To: All Faculty

From: Dean of Bienen School of Music  
Dean of School of Communication  
Dean of School of Education and Social Policy  
Dean of McCormick School of Engineering and Applied Science  
Dean of Medill School of Journalism Media, Integrated Marketing Communications  
Dean of Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences

Re: The importance of voting in the upcoming SEIU election

Date: June 15, 2016

Since Provost Linzer’s letter on Friday evening regarding the union petition, some of you have shared your concerns that this process is moving at a pace that prevents you from obtaining sufficient information to make an informed choice about whether you want to be represented by a union. Others of you who did not teach in the Spring Quarter have asked why you cannot vote. We are committed to making sure you have the information you need to make an informed choice, and we write today to address these concerns and questions.

First, in filing the petition for representation, the SEIU prepared a petition that will determine voting eligibility. In preparing that petition, the SEIU seeks to include only those non-tenure-track faculty who “currently” teach one course in the impacted schools. By phrasing the petition in this way, the Union has limited the voting pool to only those of you who taught in Spring Quarter 2016. If a unit is certified based on that definition, all non-tenure track faculty in the certified unit who teach in future academic quarters will be included in the unit. We share your concerns that some of you who will be impacted will not have the opportunity to vote in this important decision, but the Union controls the scope of the unit it seeks to represent.

For those of you who did teach this Spring Quarter, we wanted to impress upon you the importance of voting. The election outcome—which the union estimates will impact 525 of you—will be determined by the majority of those who vote, not the majority of those eligible to vote. By way of example, if only 100 of you vote, the decision about whether you will be represented by a union could be decided by just 51 voters. That means that a minority of eligible voters could ultimately decide the outcome of this important decision, even if the majority of eligible voters does not want to unionize. If you do not vote, you will not be part of this important decision regarding your future. Just as importantly, not voting is tantamount to voting “yes.”

That is why we ask that as you enjoy what we hope will be a restful and productive summer, you take a moment to cast your vote and make your voice heard. We will be providing you with more information in the coming days regarding the ballot and how to complete it so that your vote will count. In addition to sending you the FAQs and this communication, the University has also set up a website to make this information as easily accessible to you as we can. You can access that site here: http://www.northwestern.edu/faculty-union/. We also encourage you to ask questions of the SEIU, as we do not have the answers as to why they chose this time of the year to file the petition and why they defined the proposed unit in the manner they did.
In closing, we reiterate our commitment to continue to cultivate and improve upon our important relationships with all of our faculty without the intervention of a third party union who may not be equipped to appreciate the complexities of academia and the Northwestern community. It is our hope that you will continue to ask questions and continue this discourse during the election period. Thank you again for your attention to this important matter.