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State Certifies Union for Rutgers Post-Doctoral Associates and Fellows

Only Third Group of Post-Docs in Nation To Vote for Union Representation

NEW BRUNSWICK, N.J.—The New Jersey Public Employment Relations Commission today certified the vote of nearly 350 post-doctoral associates and fellows to be represented by Rutgers Council of AAUP Chapters-AFT, the union that represents more than 5,000 faculty and graduate employees at Rutgers University. This is only the third group of post-docs in the country to vote for union representation.

“Post-docs are an absolutely essential part of Rutgers’ research effort, and we should be treated with the same level of respect as other professionals working at the university. Having a union contract will help us set working conditions that are fair and allow us to better focus on our work,” said Alan Wan, a post-doctoral associate in the chemistry department.

The next step for the union is to negotiate a contract with Rutgers University.

Post-doctoral associates and fellows are grant-based, nontenure-track research faculty who work under the direction of a principal investigator, usually a university professor. Generally, their salaries are low, job security is nonexistent, work rules are arbitrary, and visa and housing support for this largely foreign-national workforce is negligible.

“The improved pay and benefits that come with a contract will help Rutgers continue to attract top-notch Ph.D. researchers and remain a center of research excellence,” said Lisa Klein, immediate past president of Rutgers AAUP-AFT and a principal investigator herself. “We look forward to collaborating with our newest members as they seek to improve their work at Rutgers through a union voice.”

The two other groups of unionized post-doctoral associates and fellows are at the University of Connecticut and in the University of California system.

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