CGSU/AFT/NYSUT files election petition for union representation of graduate assistants

The American Arbitration Association (AAA) has confirmed that Cornell Graduate Students United (CGSU), American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) have filed a petition for a union representation election at Cornell.

An Arbitrator will review authorization cards filed to confirm that the union has reached the required 30 percent of signed and valid authorization cards from graduate assistants eligible to vote in an election. Those eligible to vote are all Ithaca and Geneva campus-based graduate students enrolled in the Graduate School who currently hold titles under University Policy 1.3 as Teaching Assistants, Graduate Research Assistants, Research Assistants, or Graduate Assistants (collectively, graduate assistants).

According to the agreement reached between Cornell and the CGSU/AFT/NYSUT in May 2016, should the 30 percent threshold be confirmed by the Arbitrator, a secret ballot election will be conducted by the AAA within 15 business days after filing the election petition to determine if a majority of eligible graduate assistants who vote select the CGSU/AFT/NYSUT as their exclusive collective bargaining representative.

Every eligible graduate assistant, regardless of whether they submitted an authorization card to the union, is strongly encouraged to vote in the election.

Each eligible voter will first receive on Tuesday, March 14 a notice that their contact information will be shared with the Union as required by the May ’16 Agreement, and then later a detailed communication from the university with specific voting instructions and an assigned voting location.

While the 30 percent threshold is being confirmed, agreement on election logistics (pending confirmation of the threshold) include two election days on the Ithaca Campus (March 27 and 28; 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. – 10:00 p.m.) and one election day (March 28; 10:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.) on the Geneva campus. Ithaca locations will include B73 Warren Hall; G01 Biotech; Goldman Lounge, Duffield Hall; and the former Temple of Zeus space, Goldwin Smith Hall. The Geneva location will be in the Foyer, Barton Labs.

If the 30 percent threshold is confirmed, each eligible voter will receive individual instructions with an assigned voting location. Voters will need to present photo-identification at the assigned voting location, such as a Cornell ID or a government-issued ID (e.g., driver’s license, passport).

If a majority of the graduate assistants voting in the election vote in favor of representation by CGSU/AFT/NYSUT, Cornell shall grant recognition to CGSU/AFT/NYSUT as the exclusive collective bargaining representative for all graduate assistants enrolled in the Graduate School on the Ithaca and Geneva campuses.
Cornell remains committed to fostering an open and respectful environment in which graduate assistants at Cornell can learn about and make informed decisions regarding union representation.

More information regarding graduate union representation issues is available through this FAQ and in a series of questions asked by graduate students.