

# Update on Adjunct Faculty Organizing Efforts in Massachusetts

Presented By:

Jeffrey L. Hirsch

HIRSCH ROBERTS WEINSTEIN LLP

AICUM FALL SYMPOSIUM

October 3, 2013

# SEIU Local 500 Adjunct Action

- Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 500 “Adjunct Action”
  - Regional campaigns in Washington, D.C., Boston, etc.
- SEIU’s Major Successes in Washington provided a powerful springboard into the Greater Boston Area
- American University, George Washington University, Montgomery College and Georgetown University were organized
  - NOTE: At Georgetown, out of 650 eligible, less than 50% voted – but 72% voted “yes”

# Adjunct Action in Boston

- “Adjunct Action” has already established a presence in Boston
  - Tufts University adjuncts voted 128 “yes” and 57 “no” on 9/26/13 at NLRB Count
  - Bentley University adjuncts’ ballots will be counted on October 4<sup>th</sup> (if no “shutdown”)
  - Northeastern University is also a target of Adjunct Action, although no NLRB petition has been filed

# The Reality of Adjuncts in Higher Ed

- Adjunct issue has been percolating for many years
- Adjuncts have the same basic needs as all other employees – and more given history
- “Respect & Dignity” are the slogans in most union organizing campaigns
- Duquesne University
  - Adjunct Mary Margaret Vojtko’s tragic passing went “viral” and galvanized adjuncts

# The Reality of Adjuncts in Higher Ed

- Adjuncts feel “exploited,” “ignored,” “taken for granted”
- Adjuncts feel disrespected and unappreciated by both Administration and Full-Time Faculty
- Comments on websites and WBUR make it clear – the adjuncts are hungry and eager for solidarity – and SEIU will provide it

# The Reality of Adjuncts in Higher Ed

- Adjuncts are a special group
- Academic credentials and experience
- Feel undervalued and undercompensated
  - That's where the SEIU steps in
- Private Sector Union Membership still at 7%
  - Plenty of opportunity for unions

# The Reality of Adjuncts in Higher Ed

- SEIU Local 500, UAW, AAUP, Steelworkers and others
- Successful adjunct campaigns could lead to full-time faculty organizing, in some cases
- What should colleges and universities do?
- Key leadership strategy:
  - “Walk a Mile in Their Shoes...”

# The Reality of Adjuncts in Higher Ed

- What would be important to *you* as an adjunct?
- **Key Issues:**
  - Compensation
  - Health Care
  - Respect From Administration and Full-Time Faculty
  - Job Security
  - Longer Term Contracts
  - Tuition Assistance
  - Consideration for Full-Time Positions
  - Leave For Professional Development
  - Office Space
  - Official Email Address
  - Library Access
  - Recognition in Course Catalog and Website
  - Regular Meetings with Administration



# The Reality of Adjuncts in Higher Ed

- Quick story about my law partner
- Different types of adjunct faculty
- Those who teach part-time for personal reasons

# The Reality of Adjuncts in Higher Ed

- Those who accept multiple adjunct appointments as their primary source of income
- SEIU – Adjunct Action focuses on the adjuncts with multiple appointments
- Regional nature of Adjunct Action Campaign will “cross-over” between institutions, making it easier to organize

# Strategic Recommendations

- The adjunct issue must be taken seriously and given priority attention
- Leadership should initiate communications with adjuncts and hold open meetings to listen and understand adjunct concerns
- If not already in place, administration should establish protocols for regular communication with and recognition for adjuncts

# Strategic Recommendations

- Let's listen to what some adjuncts have to say:
  - Rebecca Kaiser Gibson, Tufts – interviewed on “Radio Boston” on 9/26/13
  - Andy Klatt, Tufts
- Closing Recommendation:
  - BE PROACTIVE, Before A Petition is Filed