

Understanding Union Organizing

Why is the union trying to organize full-time instructional and adjunct faculty?

The union has recently targeted several Florida universities, and The University of Tampa may be their latest campaign target. However, we don't believe that you can compare UT to these other union targets.

While we can't speak for other universities or the union, at UT we have a proud history of supporting a strong and collaborative working relationship between faculty and administration. We believe this is one of our unique assets that attracts excellent faculty to our university, and we can best continue the support of our faculty and our higher education experiences without the restrictions of a labor union.

Did UT give the union my personal contact information?

Absolutely not. The University respects the privacy of our faculty, staff and students. We did not and will not share personal contact information with any outside organization, including the union, unless required by law. You may want to ask the union how they got your information.

If the union files a petition for election, the University would be required by federal law to provide the National Labor Relations Board and the union the personal contact information of the bargaining unit faculty listed in the petition. There are no restrictions to how the union would be able to use that information to contact faculty, and we hope that we do not have to face that challenge.

How can a union affect UT faculty?

UT administrators respect the federally-protected rights of our faculty to make an informed choice about union representation but we do recognize the challenges in providing excellent higher-education experiences to students when a union acts as the intermediary between faculty and university administrators.

In some ways, the union is already restricting what UT Administration can do for the faculty. By law, UT cannot make any changes to the terms or conditions of employment for the adjunct and full-time instructional faculty once they are aware of union organizing, unless those changes were already in process.

If full-time instructional and adjunct faculty were to be represented by a union, the union could affect the way UT Administration and the faculty are able to work together. A few of those ways are:

- The union would serve as the faculty's exclusive representative, meaning department chairs and university administration would be prohibited from dealing directly with the full-time instructional and adjunct faculty regarding their pay, benefits, course assignments, leaves of absence, accommodations and all other terms and conditions of employment.
- Campus unions are usually voted in by a small number of those eligible to vote, but this is an issue that could directly or indirectly affect the entire campus, which could pit those faculty who support the union against those who don't.
- A union could change the campus that potential students, faculty and staff now see as a desirable place to study, teach and work. Adversarial bargaining and pickets, for example, would have negative effects on the university and the students.

Will the union rules still affect me if I don't have to join the union?

As a right-to-work state, union-represented employees in Florida cannot be required to join a union or pay union dues as a condition of employment. Right-to-work does not allow you to opt-out of a union contract if UT faculty were to unionize. You would still be contractually bound to the rules and regulations of the union contract, whether or not you are a member or voted for the union.

It's important to understand that a union's main source of revenue is member dues, and therefore, unions are often motivated to get more dues paying members. In Florida, 84 percent of union-represented workers are union members, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics.

What are my rights if I don't want a union here?

You have the legal right to oppose the union. You also have the right to let other faculty know your opinion and you can communicate that opinion in whatever manner you choose (while following our university policies). Ultimately, if an election were to be held, you have the right to vote "no" to a union.

Why is the union asking faculty to sign cards?

Union cards are part of a union's organizing campaign. If the union obtains signed authorization cards from at least 30 percent of the full-time instructional and adjunct faculty it wants to represent, it can request a secret ballot election.

You should understand that unions are allowed to make promises even though they have no legal power to guarantee what they are promising in order to get faculty to sign a card and support the union. The NLRB ruled this to be "pre-election propaganda" [Shirlington Supermarket, Inc., 106 NLRB 666 (1953)].

Union Authorization Cards

What is a union authorization card?

A union authorization card is a legal document that authorizes the union to represent you. By signing this card or agreeing to it electronically, you are authorizing the union to speak and make decisions for you about the terms and conditions of your employment.

How to Spot a Union Card

1. Does it contain legally-binding wording ("I authorize..."; or "I choose the union to represent me...")?
2. Does it ask for a personal phone number, email address and/or home address, allowing the union virtually constant access to you?
3. Does it ask for specific information about your department, college and class schedule?
4. Does it ask for you to sign, giving your consent to the union to act as your exclusive representative?

This could be a union authorization card. Understand what you're being asked to sign. You don't need to sign anything to get more information about the union.

Do faculty members have to sign a union card or attend a union meeting?

No. The National Labor Relations Act protects the rights of faculty to say "no" to union cards, union meetings, and union representation. UT respects your rights as well as the personal opinions and privacy of our faculty.

Understanding Union Organizing and Union Authorization Cards

We would encourage full-time instructional and adjunct faculty not to sign a union card without understanding the facts about union representation, including the impact a union could have on our faculty's contributions to the university and our students' experience.

If I already signed a card, do I have to support or vote for the union?

No. Signing an authorization card does not obligate you to continue to support the union, if you changed your mind. After learning the facts, you may decide that the UT faculty wouldn't benefit from the SEIU speaking and making decisions on their behalf. You have the right to change your mind and can always vote "no" if there is a secret ballot election.