GET THE FACTS

FORMING A UNION

SUMMARY:

1 Student Researchers (SRs) reach out to UAW 2865 and UAW 5810 asking for support in forming a union.

2 SRs form organizing committees to get information, and make a plan to form a union.

3 A majority of all SRs (50% + 1) sign authorization cards indicating they would like to form Student Researchers United / UAW (SRU/UAW).

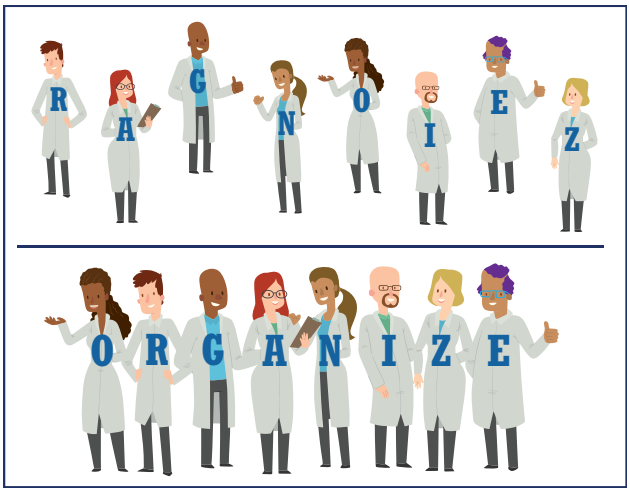
4 Authorization Cards are delivered to PERB (Public Employment Relations Board), the board designated to oversee public employee unionization efforts.

5 PERB then requests a list of SRs from UC to verify that all cards are valid and represent a majority.

6 If PERB finds a majority of Student Researchers have signed cards, then PERB certifies SRU/UAW and SRs can begin bargaining with University Administration.

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/). 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.