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LERA Session Title: The Changing Nature of the Professional Employment Relationship

Paper Title: **What Professionals Want: Union and Employer Characteristics in Certification Elections of Professional Workers**

Paper Abstract:

Given the projected growth in professional employment and the changing nature of professional work through bureaucratization and deprofessionalization, professionals are an increasingly strategic target for union organizing efforts. Yet organizing professional workers is – and often has been – considered a challenge for labor leaders. This paper analyzes the effectiveness of tactics and strategies used by unions and employers during organizing drives and the impact of integrating professional issues into the focus of unions' organizing campaigns involving professional workers.

Using matched National Labor Relations Board certification election records from 2011-2012 and data from a national survey that I designed and administered to national and local unions throughout the United States, I test whether the effect of commonly used strategies and tactics on certification election outcomes differ across professional-worker status.

Underlying my research is a rejection of the supposed dichotomy between professionalism and unionization. Recognizing the presence of distinct social identities of professionals and nonprofessionals, I focus on a unique professional identity and set of professional values that affect the relationship between professionals and labor unions. My results indicate that due to key differences in the effect of commonly used tactics on election outcomes across professional/nonprofessional status, unions should tailor their strategy to maximize effectiveness when organizing professionals.