Who are Student Researchers (SRs)?

Student Researchers are students employed as researchers by the University of California and its affiliated labs, including Graduate Student Researchers, Trainees, Fellows, Graduate Student Research Assistants, Research Assistants and Student Researchers. SRs can be employed directly by UC or through external funding for the training of graduate students, e.g. through National Institute of Health (NIH) or National Science Foundation (NSF) grants. Like other UC Employees, SRs have the right to collectively bargain under California’s Higher Education Employer Employee Relations Act, or HEERA (https://www.perb.ca.gov/laws/heera.aspx).

Cards

UC Student Researchers are asking colleagues to sign union authorization cards. These say that SRs want the union they are forming — Student Researchers United/United Auto Workers (SRU/UAW) — to represent Student Researchers in collective bargaining with UC Administration.
California regulations require that each employee’s “printed name, signature, job title or classification and the date on which each individual’s signature was obtained” be present on cards, and state that cards are valid for one year after the date on which they are signed. Authorization cards are confidential and will not be shared with UC Admin.

**Representation Petition**

When a majority of UC Student Researchers have signed authorization cards, SRU/UAW will file the cards with the California Public Employment Relations Board or PERB ([perb.ca.gov/](https://perb.ca.gov/)). Also submitted at this time will be a “Representation Petition,” asking PERB to conduct a count of the authorization cards as “proof of majority support.” PERB will ask UC Admin to provide a list of SRs to PERB. PERB then checks that at least 50% +1 of SRs on that list have signed cards.

If less than 50% +1 but more than 30% of Student Researchers have signed cards, PERB may order an election. In an election, a simple majority of those voting is required to form a union. While we estimate there are around 18,000 Student Researchers, if only 2,000 vote then 1,001 SRs could determine the outcome. Such an outcome would be significantly less representative, and therefore less democratic, than the process in which 50% +1 (an absolute majority) of ALL SRs sign authorization cards.

**Campaigning**

California State Law is clear that UC may not “Impose or threaten to impose reprisals on employees, to discriminate or threaten to discriminate against employees, or otherwise to interfere with, restrain, or coerce employees because of their exercise of rights.”

Nevertheless, the UC Administration is free, under the law, to express its opposition to UC employees unionizing and has done so in other major organizing drives, and is on the record opposing SR unionization in the past.

**Certification**

Once PERB counts the cards (or ballots in an election) and approves the petition to form a union, PERB will “certify” SRU/UAW as the union that represents all Student Researchers, or the “exclusive bargaining representative.” Once certified, Student Researchers can elect a bargaining team and begin negotiations with UC.

**More Information**

If you'd like more information or to get more involved, please ask an SR you may know who is helping organize SRU/UAW; send an e-mail to info@studentresearchersunited.org; or visit: studentresearchersunited.org.