

1,600 part-time faculty strike at the New School in New York City

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Work at the New School? We want to hear from you: Fill out the form at the end and tell us what your working conditions are like and what you're striking for.

Friday, November 18, is the deadline given by the Monitor for mailing in ballots for UAW elections to ensure that they are received on time to be counted. For more information on the campaign of Will Lehman, visit WillforUAWPresident.org.

In a powerful boost to the strike of 48,000 academic workers in the University of California (UC) system, over 1,600 part-time faculty at New York City's New School university struck on Wednesday.

The adjunct professors, members of UAW Local 7902, are demanding pay increases, better access to medical coverage, job security and guarantees for academic freedom. The union's contract with the university expired on November 13.

There was a large turnout of strikers and supporters on the picket line at the New School's University Center on 14th Street near Union Square in Lower Manhattan. Hundreds walked the picket line, with students and full-time professors joining the striking part-time faculty.

Workers on the picket line described the abysmal wages, lack of job security and extreme inequality that are driving their struggle.

"The New School needs to do more for part-time faculty," a striking part-time faculty member who has been teaching writing for at least 10 years said. "I do other work such as freelance work. I have to just to survive."

"I was public school teacher for 23 years and have been teaching at the New School for eight years," said Sam Sellers, a part-time teacher in hip-hop culture and music. "Seven percent of their budget is used to pay 87 percent of the faculty. They do not pay us for anything that we do outside the classroom. I work as a DJ and other things to help with my finances."

Julie Anne Brosseau, a third-year student of film, was one of the many students who came to the picket line to show their support. "There are labor struggles all over the country," she said. "The teachers are not being compensated for the work that they do. They have been negotiating for months, and this is the result."

"The teachers are amazing," she added. "They are as dedicated for the students as the full-time teachers. However, the pay gap between them is pretty big."

Clara, a first-year student in photography, denounced the New School for its hypocrisy. "I came here because this is supposed to be a progressive school," she said. "I was lied to. The school head gets a million dollars a year. I think the founders of this place would be very unhappy if they saw what is happening here."

As with the struggle in the UC system, the New School strike expresses the opposition of academic workers to a brutal decline in living standards. Real wages for New School adjunct faculty have declined 18 percent in the last four years.

The union's demands—insufficient given the high cost of living in New York City—call for an immediate 10 percent raise and 5 percent raises in years after that. The university is offering only a 3.5 percent wage increase this year and 2 percent increases in subsequent years. The union is asking to lower employee contributions to health care by 2 percent, and the university is seeking to raise them by 5 percent.

Educators have told the *World Socialist Web Site* of how they work long beyond contracted hours (they are paid only for hours in the classroom) and pay for supplies out of their own pockets to make a first-rate learning experience for their students. One adjunct told the WSW, "A three-credit course has 45 contact hours per semester, but I would say I'm working double or three times as much."

The New School, which markets itself as a progressive

institution, is one of the most unequal universities in one of the most unequal cities in the world. The president of the university, Dwight A. McBride, received over 1 million dollars in compensation. The school's top 15 administrators have incomes that range from over \$350,000 to \$900,000 annually. Part-time faculty live in a city in which the average price of a one-bedroom apartment has now topped \$4,000 a month, and inflation remained at over 6 percent last month.

In line with the casualization of educational labor everywhere in the world, adjunct professors teach nearly 90 percent of the courses at the New School. The fact that the New School intends to make life even more precarious for its faculty in a "restructuring plan" is an open secret.

One tenured professor who supports the strike told the *World Socialist Web Site*: "The current trajectory of hiring more adjuncts and independent contractors will lead to the few remaining full-time faculty being seen as an expensive and inconsequential part of the labor force."

"We've yet to see the details of the university's restructuring plan, but as its goal is to streamline and reduce the cost of 'delivering education,' it won't involve better pay for part-time faculty. The administration continues pushing its 'social justice' branding, but most people see through it."

The contempt of the New School for the health and safety of its staff is evident in its COVID-19 policy. While the New School and the UAW are negotiating over a "pandemic bonus" for adjuncts, the number of infections are rising again in the city. Primary and secondary school teachers are reporting that whole classes are being shut down because of absences due to illness, and the pediatric wards of New York hospitals are full.

Many of the New School's buildings have exceptionally poor ventilation, and the university had a COVID-19 positivity test rate of about 4.8 percent last week. It abandoned mask requirements on October 10, and cases will undoubtedly spike.

These are the same conditions that have forced millions of workers around the world into struggle. The strike at the New School and the strike by 48,000 academic workers in California are part of a powerful resurgence of working class opposition after three years of the pandemic, the growth of inflation and the "war tax" of austerity as the Biden administration spends tens of billions on arming its proxy war in Ukraine against Russia.

The UAW bureaucracy is doing nothing to mobilize other workers in New York City or around the country in

a unified struggle. The massive UAW International apparatus, staffed with hundreds of officials making more than \$100,000 and controlling more than \$1 billion in assets, is doing nothing to inform auto and other manufacturing workers of the struggle of academic workers, let alone mobilize support for them.

UAW Local 7902 has kept isolated its different subunits, which represent graduate workers at the New School as well as adjuncts at New York University (NYU). The NYU adjuncts union settled a contract two weeks ago without strike.

While many of the members of these organizations have given their full support to the striking faculty, and even joined protests and picket lines today, the UAW—according to a well-developed game plan—is working to first isolate the strikes and then to demobilize them.

While many full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty support the strike, the organization that negotiates for them, the AAUP, which is affiliated with the American Federation of Teachers, has not stopped work.

UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman has called for a rank-and-file movement of workers to abolish the apparatus and transfer power to workers on every shop floor and in every workplace. Lehman has called for academic workers in UC and at the New School to establish rank-and-file committees to take the conduct of the struggle in their own hands and unite their strikes with the fight of all workers in the UAW and beyond.

On Wednesday, Lehman tweeted his support for the New School strike, saying, "I call on all autoworkers and academic workers to join their fight."

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