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***IFO Equity Caucuses***

***Frequently Asked Questions and Tips***

**What is a caucus?**

Most caucuses start out small informal groups of like-minded members of a union who wish to pursue some common goals. The IFO Equity Caucuses are organized around identity groups: Faculty of Color, LGBTQ+, and Women. These groups are organized and led by *members of the identity groups.* The caucuses are part of the IFO’s desire to create an inclusive and diverse organization, to create a means of communication with identity groups, and to advocate for equity issues on individual campuses and across the system. Ultimately, the overall goal is to empower marginalized faculty and improve working conditions for all faculty.

**How is a caucus different from a union committee?**

IFO and local FA committees are appointed by the governing bodies of the state or local union. Usually, individual faculty members are nominated for these positions and appointed by the governing body to represent campus faculty perspectives on equity issues. Unlike committees, caucuses are not appointed by governing bodies. Rather, anyone in an identity group can be in a caucus and participate in leadership or as an active member of the caucus. The caucuses are a more direct and member-driven form of representation for marginalized faculty on campuses, in the system and within the IFO and FAs.

**Are the caucuses replacing local or state equity committees?**

At the 2018 Delegate Assembly, resolution MS.2018.14 was approved: Faculty Association equity committees be replaced by separate caucuses (Faculty of Color, Feminist Issues/Women Faculty, LGBTQ+ Faculty), and each will have representation in Faculty Association governance and on statewide IFO equity committees.

At the campus level, caucuses will provide representation of faculty in these identity groups, including selecting representatives to campus governing bodies. The statewide IFO committees will continue their work, with each campus caucus will select representatives to the statewide IFO committees.

**Who can belong to a caucus?**

Essentially, anyone who identifies with the group represented by the caucus is a member. For example, if a faculty member self-identifies as a person of color, they are a member of the faculty of color caucus. If a faculty member identifies with more than one group, they are a member of multiple caucuses.

Since the caucuses create a collective voice for identity groups, the caucuses represent all members of the identity group. Members of the group are encouraged to be active in their caucuses to the extent that they are able and in whatever way they can contribute.

**How is a caucus structured?**

Each caucus will determine the structure of the caucus. Some caucuses may create a structure that resembles the union’s structure, with officers, bylaws, etc. Others may be more informal, with an elected steering committee, or just a committee in which everyone participates equally.

**What does a caucus do?**

Caucuses are self-determining bodies. Each caucus will develop their own agenda, issues to address, action plans, etc. The goal for creating change begins with member participation: it is important to have active members, to communicate with all caucus members about what matters most to the members, and to create a plan or strategies for addressing those issues or concerns. Each identity group will develop their own priorities.

**Tips for organizing a caucus agenda, priorities and strategies:**

* Begin by tackling some manageable project, not reshaping the world overnight.
* As new members come on board and their talents are recognized and tapped, the caucus can then afford to become more ambitious.
* Successful caucuses usually start small and build through action and discussion.
* Questions to consider include:
* Where are you going and how will you get there?
* How are your goals related to the concerns of your coworkers? Do you just want new faces in the top positions? Or do you have a plan for changing the way the union works?
* Say you win office, what will make the new officers different from the people they replaced? What will you do differently?
* Do you want to change the union’s orientation toward management?
* Do you want to reorganize the union to make it more democratic? Will you make it easier for the members to vote you out than it was for you, when you were the opposition?
* Where do you plan to begin? Should you run for office or focus on organizing at the workplace?
* What role will members play? Will you educate your coworkers and get them involved in actions?
* How will you help members get hold of the information they need to be in control and hold their leaders accountable?

**Tips for successful caucus building:**

* Create structures, governance and meetings with the overall goal in mind: Caucuses are a means of giving voice to marginalized faculty and creating change.
* Develop and enact values based on diversity, inclusion and equity.
* Build coalitions with other equity caucuses, union leadership and allies.
* Successful caucuses and coalitions value:
* Voluntary and open membership
* Democratic member control
* Member participation
* Autonomy and independence
* Education, training and information
* Cooperation among caucuses
* Concern for community