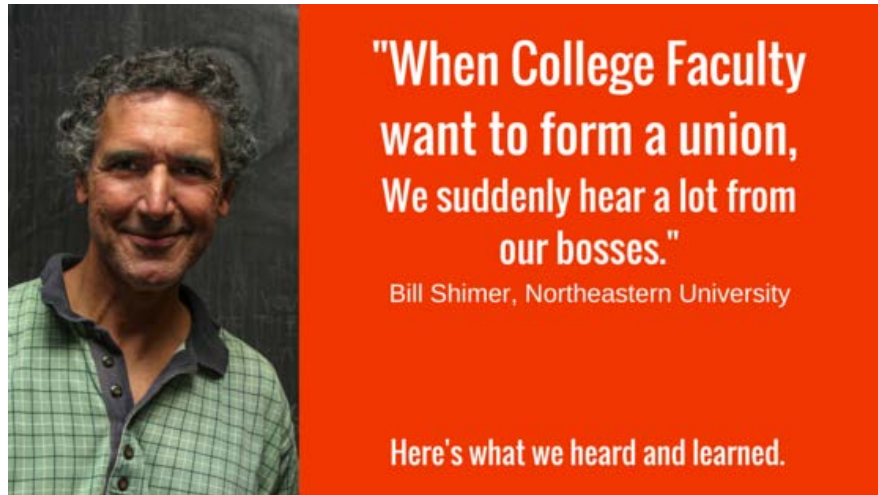


We Formed a Union. Here's What to Expect.



College administrators often suggest that all faculty should study “implications” of union representation carefully. They should take her advice and go straight to the source. There are plenty of unionized contingent faculty across the country — myself included — who can tell them what that’s been like. And there are even more faculty — myself also included — who can tell them what life on campus has been like without any representation or professional status.

— **John Barry, Maryland Institute College of Art**



A Union is Us, Not a Third Party

It is apparently a common trope to consider a union an external organization, a so-called “third party,” with the monolithic self-interested agenda that implies. The suggestion is the “third party” would intervene and interrupt the



productive relationship between adjuncts and administrators of their university. Our experience at Tufts, where we won a first contract with significant improvements in pay and longer contracts as members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), has been strikingly different from that stereotype. Though we have benefited from the experience and energy of SEIU’s professional staff at every step, our issues, our preferences, our priorities, our language about our situation, our strategy and our ability to discover all of these, have determined the shape and direction of our efforts to form a union. Far from feeling separated by some third party, we feel much more deeply and

more significantly integrated into the university than before. We have gained stature by being together, a union, and we feel it both in our own commitment to the well-being of our students and our teachers, and in our ability to be heard and considered part of our university.

— **Rebecca Gibson, Tufts University**

Pooling Our Resources is Part of Our Strength

As is often the case, the issue of dues was raised in the run-up to our union election at Tufts. It's important to remember that we did not pay a penny in dues until we voted overwhelmingly for our first contract. We would never have voted to approve a contract that isn't worth considerably more to us than our dues. Simply put, it's up to us: if it isn't worth it, we won't approve it.

What's more, it's important to consider the intangible benefits of unionization, including a more democratic university in a more democratic society. I think the fundamental question for any of us to ask ourselves is whether we want our universities' administrations to have unilateral control over our pay, benefits and working conditions, or whether we want to have a say in our work lives. Our union gives us the tools we need to prevent further declines in our standard of living, to defend what we have, and to move forward on equity, job security, cost of living, and the other issues we have identified as important to us.

— **Andy Katt, Tufts University**



At MICA, We Gave the Administration a Shot, Then We Got Serious

In 2011 — the very beginning of the process to advance adjunct conditions, the Part-time Faculty Committee had naively hoped that the administration would agree to our proposals for change once they realized that



there had been 14 years of neglect of part-time faculty. We thought the administration would feel morally responsible to correct this oversight. We believed those family values that MICA refers to would translate to fair treatment. After countless meetings, research and proposals, followed by meetings with full time faculty, deans and administrators we began to understand that we were powerless and without recourse unless we had strong and organized support.

We are clear that this process is NOT about a quick fix for salaries. There are many issues that are critical for educating some of the best art students in the country and we're hopeful that we can begin to make those changes with full support of all adjuncts and administrators.

— **Katherine Kavanaugh, Maryland Institute College of Art**