

# Building our Union by Building a Department Rep System

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Florida International University

# Pair & Share

\*Name

\*Union / Institution

\*Why you're here

\*One thing your union has done that you're proud of

# UFF-FIU (2022 - 2025)



~42% density (2022)

~62% density (2025)

Added more than 264 members

## RUN FOR CHAPTER COUNCIL



UFF-FIU Elections Committee Solicits Nominations

### UFF-FIU Officers    UFF-FIU Senators

President  
Vice-President  
Treasurer  
Secretary

The duties of the Chapter Officers  
can be found in the [Chapter By-  
laws](#).

- Attend Chapter Council.
- Serve on a [Chapter committee](#)
- (Encouraged) Attend Statewide UFF Senate once per semester.
- Many who are new to our union activity run for Senator.
- The role of Senator is a good way to contribute and learn more about our union.



**SEND (SELF)  
NOMINATIONS TO  
[ELECTIONS@UFF-FIU.ORG](mailto:ELECTIONS@UFF-FIU.ORG)  
BY FRIDAY, FEB. 21, 2025**



# UFIU FALL SOCIALS

Come have a drink on us!

WED, 9/6 @ 10-11AM	Coffee at B&N Cafe
TH, 9/21 @ 4-6PM	Happy Hour at Chili's
WED, 10/4 @ 10-11AM	Coffee at B&N Cafe
TH, 10/19 @ 4-6PM	Happy Hour at Chili's
WED, 11/1 @ 10-11AM	Coffee at B&N Cafe
TH, 11/30 @ 4-6PM	Happy Hour at Chili's
WED, 12/6 @ 10-11AM	Coffee at B&N Cafe



UFIU SPRING 2024 OFFICE HOURS		
WHEN	WHO	WHERE
MONDAYS 6:30 - 8:00 PM	DAH SAUNDERS dah.saunders@ufl-fiu.org LEAD NEGOTIATOR	
TUESDAYS 11 AM - 12 PM	TANIA LOPEZ tania.lopez@ufl-fiu.org MEMBERSHIP	PC 312
WEDNESDAYS 9:00 - 11 AM	ERIC SCARFFE eric.scarffe@ufl-fiu.org PRESIDENT	
THURSDAYS 10 AM - 12 PM	DAH SAUNDERS dah.saunders@ufl-fiu.org LEAD NEGOTIATOR	ZER 323
FRIDAYS 10 AM - 12 PM	TANIA LOPEZ tania.lopez@ufl-fiu.org MEMBERSHIP	PC 312



## REBIRTH AMIDST REPRESSION: UNIONS IN FLORIDA AND BEYOND

APRIL 17TH @3PM  
LABOR CENTER ROOM 301

Come discuss how all workers on campus can organize for greater equality and a better future

**FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

**PANELISTS:**  
Noah Thompson  
Cloning Virtually! Noah Thompson, a member of YDSA, is an organizer of a new union comprising all (4000+) undergraduate student employees at the University of Oregon.

Max Fraser  
Max Fraser is a labor historian and will speak about his experience organizing non academic and academic workers at Yale with Unite Here! Local 33.

**REGISTER WITH THE QR CODE**



# How to Build a Rep Structure: UFF-FIU's Experience



Why build a rep structure ?

- Responding to internal objections!

Getting started

- Setting up a database

Identifying reps (Activity)

- Activists vs organic leaders

Engaging reps in membership work

Using rep system to build power

- 2 successes & 1 failure

Where we go from here...

- Issue based organizing?
- Convening rep council

Summing Up (Activity)

# FIU...The Context...

Commuter campus (traffic)

In one of the most expensive cities for housing in the US

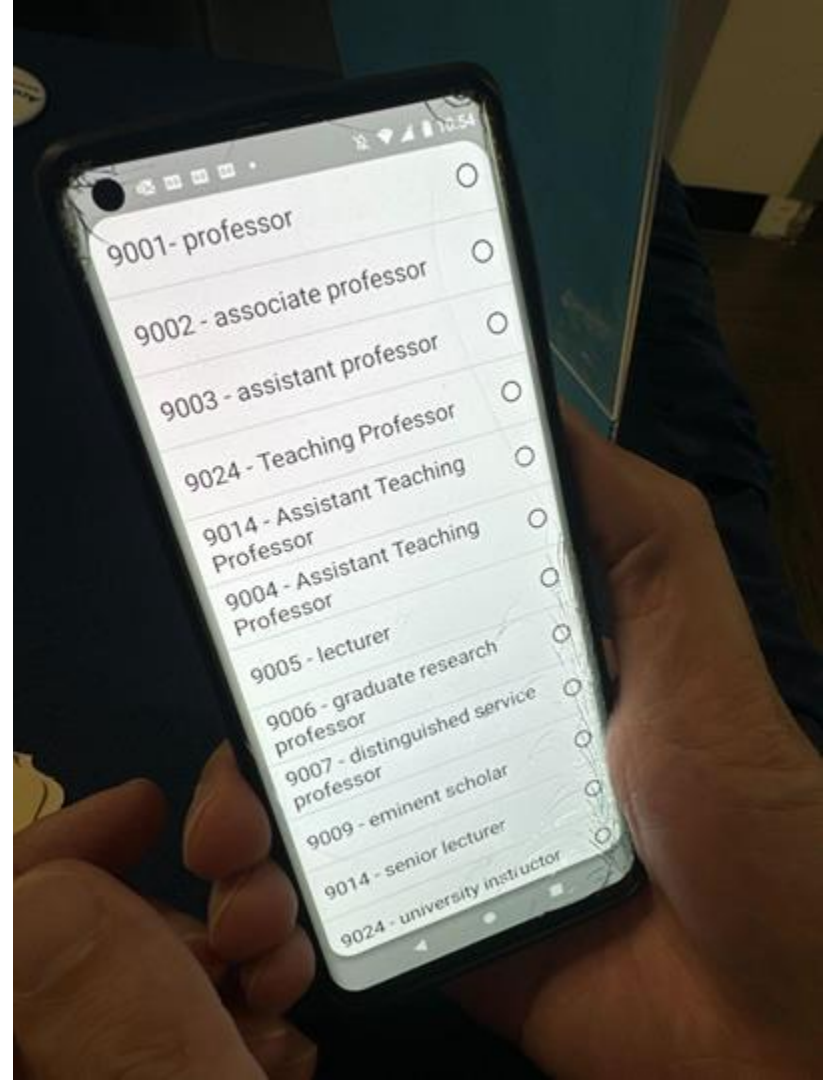
Transition to a lot of online education

3 campuses (BUT one main one)



# UFF-FIU: The Context

- 1351 Members in our Bargaining Unit
- Today: 840 union members (62%)
- Our unit
  - Full-time faculty
    - Research faculty
    - Teaching faculty
    - Research associates
    - Visiting faculty (~10%)
    - Chairs out of unit
    - Adjunct faculty out of unit



# Florida...The Context



- Stop Woke (2022)
- SB 266 (2023)
- SB 256 (2023)
  - 60% density for recertification
  - Payroll deduction banned
  - Must collect Membership Authorization Form from every member

## The Boss is the Best Organizer?



# Why build a rep structure?

- Increases union democracy
  - Rep union to members
  - Rep members to union
- Builds power
  - Contract enforcement
  - Workplace actions
- Facilitates membership work
  - Retention of existing members
  - Recruitment of new members



# What have we done over the past year?

- Signed up a non-member
- Helped someone transition to E-dues
- Helped someone resolve a bank account issue
- Got a member/non-member to sign a showing of interest card
- Gave a union update at a faculty meeting
- Got a faculty members to put a union sticker on their door
- Went to a union training
- Introduced yourself as a department rep to members in your department
- Talked to a member about our demands for the full book contract
- Asked a member to participate in an action
- Planned an action
- Spotted a contract violation
- Worked with a member to resolve a contract violation

Slide from UFF-FIU  
Department Rep  
Luncheon (April  
2024)

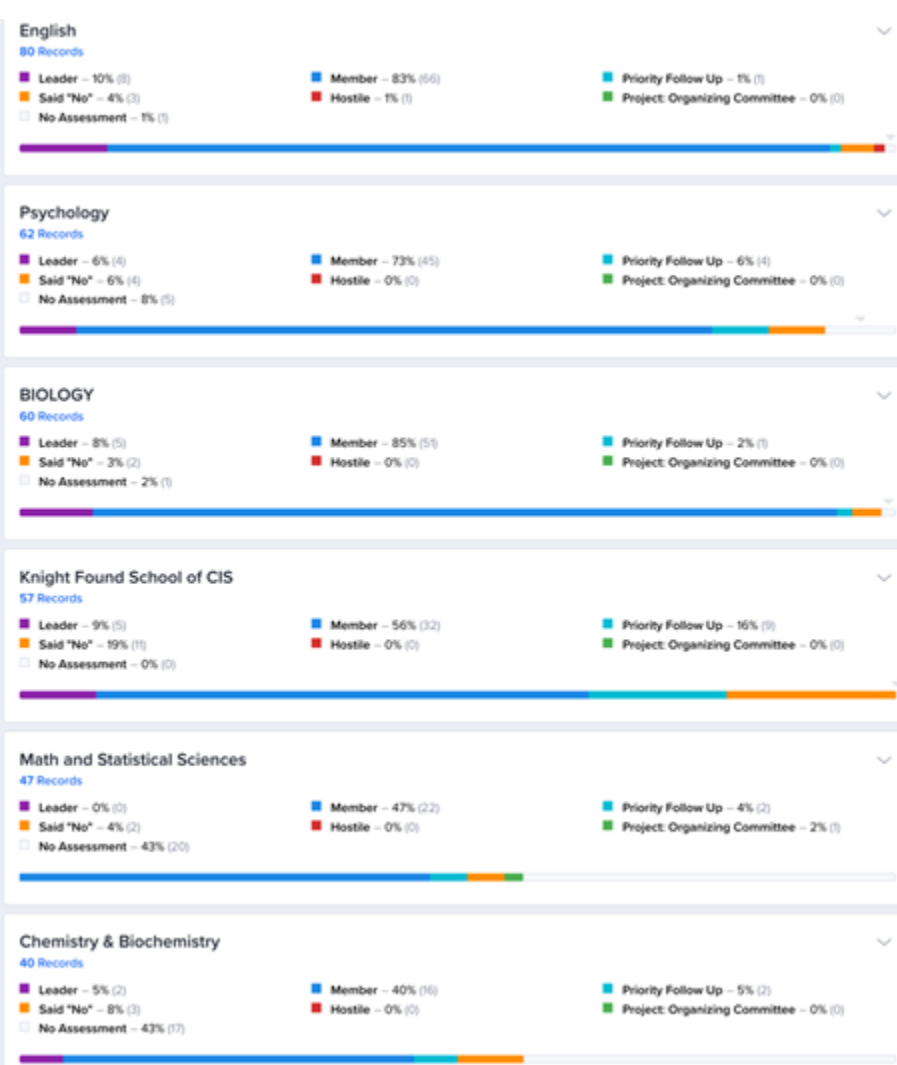
# Internal Objections

- “When I think of stewards, I think of someone coming after me with a crowbar”
- “We have a grievance committee. We don’t need reps.”
- “We’ve tried that and it just doesn’t work in our chapter”



# Getting Started

- Get a database
- Organize according to organization of your workplace (e.g. department, building)
- Use numbering system for each person in-unit
- Aim for 1 rep for every 10 members





# Who makes a good rep?: Activity



# Identifying reps

Events

One-on-ones with known persons

Activists vs Organic Leaders



# Engaging Reps in Membership Work

Teach basics of organizing conversation

Go through the list

Make a plan

Assign deadlines

Follow-up, Follow-up, Follow up!

## Quick Guide for Membership Drive

### STEP 1: Find a way to talk to the non-member

You may show up at their office, call them, or email the non-member asking them to grab a cup of coffee. (You can submit a receipt and your bank account info to be reimbursed for your coffee and their coffee to [marc.weinstein@uff-flu.org](mailto:marc.weinstein@uff-flu.org)).

If you send an email, the email could be someone like this, but we encourage you to customize it:

Subject Line: Let's grab a coffee

Dear []:

How are you? I've recently volunteered to help reach out to people about the attacks on higher education and our union from the state legislature. It's important that we talk to every faculty member. Would you be available to meet soon?

I could do [insert a couple of times in the next week or so].

Let me know what works best for you.

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### STEP 2: During the meeting

You might chat for a while about your jobs, lives outside of work etc.

Then say something like, "So, what are your thoughts on DeSantis' attacks on higher education?"

Listen for a while, asking questions to get them to recognize how bad the situation is, and then say something like, "DeSantis is trying to kill educators' unions in order to minimize resistance to his agenda. Without a union, we will have no way to bargain over wages or terms of conditions of our employment. We can become at-will employees. Proposed legislation will decertify our union if we don't reach 60% density [or have 60% of those in the bargaining unit be members] and we're at less than 50% now. Could you help ensure that the union survives by joining the union today?" [Then ask them to complete the form on our website: <https://www.uff-flu.net/wordpress/join/>] This form enables them to join the union and sign up to directly pay their dues from their bank account in one step.

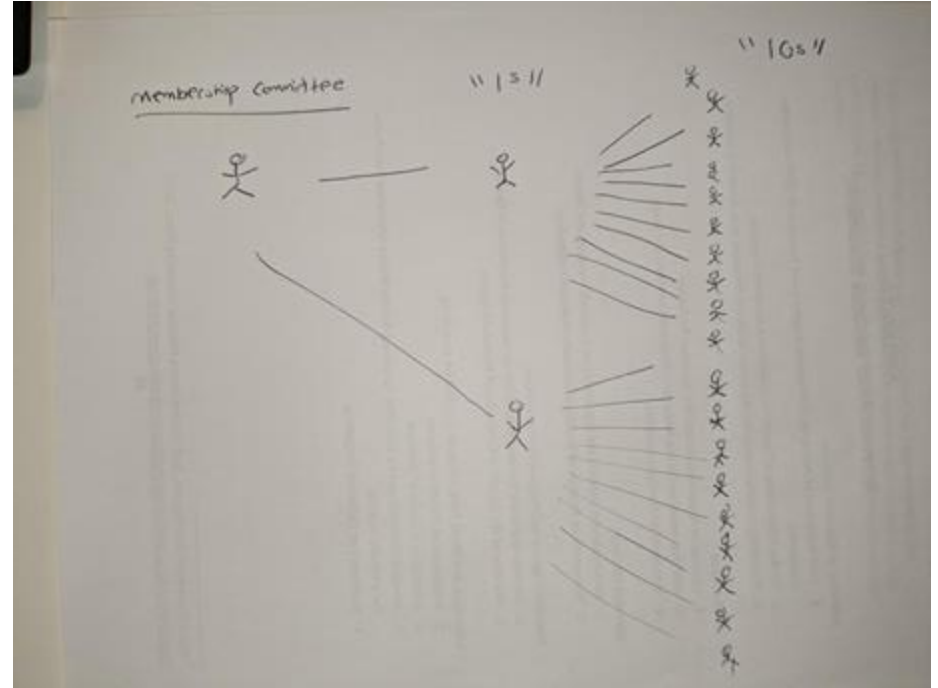
# Membership Committee

At least one committee member for every college

Each committee member works with reps from that college

Meet weekly

Most membership committee members started as reps and moved onto the committee





# Using Rep Systems to Build Power : Successful Cases

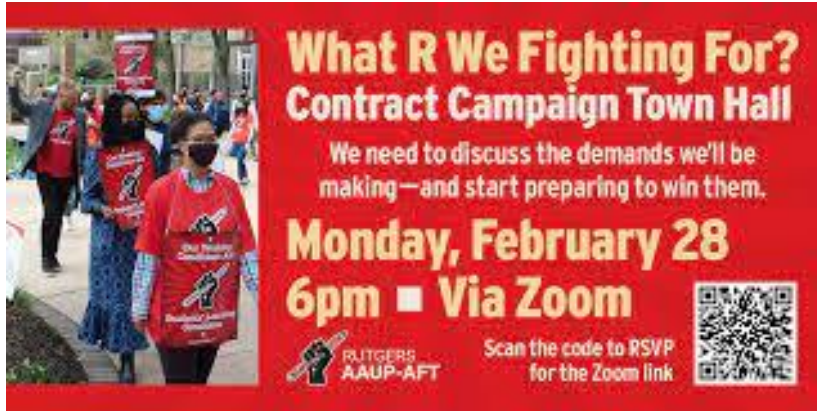


Faculty Senate Resolution on Curriculum



HB 999 Protest

# An Unsuccessful Case: The SEA Change Campaign



AAUP Rutgers Contract Campaign: An inspiration for SEA Change Campaign



# MEETINGS + ENGAGEMENT TASKS

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- 4 Meetings
  - Beginning of Fall Semester (Now!)
    - Laying the Foundation
  - End of September/beginning of October
    - Determining Collective Demands
  - Beginning of Spring Semester
    - Escalating Actions
  - Middle of Spring Semester
    - Escalating Actions
- Membership Committee Meetings

Slide from Sea Change  
Campaign (Fall 2023)

# WHAT DOES BEING A “1”/DEPT REP ENTAIL?

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- Connecting with 10 members around union issues
  - Completing tasks
- Giving union updates in Faculty Meeting (or after Faculty Meetings) where possible
- Attending 4 workshops in the academic year

Slide from Sea Change  
Campaign (Fall 2023)



# LAYING THE FOUNDATION (AUGUST – SEPTEMBER)

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- Identify 10 members for whom you'll serve as the organizer
- Talk to each of these 10 members and do 4 things:
  - Sign them up for e-dues
  - Get their non-FIU email address/updated phone number & preferred way of contact – Let them know you're going to need to be in touch this year
  - Ask them to put UFF-FIU Sticker on office door
  - Let them know we're having a contract campaign & ask them to complete survey about their job
- Make announcement about the union in faculty meeting

Slide from Sea Change  
Campaign (Fall 2023)

# Where we go from here...

- Issue Based Organizing
- Convening Rep Council

