

# Classes at NYU are not safe! For a full transition to remote learning! Link up with students and educators across the city!

IYSSE at NYU  
14 September 2021

*The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) at New York University (NYU) is holding an online public meeting this Saturday, September 18. The meeting will inform students and educators about the science of the pandemic and discuss a political strategy to fight against the reopening of NYU and public schools and colleges across the city. Register here to attend.*

A little over a week after the full reopening of NYU and other colleges in New York City, a growing number of students and faculty are disturbed by the conditions they are facing with in-person instruction at the largest private university in the country amid the latest surge of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One NYU senior described his experience to the IYSSE, “In my math class, in an auditorium that fits 50-60 people, there were 50-60 people in there. There were only four empty spaces in the entire auditorium. Everywhere else it was packed with students, shoulder to shoulder. I sat down and felt someone cough on my neck.”

“I started to have a panic attack and had to leave because it reminded me of my experience contracting COVID. All I could think of was the loved ones I had lost to COVID and how the NYU administration is just so unconcerned about student health and more concerned about profit.” He added, “I don’t think there’s been one student that I’ve spoken to who has been in favor of in-person classes.”

NYU’s decision to herd more than 60,000 students, faculty, staff and workers back into classrooms and onto campus is nothing less than criminal! Amidst an ever-intensifying surge of the highly infectious and deadly Delta variant of COVID-19 and Monday’s reopening of K-12 schools throughout New York City, the largest school district in the country, NYU’s reopening will

contribute to a dramatic rise in infections and deaths in the city and more broadly.

The university administration’s “safe reopening” plan has no grounding in science. It relies entirely on vaccinations and an indoor mask mandate, measures that leading epidemiologists and scientists have stressed are insufficient to stop the spread of the virus. Enforcement of social distancing measures inside and outside of NYU buildings has been abandoned and the mandatory testing program for the vast majority of students and staff has been eliminated. NYU has not established a program for the public to easily track new COVID cases, and the administration has announced to faculty that it will not inform them if students in their class have tested positive.

Conditions in classrooms are optimal for the spread of the virus. Classes are being held at full capacity, with dozens of students sitting close together for lectures, seminars, recitations, and labs that run at least 75 minutes in duration. Conditions outside of the classrooms are not much better. Students who commute to NYU’s campus, the majority of the student population, are faced with packed subways, buses, and city streets, which are Petri dishes for the virus. This also means that anyone who contracts the virus at or outside of NYU’s buildings can spread it to dozens of other students and workers in the community and across the city.

Even before students returned to campus, transmission rates in the neighborhoods in downtown Manhattan, where NYU’s main Washington Square campus is located, were higher than the city-wide and Manhattan 7-day average of new COVID-19 cases. The highly overcrowded neighborhoods are the refuge of countless homeless people, many of whom have just been recently kicked out of hotels by NYC’s Democratic Mayor Bill de Blasio. They are at particular risk of suffering the deadly

repercussions of outbreaks among the NYU student and faculty body.

Opposition to the reopening among students and faculty is growing. But this opposition needs to be based on a scientific understanding of the pandemic and a political orientation to the international working class. At stake are not just the lives of students, staff and faculty at NYU. Students and faculty at NYU must take a stand for the life and rights of the working class as a whole!

The virus does not negotiate. The fight to save lives and end the pandemic requires the implementation of the scientifically-guided strategy of eradication. Experiences in countries such as China and New Zealand and studies by epidemiologists have shown that the virus can be eradicated in a matter of weeks. But this requires far-reaching social and political measures that must be coordinated on a global scale. Mass vaccination and mask mandates must be combined with social distancing, mass testing and contact tracing, and the shutdown of all schools and non-essential businesses. A major campaign of public education on the science of the pandemic must be conducted and enormous financial resources have to be provided to guarantee full income for all workers affected by lockdowns.

Over the past year and a half, the capitalist ruling class and both of its parties — the Democrats and the Republicans — have made it abundantly clear that they will do nothing to end the pandemic.

Following in the tracks of the Trump administration, the Biden administration is now spearheading the reopening of schools and businesses. In New York, the Democratic Party has overseen from the beginning the criminal response of the ruling class to the pandemic, which has resulted in over 54,000 deaths, one of the highest death rates in the country.

The Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), a faction in the Democratic Party, is providing a “left” cover for this homicidal policy. The true class orientation of the DSA was on full display recently when Democratic Representative and DSA member Alexandria Occasio-Cortez, in a revolting publicity stunt, lured students back into school by handing out backpacks to the children of impoverished working class families in the Bronx.

These same social and political forces dominate the NYU administration and determine all of its decisions. Its Board of Trustees is packed with multi-millionaires and billionaires, Wall Street figures, and functionaries of the Democratic Party. The university also maintains close ties to the US military-intelligence apparatus.

In order to carry forward their struggle, students and staff must turn out to teachers, parents, and workers in NYC. We propose the following demands to save lives across the city and put an end to the deadly pandemic:

1. Full transition to remote learning! It will not be safe to reopen schools and colleges until transmission in the community is zero.

2. All students and faculty must be provided with the necessary technical equipment for remote learning. NYU must cover all expenses.

3. Link up the fight at NYU with teachers and parents across the city and the country! Fight for the shutdown of all NYC public schools and colleges!

4. Lives before profit! Fight for the full eradication of COVID-19!

The fight for these demands requires new organizations. The corporatist trade unions have done nothing but betray workers’ struggles over the last four decades. The United Federation of Teachers (UFT) union is fully complicit in the deadly reopening of schools in the city. At NYU, the graduate student union GSOC-UAW, which sold out the graduate student worker struggle last semester, and other unions are offering no opposition to the reopening of campus.

Teachers and autoworkers have already begun establishing independent rank-and-file committees to organize their fight, including the New York Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee. Faculty and students at NYU must join this struggle and establish an independent committee to lead the fight against the reopening.

There is no time to lose! The situation is deadly serious. On Saturday, the IYSSE at NYU is hosting a public online meeting to discuss the science of the pandemic and a political strategy to fight for the safety and lives of students and educators. Register and attend the meeting! Discuss it and share it widely among your friends, students, educators and parents across NYC.



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