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Oregon Tech Faculty Move to Unionize

The faculty of the Oregon Institute of Technology (OIT) today moved to form a faculty union by filing a petition with the Oregon Employment Relations Board. Under Oregon’s public sector labor law, a union can petition for certification when a majority of potential bargaining unit members sign authorization cards, a process known as “card check.”

The new union, representing approximately 180 full-time faculty members, including tenure-track and non-tenure-track faculty members, will be a chapter of the AAUP. It aims to strengthen shared governance and to establish a legally enforceable contract with respect to working conditions, pay, and benefits.

As of today, faculty at all public universities in Oregon have organized into unions in an effort to raise the quality of higher education in Oregon.

“We look forward to working with OIT president Dr. Nagi Naganathan and the school administration to advance the interests of our students and of the university,” says Mark Clark, a professor of history at the school who helped spearhead the unionization process. “Oregon Tech is a strong and vibrant institution, and we will do our best to make it an even more successful place as we move into the future.”

Once Oregon has certified OIT’s AAUP chapter as a collective bargaining representative, all faculty members will have the opportunity to participate in the organization of the union. The chapter plans to elect union representatives and approve a set of bylaws during the fall academic quarter.

“We hope to learn from the unionized faculty at other Oregon public universities as we organize our union and enter into the bargaining process,” says Clark. “Oregon’s faculty unions provide a model for how shared governance makes higher education more effective, and we will seek to build on that tradition.”

“We believe that collective bargaining is the best way to give faculty a voice on their campus and strengthen their ability to protect academic freedom, shared governance and give faculty a clear voice in helping shape priorities at OIT,” says Rudy Fichtenbaum, president of the AAUP.

Unionized and nonunionized chapters of the AAUP champion academic freedom, advance shared governance, and promote economic security for all who teach and conduct research in
higher education. Since 1915, the AAUP has shaped American higher education by defending standards that support quality education and ensure higher education’s contribution to the common good.