

December 3, 2013

Dear Colleague:

I have heard from adjunct faculty and core faculty that representatives of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) have been contacting adjunct faculty with the intent to establish an adjunct faculty union at Lesley University. This is part of a larger effort by SEIU to organize adjunct faculty in various eastern cities, as reported in the press over recent months.

The process to establish a union is administered by the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB). The organizing union, SEIU in this case, must first show the NLRB that there is adequate interest within an appropriate unit. We believe that the appropriate unit would probably be all adjunct faculty at Lesley University. The union must provide the NLRB with the signatures (approvals) of at least 30% of the members of the unit it identifies. A hearing would then be convened by the NLRB to determine if the unit is indeed appropriate under the law. We believe that SEIU may be collecting signatures from adjunct faculty in order to achieve its goal of reaching the 30% threshold in order to petition for an election.

If the appropriate unit is defined and approved by the NLRB, and if SEIU provides signatures from at least 30% of that unit, a second step would follow. The NLRB would schedule an election for adjunct faculty to vote on whether they want to join a union and be exclusively represented by SEIU. The simple majority of those voting decides the outcome of the vote. This means that 51% of those who cast a ballot decide whether or not a union will represent all adjuncts at Lesley. Lesley University may, in any given year, employ 700 adjunct faculty, but if just 100 adjunct faculty vote, then only 51 votes are needed to approve SEIU representation. A choice not to vote means that fewer adjunct faculty determine the outcome.

Here are some points that I think are important to note.

As professionals, you bring to our programs a wide range of expertise that increases the diversity of specializations in any given discipline. Many of you have full-time careers in the fields in which you teach, giving you current and applied experience in your professions that enriches our students' learning. Since many adjuncts have worked in a Lesley department or program for some years, our adjunct faculty have positive relations with core faculty, staff and students. We know that adjunct faculty are an essential component of the teaching and learning environment at Lesley University because of your expertise and these relationships.

This is why we continue to address issues that are important to all Lesley faculty:

- With limited space, we continue to establish additional adjunct faculty office space, most recently on the lower level and the third floor of University Hall.
- With the passage of the Affordable Care Act, President Moore constituted a task force to study the provision of health insurance options for adjunct faculty who may meet the ACA criteria.

- Since President Moore arrived at Lesley in 2007, Lesley has increased adjunct compensation by the same annual cost-of-living percentage as every other faculty and staff member.
- University decisions about adjunct employment are made at the point closest to the program, resulting in stability, predictability and flexibility for the program and the adjunct faculty.
- Small class size and a positive working environment remain characteristics of the adjunct faculty experience at Lesley.

The University administration supports the right of adjunct faculty to petition for union status, and the University will participate in each stage of the process with clarity and transparency. However, like any change, one can never be sure whether the intended outcomes will be achieved and what unintended effects might develop if Lesley's adjunct faculty vote to unionize. We know that the policies and procedures that govern adjunct faculty employment and working conditions will be more centralized in a union environment with one collective bargaining agreement for all adjunct faculty. No one can predict what such an agreement will look like. The law does not dictate what goes into collective bargaining agreements; each side must negotiate in good faith and each side has the right to propose and reject what it wishes. In addition, based on a review of other SEIU union contracts for adjunct faculty, we believe that SEIU would require adjunct faculty to pay either union dues or an agency fee, whether or not you favor unionization.

For these reasons, I urge you to consider all of the ramifications of unionization. For now, that means carefully considering whether or not you sign a card to seek a union election. This is an important decision for you and the University, but ultimately, it is your decision.

President Moore and I will be hosting four meetings for adjunct faculty over the next week to answer questions you may have, provide updates, and engage in dialogue with you about topics of importance to you. We have scheduled the meetings at different times on different days with the hope that one of them might fit into your schedule:

Monday, December 9, 4:00 p.m.	700 Beacon Street, Boston, LUCAD
Tuesday, December 10, 6:30 pm	University Hall, Porter Campus
Wednesday, December 11, 10:00 a.m.	Alumni Hall, Doble Campus
Thursday, December 12, Noon	Washburn Hall, Brattle Campus

I look forward to seeing you at one of the meetings next week, but, in case I do not, I hope the remainder of your semester goes well and that you have an enjoyable holiday season.

Sincerely,

Selase W. Williams  
Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs