

Local News

Wednesday
November 26, 2014
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towns@cortlandstandard.net

TC3 adjunct union petitions show support by majority

By SARAH VABER
Staff Reporter

sbullock@cortlandstandardnews.net

An Ithaca pastor who counted petitions calling for the creation of an adjunct faculty union at Tompkins Cortland Community College found the majority of adjunct faculty signed petitions, according to a New York State United Teachers news release.

The announcement comes as the adjunct association has been seeking TC3's recognition as a union and was directed by the college to appeal instead to the state Public Employment Relations Board. The college was not convinced the majority of adjunct faculty members were in favor of unionizing.

The Rev. Richard Rose of the First Baptist Church of Ithaca said for the first time Tuesday in a news release he compared original signed petitions against a list of 258 adjuncts supplied to the TC3 Adjunct Association and was convinced the proposed union was the will of the majority. The association and NYSUT have refused to release the number of adjunct faculty that have signed petitions. Rose could not be reached for comment Tuesday afternoon.

Rose's count of the petitions did not change the college's stance toward the proposed union.

John Connors, provost and vice president of the college, said he did not understand why the association was seeking help from people who are not experts in the employment relations field instead of focusing on filing for certification with the state Public Employment Relations Board.

The college rejected the association's request to recognize it as a union on Nov. 18, citing concerns that the majority of adjunct faculty do not support the union.

Connors said the college instead wants the relations board to take a vote among the adjuncts to clearly decide the matter. But if the association truly has a strong majority of petitions, the board may decide to verify the association as a union without a vote, he said.

Counting petition signatures is not as fair as a secret ballot, as a ballot would also count the number of adjuncts who do not support the union, Connors said.

Some adjunct faculty have privately said they felt pressured to sign the petition and do not want to ask the association to remove them from the list as that would put them in an awkward position, he said.

"If we have a vote, and everyone gets to vote quietly, privately, efficiently, we get an answer," he said.

The petitions and required paperwork are set to be sent to the relations board. The packet is expected to arrive at the board's Albany office by the end of the week, according to the association's website, tc3adjunctassociation.wordpress.com.

Once it arrives, the case will be assigned to an administrative law judge who will conduct an investigation, hold hearings if necessary and issue a ruling.

The proposed union would advocate for job security, fairer pay, and health insurance in its first contract, according to the association's website.