**University of Illinois Faces Strike as Hundreds of Faculty Walk Out**

Hundreds of non-tenure track faculty at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign will walk out of their labs and classrooms for two days beginning Tuesday morning, April 19, to protest the University’s refusal to negotiate on key provisions of a labor contract. The teachers and researchers, members of the Non-Tenure Faculty Coalition (NTFC),  Local #6546 AFT/IFT/AAUP, are asking for improved employment security, opportunities for promotion and professional support, and the protection of academic freedom for non-tenure-track faculty members. The union, certified in July 2014, has been negotiating its first contract since October 2014.

"This is a fight to force the administration to recognize the valuable work that non-tenure-track faculty have done at the University of Illinois for decades--work that needs to be supported through a union contract,” stated Union President Shawn Gilmore, a lecturer in the English Department.

Dennis Dullea, a senior instructor in English, and Vice-President of NTFC Local #6546, added, “Currently most of ourmembers exist on temporary, nine-month contracts. Many of us have been ‘temporary’ faculty for over twenty years! It’s time to prioritize our students’ learning experience. Multi-year contracts mean faculty are able to focus on teaching and preparing their courses rather than on wondering if they will have a job in the fall.  These contracts will bring stability to the faculty, to our students, and to the campus community at large.”

After more than eighteen months of attempting to resolve these issues at the bargaining table, the union has decided that a strike is necessary.  “Our door is always open,” said lead negotiator Kay Emmert, “but after twenty-nine negotiating sessions, with little to show for our efforts, our members are telling the administration: Enough is enough!”

“We have continually tried to negotiate a contract that would support our work as educators,” said Christina De Angelo, instructor in Spanish and Portuguese and chair of the NTFC Strike Committee. “Having a fair evaluation system in our contract would allow us to expand our teaching strengths to make sure that all of our students receive the quality education they deserve. We say ‘Education First,’ and the administration’s only response is ‘No’. Their constant refusal to act on these important issues has forced us to take these steps and to demonstrate how serious we are about improving campus life at UIUC.”

 American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten said that the UIUC problems mirror what’s happening on campuses nationwide.

“Across the country, universities are increasingly relying on contingent faculty, but these dedicated educators aren’t being treated fairly. That’s why educators are coming together—from Chicago to Portland [Ore.] to Philadelphia—to demand fairness,” Weingarten said. “At UIUC, non-tenure faculty teach nearly 40 percent of all undergraduate courses, yet they have no guarantee of stable employment year-to-year, no vote on department governance and no evaluations to help them measure or improve their teaching. They want UIUC to remain a place where students receive a high-quality public higher education, but that will only happen with a fair contract.”

Striking faculty will maintain a picket line around the English Building (608 S. Wright Street, Urbana) during working hours.  The strikers and their supporters will assemble for a rally at noon on the East Side of the English Building each day. Union leaders from around the country will address the strikers and their supporters on both April 19th and 20th at 5 pm in front of the Swanlund Administration Building (601 E. John St., Champaign). The union will also hold rallies on the East side of the English Building at noon on both days.

NTFC Local #6546 AFT/IFT/AAUP represents approximately 500 full-time teaching, research, and clinical faculty at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Media Contact:  Shawn Gilmore (217) 778-2925

Dorothee Schneider, (217) 390-8725, dorothee.schneider@gmail.com

  Dennis Dullea (217) 419-5082

Contact persons will be available on the picket line, on the East Side of the English Building at 608 S. Wright St.

Website: [www.local6546.org](http://www.local6546.org)  Facebook: NTFC Local 6546