of all eligible faculty in the bargaining unit return a membership card supporting one or more bargaining representatives, that triggers an election for an exclusive bargaining representative. If any one representative receives a majority of the votes from the ballots that are returned in the election, that representative will be certified as the exclusive bargaining representative (union) of the bargaining unit. In this situation, signatures on membership cards may not be withdrawn once a petition for an election is filed.

If any one bargaining representative receives membership card support from 50% or more of all eligible faculty that could result in a cross-check of signatures and possible certification of the exclusive bargaining representative without a separate election. In this situation, employees are given an opportunity to request their signature not be used in determining the certification.

Faculty labor relations at public institutions of higher education are governed by [RCW Chapter 41](#). Some highlights include:

1. Definitions of "Faculty" and "Bargaining Unit" in [RCW 41.76.005](#).
 - a. "Faculty" means employees who, at a public four-year institution of higher education, are designated with faculty status or who perform faculty duties as defined through policies established by the faculty governance system, excluding casual or temporary employees, administrators, confidential employees, graduate student employees, postdoctoral and clinical employees, and employees subject to chapter [41.06](#) or [41.56](#) RCW.
 - b. "Bargaining unit" includes all faculty members of all campuses of each of the colleges and universities. Only one bargaining unit is allowable for faculty of each employer, and that unit must contain all faculty members from all schools, colleges, and campuses of the employer.
2. Procedures for certification of exclusive bargaining representatives in [RCW 41.76.020](#)
 - a. "An employee organization seeking certification as exclusive bargaining representative of a bargaining unit, or faculty members seeking decertification of their exclusive bargaining representative, must make a confidential showing to the commission of credible evidence demonstrating that at least thirty percent of the faculty in the bargaining unit are in support of the

petition. The petition must indicate the name, address, and telephone number of any employee organization known to claim an interest in the bargaining unit.”

- b. “The commission shall certify as the exclusive bargaining representative the employee organization that has been determined to represent a majority of faculty members in a bargaining unit.”

While this information is by no means comprehensive, we hope it will be helpful for you to understand the process. Any questions would be best answered by [PERC](#).

Sincerely,

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