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By **Matt Rocheleau**

GLOBE CORRESPONDENT DECEMBER 16, 2014

Full-time professors at several Boston-area private colleges are taking steps to unionize, joining a growing number of their part-time colleagues who have organized to seek higher pay and better work conditions.

The latest effort involves instructors and lecturers who are not on track to receive tenure, which is generally considered a permanent position, and represents the latest development in the national faculty-unionization movement launched a year and a half ago.

Full-time lecturers at Tufts University filed paperwork this month with the federal agency that oversees unionization votes. The lecturers requested that a formal vote be conducted soon for the school's 90 or so full-time, nontenure-track faculty to decide whether to unionize.

Similar campaigns are underway, though not as far along, to organize hundreds of full-time, nontenure-track faculty at Brandeis University, about 200 more at Lesley University, and an undisclosed number at other local universities, according to union and university officials. The officials declined to name the other colleges because faculty there are not ready to publicize their intentions.

While average annual pay nationally for tenured and tenure-track faculty is in the \$85,000 range and can climb to more than twice that amount, the median salary for full-time nontenure-track faculty falls around \$50,000, according to surveys by the American Association of University Professors.

Penn Loh, a lecturer in Tufts' urban and environmental policy and planning department and one of 15 organizing committee members at the college, said full-time faculty at his college want improved compensation, better job security, support for professional development, and "a seat at the table."

"As full-time lecturers, we remain the only group of instructors on campus who don't have a voice," he said. "Tenured faculty have a voice. Part-timers have established their voice. We feel like we need to have the opportunity to be involved."

Unlike part-time or adjunct teachers, full-time faculty who are not on the path to tenure typically are eligible for employer benefits, including health and retirement insurance, and they often receive better pay than adjuncts.

Like part-timers, however, most full-time faculty who are not on the tenure track do not have long-term job security. They say they have little influence in decisions made by their colleges, including ones that directly affect their working conditions.

Loh said that he and other lecturers at Tufts were required several years ago to teach two additional courses per year on top of the four already required, but their pay did not increase as a result of the extra workload.

"That represents one of the really big reasons why a union is really crucial, because when that happened there was really no recourse," he said.

Last fall, adjunct professors at Tufts became the first of several local groups to unionize since the Service Employees International Union launched a national effort to organize part-time faculty a year and a half ago. About 200 part-time faculty at Tufts reached a contract agreement that will give most a 22-percent pay raise over the next three years and better job security.

In a statement, Tufts said it is aware of the effort by full-time lecturers to unionize and will comply fully with the National Labor Relations Board.

"As an employer, Tufts strives to create a climate of mutual trust and respect for all faculty and staff. We will continue to be guided by that principle," the statement said.

To file with the NLRB, Tufts lecturers had to submit paperwork reflecting a desire to unionize among at least 30 percent of faculty. Officials from the NLRB will need to verify the paperwork before scheduling a vote.

Labor laws allow for any faculty at public colleges to unionize, legal experts said. But professors at private colleges who have influence in hiring and policy decisions — as tenured faculty often do — are considered to be management-level employees and are therefore prohibited from unionizing.

Union officials said the ongoing campaign at Brandeis is seeking to unionize both nontenured full-time faculty and adjuncts together, while the effort at Lesley involves organizing just the full-timers. Lesley's 700 adjuncts unionized in February and are now negotiating a contract.

Brandeis spokesman Bill Schaller said the Waltham university has not received a formal notice about the unionization campaign.

"If and when a petition is filed, the university will respond with our position with respect to the proposed bargaining unit," Schaller said. "Brandeis deeply values the work of our adjunct and contract faculty members."

Officials at Lesley said they are aware of the discussions among full-time faculty but declined to comment further.

As full-timers join the movement, part-time faculty are continuing their push. About 960 Northeastern University adjuncts organized in May and are now in contract negotiations. Some 800 adjuncts at Boston University are scheduled to vote next month on whether to unionize. At Bentley University, a push to organize 200 adjuncts fell two votes short in fall 2013, but some faculty there want to try again. A campaign to unionize part-timers is also underway at Simmons College and other area colleges.

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