



# Illinois State Faculty Unionize

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**BLOOMINGTON-NORMAL** – In a huge win for public higher education and the labor movement in Illinois, 650 tenured and tenure-track faculty at Illinois State University (ISU) filed authorization/membership cards today with the Illinois Educational Labor Relations Board expressing their intent to unionize.

“It’s a really exciting moment for us,” said Xiaoying Zhao, ISU assistant professor of teaching and learning. “Today we have taken the necessary steps to formalize our union and send a clear message that the faculty at ISU want a strong voice to advocate for the needs of our students, this institution, and our colleagues who are dedicated to them both.”

United Faculty of ISU (UFISU) officially launched a unionization effort in August. In just weeks, an overwhelming majority of faculty signed cards to say, “Union YES!”

Dave Kopsell, ISU professor of agriculture, noted, “Right away, my colleagues and I recognized that joining a union is the best way to ensure safe, fair, and equitable working conditions for ourselves and a stronger university for everyone. By filing cards today, we are showing our resolve to wield collective power as faculty to help our students learn, our educators teach, and the entire community thrive.”

UFISU is expected to be certified as a union by December. Upon certification, the 650 professors will officially become a chapter of the University Professionals of Illinois (UPI, Local 4100), affiliated with the Illinois Federation of Teachers (IFT), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and American Association of University Professors (AAUP).

“We are so proud that ISU’s outstanding faculty have chosen to join the University Professionals of Illinois,” said UPI President John Miller. “As part of our family of nearly 3,000 higher education professionals and staff, ISU’s dedicated educators will have a powerful voice to help build a stronger university and elevate the needs of students, workers, and public higher education across Illinois.”

“Our members around the state are excited to welcome the incredible faculty at ISU to our union of professionals,” said IFT President Dan Montgomery. “Fall may be here, but it is great to see that the ‘hot labor summer’ is continuing in Illinois. Like so many thousands of working people have done in recent months, these dedicated faculty are standing up for fairness, equity, and excellence by forming a member-driven union. ISU is an important part of Illinois’ higher education system, and this faculty unionization will make it an even stronger university for its students and our state. The IFT looks forward to continuing to support UFISU’s collective efforts every step of the way.”

“The Illinois State faculty joined together to win a seat at the table to secure the wages, conditions, and voice they need for their students to thrive,” said AFT President Randi Weingarten. “Higher education faculty across the country understand it’s only through the collective clout a union brings that their voices are heard and issues addressed. They know they are stronger together than they could ever be alone. The more faculty who organize, the more opportunity is unlocked, and the more families have access to the middle class. That’s why, as temperatures start to fall, the hot labor summer rolls on.”

Irene Mulvey, president of the American Association of University Professors, said, “I am delighted to welcome my incredible faculty colleagues at Illinois State University to the growing academic labor movement which is transforming higher education in America. The strong collective voice of unionized faculty at ISU will create a more just and equitable campus, and ensure that the core academic mission is prioritized.”

The AFT and AAUP, the largest combined national higher education union with more than 300,000 members, have organized several new units this year, including at the University of Miami, Ohio and the Maryland community college system.

As members of UFISU/UPI, the faculty look forward to working with the administration to negotiate a fair agreement that prioritizes student needs and builds a stronger ISU.