



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
May 6, 2010

Contact: Nat T. Bender, 908-377-0393 (cell)
nbender@aftnj.org

NJIT Graduate and Postdoc Workers Unionize

Research and teaching assistants unite to form United Council of Academics at NJIT

NEWARK...More than 450 graduate and postdoctoral workers at the state's leading technology university have formed a union to advocate for better working conditions and healthcare benefits. Members of the new union work throughout the New Jersey Institute of Technology's (NJIT) departments on a range of topics from planning green cities to strengthening first responses to national emergencies.

"Graduate workers are essential to creating the high quality research and teaching that the university depends on," said Sevin Yildiz of NJIT's Urban Systems Program, an organizer of the new union. "Despite the high cost of living in New Jersey, we cannot afford to be distracted by looking for extra income which is one reason we decided to unionize."

The group selected United Council of Academics at NJIT for its name and affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The next step for the new union is to negotiate a contract with NJIT.

Ali Anvik Cirik, teaching assistant in the Information Systems department joined in the organizing effort because he saw a vast difference in working conditions with a contract as a graduate student overseas. "Without a union we have been lacking clear protections of our rights and suffering with substandard healthcare and other benefits," said Cirik. "My colleagues and I in the United Council of Academics at NJIT are teaching and research assistants and post doc researchers who are important to the intellectual worker community at NJIT and deserve better."

AFT State Federation president William Lipkin said, "On behalf of nearly 30,000 education workers across the state, we are proud to welcome NJIT's new union of graduate and postdoctoral employees. This group decided to unionize to improve their professional standing within NJIT and work in an environment where there is respect for the vital research they perform and classes they teach."

The group submitted a majority card check vote to the Public Employees Relations Commission (PERC), the state commission that regulates public sector worker relations in New Jersey, today to request certification of the unit.

The United Council of Academics at NJIT is the new union representing graduate and post doctoral workers. AFT New Jersey State Federation consists of a higher education division including full-time and part-time faculty and staff at state ten state colleges and universities and six community colleges and a pre-kindergarten through 12 division representing teachers and support personnel in schools throughout the state.

[END]



629 Amboy Ave. | Edison, NJ 08837-3579 | (732)661-9393