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Information for Deans, Department Heads/Chairs, Other Supervisors and Managers
Related to Union Organizing Drives

It is our understanding that the Campus Faculty Association has an ongoing effort to unionize the tenure system faculty on the Urbana campus. Regardless of where one may stand on the question of unionization, it is important that an open, fair dialogue occur. Towards that end, the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act places certain restrictions on supervisors and managers (e.g. deans, department heads and chairs, and other administrators) during unionization campaigns. Department heads and administrators must refrain from any threats, promises, interrogation, or surveillance concerning individual faculty members’ interest or support for a union. However, administrators may communicate facts and opinions concerning the consequences of union certifications, and may rebut misstatements of facts made by union organizers. A more detailed statement regarding labor law restrictions on supervisors is set forth below:

What Supervisors Cannot Do Under the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act

- Promise employees, directly or indirectly, a pay increase, promotion, or any other benefit or special favor if they stay out of the union or vote against it.
- Prevent employees from soliciting union membership during their free time on University premises as long as it does not interfere with work being performed by them or others.
- Departments should respond to requests for rooms for union meetings in the same manner as any other requests for meeting rooms for other non-departmental purposes.
- Threaten loss of jobs, reduction of income or discontinuance of any privileges or benefits to influence an employee to support or oppose the union. This includes statements to employees that they will suffer adverse consequences if they support or vote for the union.
- Ask employees whether they have signed or intend to sign a union card or other document supporting the recognition of a union, attend union meetings, vote for the union, etc. This includes asking employees how they think other employees will react to the union.
- Call employees into a supervisor's office to discuss the employer's position on unionization, even though nothing coercive or improper is said.
- Conduct surveillance of employees to determine whether or not they are participating in union activities.
- Discriminate by giving an employee less favorable work assignments, denying a promotion or other benefits, etc., based on an employee's pro-union activities.

What Supervisors May Do Under the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Act

- Supervisors may listen to information voluntarily provided by employees.
- Supervisors may respond to questions and discuss current conditions of employment at the U of I, and how those conditions compare with other universities.
- Supervisors are free to rebut any misstatements of fact made by the union.
- Supervisors may discuss the cost of union representation, such as payment of dues and fair share requirements, as long as these are "possibilities" and not "threats."
- Supervisors may discuss the union “card check” and election procedures, such as the change in law that allows a union to represent employees with no election.

In summary, one-on-one discussions and small group meetings between supervisors and bargaining unit employees are permissible provided they are not coercive (e.g. requiring the employee to come to the supervisor's office or interrogating the employee about his/her support for the union).

If you have questions, please contact Sharon Reynolds in Academic Human Resources at sreynlds@illinois.edu.