

Union Update

For all union-eligible staff
November 5, 2020, 7pm



Agenda

1. Introductions
2. About our Union
3. Update: meeting with President Pribbenow
4. Next steps for gaining recognition
5. Your rights
6. Common anti-union statements
7. Get Involved, Contact us and Stay Informed
8. Q&A



About our Union

Our union will represent:

- Approximately 170 non-supervisory staff who work an average of at least 4 or more hours/week.
- ~15 on Organizing Committee (anyone is welcome to join!)

We have gained support from 500+ students, faculty, elected officials, community members, in just one week.





About our Union

We are exercising our right to form a union to improve our work environment, improve equity, and address staff issues, including:

- **Vulnerabilities:** other groups at Augsburg are represented by unions; non-union staff don't have the same protections, such as guarantees to safe working conditions and continuing benefits
- **Imbalance of power:** administration creates policies and procedures, staff are on the front-lines enacting and enforcing them. We desire to be true collaborators and have representation on committees, task-forces, and in other decision making spaces that affect our jobs.
- **Wage discrepancies:** Pay rates are consistently low and there is no accountability for wage equity between genders, races, or roles/titles
- **Benefits:** We are not protected from unilateral pay and benefit cuts, increases in health insurance costs, and more



About our Union

A Staff Union will nurture a stable workplace for all of us:

- ★ **We're Stronger Together:** As a union, we can approach workplace concerns as a unified group, instead of on our own, which means a better chance of making improvements that benefit us all.
- ★ **A Voice on the Job:** As a union, we have the right to negotiate with Augsburg for fair wages, benefits, and safe working conditions.
- ★ **A Legally Binding, Written Contract:** As a union, we negotiate a contract that defines and guarantees the terms of our employment. WE decide what gets proposed, elect our bargaining team, negotiate, and vote to approve our contract.
- ★ **Protection and Support:** A union contract ensures our workplace rights are being upheld, and we can challenge unfair, or unsafe decisions made by administration.



About our Union

A Staff Union will nurture a stable workplace for all of us:

- ★ **Respect and Fair Treatment:** We want a union, not because we're "against" Augsburg, but because we want to join together with our colleagues to gain respect, and receive fair treatment.
- ★ **Stronger Community:** Morale increases, and turnover decreases, when staff are protected from overwork, unsafe, and unfair policies. We can focus on our work and provide a consistent and reliable community for students, and each other.
- ★ **Lead the way in higher education:** We would be the first unionized staff at similarly sized colleges/universities in our area. Let's lead in our region, and walk the walk of equity and justice.
- ★ **By staff, for staff:** Contract negotiations take place every three years, approximately, so the needs of staff remain relevant and appropriate as time goes by. Staff came together for this effort, and we asked [OPEIU Local 12](#) to work with us. OPEIU works with professional staff in education, as well as other industries across the country.

Update: OC's meeting with President Pribbenow

The Organizing Committee (OC), comprised of Augsburg union-eligible staff, met with President Pribbenow at 9am this morning, November 5.

Positive steps: Open to process not involving Trump appointed NLRB

Admin is pushing for a vote; we're pushing for a fair, timely, and inclusive process that is indicative of Augsburg values.

President agreed to offer their opinion in writing by 11/11.

We expect Augsburg to “walk the walk”



Next Steps for Gaining Recognition

Paths to union recognition:

- Voluntary recognition - this option has been rejected by President Pribbenow
- Union Card Check or vote overseen by neutral third party
- Union Card Check or vote overseen by National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)

Our desired path:

- We are advocating for a non-NLRB path, as it is currently filled with Trump appointed anti-worker lawyers
- We are advocating for a vote to take place as soon as possible



Next Steps for Gaining Recognition

What to expect from the Organizing Committee:

- Regular email updates, and social media updates - follow us!
- Peaceful, public actions for solidarity, such as Shine a Light on Workers' Rights night on Tuesday
- Additional town-hall style Zoom meetings, possible guests to talk about their college/university staff union experience
- Check-in phone calls from the organizing committee
- De-bunk anti-union messaging and answer questions regarding unionization

What to you might experience or hear to dissuade union support

- Listening sessions, care packages
- Emails with anti-union sentiment
- Mandatory info meetings, or other presentations for eligible staff



Next Steps for Gaining Recognition: Your Rights

You have the right to organize, join, or assist in the formation of a union, and to:

- Attend meetings during non-work time to discuss joining a union
- Talk about the union whenever other non-work talk is allowed
- Read and distribute union literature as long as you do this in non-work areas during non-work times such as breaks, lunch hours or before or after work
- Sign a card or petition to show support for a union
- Ask other employees to support the union, to sign cards or petitions requesting your employer to recognize and bargain with your union

Source: <https://www.opeiu.org/NeedAUnion/WhatAreMyLegalRights.aspx>



Next Steps for Gaining Recognition: Your Rights

It is illegal for your employer to:

- Ask employees if they attended a union meeting, if they support the union, or any other questions about their union activity
- Threaten to or actually fire, lay off, discipline, harass, transfer, or reassign employees because they support the union
- Favor employees who don't support the union over those who do in promotions, job assignments, wages, hours, enforcement of rules, or any other working condition
- Shut down the work site or take away any benefits or privileges employees already enjoy in order to discourage union activity
- Promise employees a pay increase, promotion, benefit, or special favor if they oppose the union
- Refuse to deal with the union once employees vote to be represented

If your employer breaks the law, the union can help you file an “Unfair Labor Practice” charge with the National Labor Relations Board (www.nlrb.gov). The NLRB has the power to enforce the law and order an employer to stop interfering with employees' rights, to provide back pay and to reverse any action taken against workers when they try to form a union.

Source: <https://www.opeiu.org/NeedAUnion/WhatAreMyLegalRights.aspx>



Common Anti-union Statements

“Unions require dues and fees.”

- Union dues with OPEIU are 2x your hourly salary + \$9.50 per month, maximum of \$53/month
- We're confident the negotiated benefits and pay increase would more than offset these dues

“Unions discourage individuality and creative thinking”

- If an issue affects one department or employee, it likely affects others. A union provides the power to make changes that will benefit all staff, not just the individual who asks.
- Knowing that you have support of your union, it is more likely that issues will be addressed.
- Union membership does not mean you are restricted from doing your job or innovating in your position



Common Anti-union Statements

“You don’t need a “third-party” to advocate for you, we’ll listen to your concerns. We’re in this together.”

- Augsburg has had years to listen to our concerns, make changes, improve benefits. The lack of action is the impetus to advocate for ourselves by coming together in a union.
- If we are truly in this together, Augsburg will agree to a non-contentious path forward to unionization

“Unions drive up costs”

- It’s true that union employees typically earn higher wages, which costs the institution. But, the investment in creating equitable, safe workplaces reduces turnover, reducing expenses for the university.
- During contract negotiation, we can request an audit of Augsburg finances to gain transparency. We do not intend to make requests that will harm students, jeopardize financial viability of jobs, or hurt the long-term health of Augsburg.

Get Involved! Contact Us! Stay Informed!

Get Involved

- Join the Organizing Committee! We hold weekly meetings in the evenings via Zoom.
- Participate in our public actions
- Wear your Augsburg Staff Union facemask!

Contact us

- AugsburgStaffUnion@gmail.com
- AugsburgStaffUnion.org

Stay Informed

- Check your email updates from us
- Follow us and share our information on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter

Our OPEIU representatives

- Brandon Nessen bnessen@opeiu.org
- Sam Tiratto stiratto@opeiu12.org



Q&A

