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TC3 adjuncts: Recognize our union

Part-time instructors seek backing from college at board meeting

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DRYDEN — Tompkins Cortland Community College adjuncts, part-time instructors with low pay and no benefits, asked to have their union recognized by the college during the public comment session at Thursday night's Board of Trustees meeting.

Speaking on behalf of the TC3 Adjunct Association, Robert Earle, an adjunct instructor, requested the college voluntarily recognize the association as the adjunct faculty's union.

Tenured faculty and support staff at the college have unions, Earle said.

"Now we feel it's our turn," he said.

TC3 President Carl Haynes said after the meeting he received a letter Wednesday from a representative of the New York State United Teachers union asking the college to recognize the association as a union.

The association has already had a majority of adjunct faculty sign a union petition, according to the association's website, tc3adjunctassociation.wordpress.com.

The website did not list a total number of adjunct faculty that had signed a petition. Haynes said after the meeting he was not given an official number of the faculty who had signed.

A list of about 95 people posted on the

website includes the names of adjuncts who were willing to publicly state they signed the union petition, according to the association. But, at least one of the names on the list was not of an adjunct instructor and the rest could not be verified by press time.

A separate list of 180 union supporters from the college, other institutions, as well as community members is also posted on the association's website.

"There's no question there will be a union," Earle told the board, urging it not to spend money on legal fees to fight the union's formation.

For a union to be formed among the adjuncts, the majority of the 200 to 250 adjuncts must sign a union

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petition, Peter Vorhees, a spokesman for the college, said. Since adjuncts are hired on a semesterly basis and the group's make-up may not be the same in the spring semester, the adjuncts seeking union protection this semester would have to form a union by the end of the fall semester, Vorhees said.

Fall semester classes end Dec. 18 and final grades are due the next day.

The board did not discuss the request in open session. After the meeting, Haynes and Elizabeth Burns, the board's chairwoman, declined to comment on what the college's response to the request might be. The board went into executive session at the end of the meeting to discuss a personnel matter.

At the meeting, Earle asked for a "fair contract" for adjuncts.

That would include "... a reasonable degree of job security, fairer pay, and access to subsidi-

dized health insurance for adjuncts who need it," according to the association's website.

An adjunct union would benefit the college, Earle said, as it would allow TC3 to attract and retain quality adjuncts.

A union would also allow more students to build relationships over time with faculty as there would be fewer adjunct instructors teaching only one semester and then leaving, he said. Those relationships help students to succeed at college, Earle said.