

Frequently Asked Questions

Adjunct Action/SEIU

adjunctaction.org

How does a union work for adjunct faculty?

Through the power of collective bargaining instructors across the country have won a voice at the table and a relationship of equality with their college and university administrations. They negotiate for improvements in pay, benefits and working conditions. Current campaigns are now underway in Washington State (Pacific Lutheran University), Los Angeles (Whittier College, University of LaVerne, Loyola Marymount), Washington, D.C. (Howard University, University of the District of Columbia) and, of course, Boston, Massachusetts (Lesley University, Tufts University, and Northeastern University).

Who is SEIU and Adjunct Action?

“SEIU” is the Service Employees International Union. It is the largest and fastest-growing union in the country, representing 2 million members in the U.S., Canada and Puerto Rico. SEIU represents 75,000 members in public and private higher education in the U.S., 18,000 of whom are college and university faculty. In the Washington, DC area alone, SEIU represents the adjunct faculty at American University, George Washington University, Montgomery College and Georgetown University.

Adjunct Action is a campaign to unite adjunct faculty, city-wide, in the Boston area, including Lesley University. Adjunct Action is funded by the members of SEIU.

How much will dues be?

Dues will be 1.6 percent of our gross salary. But membership in the union is free until we have 1) formed our union, 2) bargained our first contract and 3) voted as a group to approve our first contract. In other words, we will not pay any money into the union before we know exactly what we’re getting out of it. We will decide when our first contract is worth our dues money.

How long will this take?

Once we have “union authorization cards” signed by enough adjuncts, we can file for our election with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Legally, we have to have cards for 30 percent of the eligible “unit,” but the higher the amount of support, the stronger our union will be and the better chance we will have to win our election, once the votes are cast.

The voting usually happens four to six weeks after cards are filed for the election. Once the ballots are counted, if there are more “yes” votes than “no” votes, we will instantly have equal rights with Lesley to determine our pay, benefits and working conditions. We call that a “relationship of equality.”

How will the administration respond to our union campaign?



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Most employers would very much like to continue making all of the decisions, without a real voice for those who work for them. However, we invite the administration of Lesley University to take a neutral stance on the union and let us make this important decision for ourselves.

If they decide to campaign against us, however, they'll say a lot of things to convince people to change their minds about forming our union. Employers' main argument against a union usually comes down to this: "You will be better off if you let us stay in charge of making all of the decisions." Most folks realize that standing together to build a union is the best choice for all of us.

Regardless of their position, our union activity is protected by the law and the strength of our numbers. The National Labor Relations Act (NLRA), Section 8A says that an employer may not threaten (us against voting "yes"), interrogate (us about union activity), promise any benefit (for voting "no") or surveil union any activity (meetings, events, etc).

Who will be in charge of our union?

We will make all of the decisions for our own union. We will have our officers and our own union contract. All of the proposals for our contract will come from us. And we will decide when the proposed contract is good enough to be ratified by a majority vote.

What will the union do for me?

Having a union empowers people to make positive changes where they work. What is most important to you: Pay increases? Affordable health insurance? Better working conditions or a retirement plan? Having a union does not guarantee any particular improvement or benefit. But a union is the tool that working people (including college and university faculty) use to make improvements where they work.

What can I do to help?

The first step to build the union is to sign a Union Authorization Card. As soon as possible, we will file our cards with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). Then, we'll have our election. Once we win that election, we will have a union and will begin bargaining for the improvements that we want to see at Lesley.

