

July 14, 2016

Dear Faculty,

We have received information from faculty members to the effect that the Service Employees International Union may be attempting to organize some or our entire faculty.

It is unclear exactly what sub-group(s) of our faculty the union is attempting to pursue or whether there may be multiple groups or indeed, the entirety of the faculty.

The first thing unions try to do, as you probably have already seen, is to ask you to sign a so-called Union Authorization Card – commonly known as a “Union Card.”

There is **legal language** contained in a Union Card. It purports to say that you intend to be represented by the union and have chosen the union as your authorized representative.

Signing the union card in effect grants the union the exclusive right to represent you on a variety of issues that have historically been part of the “shared governance” model used at the University of Missouri–St. Louis. Many of these issues could no longer be discussed on campus between faculty and administration. Instead, those negotiations would be held among union representatives and lawyers and human resources employees representing the Curators of the University of Missouri.

There have been situations where the union attempts to minimize these provisions, sometimes referring to them as just a method to show you may be interested. Or, simply a device for you to “get more information.” They may even go so far as to say that it is “non-binding” and merely a “preliminary step.” Those terms can be misleading. If the union gathers a majority of Union Cards from a group they seek to represent, the union commonly then “demands recognition” by the employer, taking the position that all of the people who have signed have clearly designated the union as their representative.

Of course, that could be different than what the faculty members were told when they signed.

It could certainly be different from what the faculty member intended.

Simply, if the union seeks for you to sign something or to “click a button” on a website showing your support or otherwise indicate your assent to their “terms and conditions,” we urge you to read it very closely.

It matters not what the union says, it matters most what you sign.

Our suggestion is not to agree to otherwise sign any commitment to a labor union until you fully understand what that means and all of its pros and cons.

We urge you to be precise and deliberate in your review of any legal document seeking your signature or any other expression of assent that the union may put in front of you.

One last thing. We have been told that some individuals have already signed a Union Card or have given their expression of assent and are now realizing what they may have done and wish to revoke it. If you are in that category, we suggest you send a letter to the union, (certified mail may be the best), informing it that you intend to revoke the prior authorization.

Unfortunately, all of this has significant legal overtones and in the end, ours is to alert you of them. I will be sending more information as the situation develops. Please, do your own conscientious due diligence in determining what is truly best for your own interests.

Sincerely,

Chris Spilling, PhD, FRSC, CChem
Professor of Chemistry
Interim Provost and Vice Chancellor for Academic Affairs