

THE ELECTION PROCESS

1. The Petition Phase

Prior to an election, union representatives typically communicate and meet with graduate students to determine their interest in representation, in order to secure enough support to file a petition for election to the NLRB.

Based on student feedback and interest, the union will attempt to obtain signed authorization cards from at least 30 percent of eligible graduate students in the bargaining unit, as that unit is defined by the union. Note the following:

- Eligible graduate students include only those serving as teaching or research assistants.
- It is entirely up to the student to choose whether or not to sign the card, and a signature does not obligate them to vote for a union in the event of an election.

Should the union obtain the necessary 30 percent, it will proceed with submitting both the signed authorization cards and formal petition to the NLRB. The petition is then presented to Northwestern University by the NLRB, kicking off the post-petition campaign phase.

2. Post-Petition Campaign

Shortly after receiving the petition, Northwestern must share election information by posting flyers around campus. Both Northwestern and the union will send out information about unionization during the campaign. This phase of the process is largely meant to build awareness around the upcoming election, and drive higher voter turnout and concludes with the election.

3. The Election

The NLRB will administer the election by secret ballot, either in-person or via mail. Voting is critical, given that a simple majority of only those who cast a vote will determine the outcome of the election.

Consider the following before you vote:

- Prior to voting, gather as many details as possible about what union representation means, about your potential union partner, and if you feel confident that a union can effectively represent your unique interests.
- If you don't feel prepared to decide whether union representation is for you, you can vote "no" in an election and take time to learn more and consider your options in the future.
- Remember that you can still choose to vote against union representation in the election even if you signed an authorization card during the petition phase.
- Should you choose to vote for the union, and the union is indeed elected and certified, this union will become your exclusive representative on wages, benefits, and other working conditions, and cannot be voted out for at least one year. After a year, a union can only be removed through a lengthy decertification process that requires another election.
- It is critical that you vote in the election to make your voice heard, either for or against the union.
- Please know that your vote is confidential, known only to you, and never shared with the University, the union representative, or the NLRB.

Please visit the [NLRB Ruling on Graduate Students website](#) for more information on unions and the election process, including [Frequently Asked Questions](#).