

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT UNION REPRESENTATION FOR GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCHERS

What does it mean to be represented by a union?

Unionization changes an employee's relationship with the university. As a non-represented employee, you currently have a direct employment relationship with the university. As a result, you and your supervisor/principal investigator can work out details about your pay, hours, etc.

If a union becomes your exclusive representative, the terms and conditions of your employment will be subject to collective bargaining. You would *not* be able to negotiate with your supervisors/principal investigators on wages, hours or working conditions, except as provided by the labor agreement. The university and the union must negotiate all future changes in wages, hours and other conditions of employment.

Why is the United Auto Workers (UAW) or another union approaching me about unionization now?

On Oct. 15, 2017, Gov. Brown signed into law an amendment to the Higher Education Employer-Employee Relations Act (HEERA) expanding the definition of "employee" to include all student employees at the University of California, even when their work is an integral part of their educational objectives. This amendment goes into effect on Jan. 1, 2018. Previously, Graduate Student Researchers were determined to be fundamentally students and not "employees" as defined by the state laws governing unionization at UC. All student employees at UC, including GSRs, are now eligible to become exclusively represented by a union under HEERA.

What is the next step in the union representation process? Will I get to vote?

Unionization may result from union cards signed by employees or by a secret election ballot. A union must show that a majority of GSRs want to be represented by a union. GSRs may be asked to sign an authorization card/petition. Signing the authorization card/petition is your way to show that you want to be exclusively represented by the union. Your signature on a card or petition may constitute your vote. The choice is yours.

What does signing an authorization card or petition mean?

It means you want the union to become your exclusive representative for purposes of negotiating with UC regarding your wages and other terms of employment. UC supports employees' rights to determine whether they think unionization is beneficial. UC believes this choice should be well informed.

How many GSRs are needed to determine unionization?

A simple majority of employees (50 percent plus one vote) of the target group decides if the whole group will be part of a union.

If a simple majority of GSRs choose unionization, will I have to become a member of that union and pay dues?

No, you are not required to become a member. However, the union would have the right to collect dues/fees from all employees in the bargaining unit, whether or not they wish to be represented by this union.

- Employees who choose to join the union and become members are required to pay union dues.
- Employees who choose not to join the union may be required to pay an agency fee. Although the amount of money paid for agency fees may be very close to the amount paid for union dues, the union cannot spend agency fee money on political contributions. In exchange for agency fees, the union represents these employees in collective bargaining and in other matters.
- The union may charge employees more for union dues than it requires employees to pay for agency fees.

Who determines the union dues and agency fees that employees must pay?

The union determines the amount of the union dues and agency fees. Once the union tells the university how much it charges employees for union dues and agency fees, the university is required to collect these amounts through automatic payroll deductions and remit them to the unions.

In calendar year 2016, UC unions collected about \$59 million in union dues and agency fees from the estimated 78,000 UC employees they represent.

What happens when a union becomes my exclusive representative?

The union will bargain for wages, hours, and other terms and conditions of employment in the represented bargaining unit. As an exclusive representative, a union has the right to represent members of the bargaining unit throughout the grievance process. It also has the right to require employees to pay fees in support of its representation responsibilities. Employees who choose to join the union and become members are required to pay union dues.