


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LIFESTYLE ▶	MAGAZINE ▶		
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Part-time Lesley faculty to unionize

By **Matt Rocheleau** | GLOBE STAFF FEBRUARY 25, 2014

 ARTICLE	 COMMENTS (1)
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PAT GREENHOUSE/GLOBE STAFF

Part of the Lesley University campus in 2009.

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Part-time faculty members at Lesley University have voted to form a union, becoming the second local group of adjunct faculty to unionize in an effort to improve pay, benefits, and other working conditions.

Adjunct teaching staff at the school in Cambridge voted 359 to 67 to join the Adjunct Action union, according to an announcement by the Service Employees International, which is backing an effort to unionize adjunct faculty at Boston-area schools, as well as at colleges in Los Angeles and Washington state.

Union officials said results of the Lesley vote were disclosed after the National Labor Relations Board counted mail-in ballots on Monday.

“With part-time faculty making up the majority of faculty, our working conditions are directly related to student success, and that’s why I’m excited about forming our union today,” said a statement from Matthew White, a Lesley graduate who teaches graphic design there. “Our union will help Lesley University

provide students a richer experience and better education.”

John Sullivan, a spokesman for Lesley, said, “We respect both the process and the outcome of the vote, and we’ll continue to be engaged in the next phase.”

Last spring, the SEIU said it met with part-time professors from more than 20 local colleges to discuss their interest and efforts to unionize.

In September, adjunct teaching staff from Tufts University — which has campuses in Medford, Somerville, Boston, and Grafton — became the first local group to unionize in recent years when they voted to join Adjunct Action.

Adjunct faculty at Tufts are negotiating with university officials to draft their first contract, union officials said.

A month after Tufts adjunct staff unionized, a vote to unionize adjunct staff at Bentley University fell two votes short.

Part-time and non-tenure-track faculty represent the majority of faculty at universities in the United States, and their numbers continue to rise, the SEIU says.

In 2011, part-time faculty held 50 percent of teaching jobs at colleges, up from 34 percent in 1987 and 22 percent in 1970, the SEIU said. Adjunct staff earn on average about \$3,000 per three-credit course. About 80 percent of them do not get health insurance from their college, and about 86 percent do not receive retirement benefits, the SEIU says.

Among private, nonprofit universities in the Boston-area, 66.8 percent of faculty are non-tenure-track and 42 percent are part time, the SEIU has said.

“Being a university professor, once the quintessential middle-class job, has become a low-wage one, where instructors face low pay and no benefits or job security,” said a statement from the SEIU, which has unionized more than 18,000 adjunct faculty nationwide.

Norah Dooley, an adjunct faculty member at Lesley, said teaching one course a semester at the university does not cover the cost of health insurance for her and her family.



“Lesley is exceptional in the way it cares for its students as human beings,” she said in a statement. “. . . I wish Lesley was equally as exceptional in its treatment of its adjunct faculty.”

“While the crisis in higher education is complex, it is not intractable,” Dooley added. “Our overwhelming yes vote to form our union with SEIU/Adjunct Action is a great start on a solution.”

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