

# No COLA, No Contract! Build rank-and-file strike committees across UC campuses and beyond! For a counteroffensive against the attacks on the working class!

UC Rank-and-File Strike Committee  
1 December 2022

*A group of striking UC academic workers has formed an independent rank-and-file strike committee and issued the following statement. The struggle continues in its third week across the expansive University of California system, the largest institution of higher learning in the world. To join the committee, email [ucstrikerfc@gmail.com](mailto:ucstrikerfc@gmail.com).*

Dear Fellow UC Workers,

Our powerful strike which has united 48,000 graduate and postdoctoral teaching assistants, lecturers, researchers and other academics at the University of California is in danger of being shut down and sold out.

After years of suffering inferior pay, living and working conditions, we are determined to win our demands for the right to a decent life, which means transformative raises, COLA to meet soaring inflation, job security, affordable housing, health care, transportation and child care.

Our struggle is at a critical point, and the rank and file must organize to stop a repeat of the sellout of the 2020 wildcat COLA strike. In the past 48 hours the leadership of Local 5810 announced that it has reached tentative agreements for 11,000 postdoc and academic researchers. The details make clear that these agreements are sellouts, with wage increases only marginally above what the UC initially offered and, most importantly, no COLA provisions.

By trying to push through agreements for just over one-fifth of striking UC workers, the UAW apparatus is attempting to divide us and isolate us, the better to force us to accept contracts that do not meet our demands.

To counter these efforts, we are founding a rank-and-file strike committee. The task of this committee is to formulate the bottom-line demands for any contract we

will accept. It will unify all striking workers against efforts to divide and weaken our strike and reach out to the broadest sections of the working class for a coordinated fight.

In order to win, we cannot allow the strike to remain in the control of the UAW apparatus, which consists of hundreds of executives on the national and regional levels who make over \$100,000 off the dues paid by members. This apparatus has long accepted sweetheart deals with UC, the auto companies and other employers. Over the past two years, it has been engulfed in a massive corruption scandal that has sent top officials to jail for taking bribes from the companies and embezzling union dues.

The UAW apparatus is working behind the scenes with the UC Regents and Democratic Party to end our walkout as it did in 2020. Similarly Biden and Congress are seeking to impose with the help of the rail unions a concessions contract on railroad workers and prevent them from striking. The corporatist bureaucrats at the top of the UAW are no different from their counterparts in the rail unions.

The agreements announced by Local 5810 were preceded by a statement signed by 27 BT members of the UAW Local 2865 and Student Researchers United-UAW bargaining team that declared that we must make concessions and drop COLA demands. It cynically claimed, "Our strike is historic, but our power is not infinite. Even if we could compel the University to accept uncertain year-over-year wage increases, we believe it would come at the expense of a critical increase to our base wage." We reject the claim that we must choose between current wage increases and COLA to assist with

future inflation and costs.

For us, “No COLA, No Contract” are not empty words but the means by which we intend to fight for a living wage that keeps up with wildly growing inflation. We need a substantial rise in base pay and cost-of-living increases! When UAW officials say the university system cannot afford both, they are only echoing the lies of the university administrators.

There is nothing democratic about the handling of our struggle. We were muted at last week’s online caucus sessions when we tried to make our voices heard. Members of the SRU BT have used the pretext of harassment to argue that BT member voting should not be disclosed to the public. Backroom bargaining and Zoom calls ended without caucus.

It is clear we must take this struggle into our own hands. We propose the establishment of a UC Rank-and-File Strike Committee (UCRFSC) at every campus to lead this fight forward. This is what Will Lehman, the socialist autoworker running for UAW president, has been calling for.

One of the first tasks of the UCRFSC is to formulate our own, non-negotiable demands, including wages that ensure no more than 25 percent of our pay is directed toward housing, and COLA that is reflective of market shifts. We also call for the farthest reaching protections for international students, COVID-19 protections, guaranteed campus housing for the entire length of our programs. The UCRFSC also calls for the resources of the UAW to be used for polling the entire membership to determine additional demands that serve our needs, and not what the UAW bureaucrats say our multibillion-dollar employer can afford.

Additionally, we insist that the UAW’s \$800 million strike fund—paid for through workers’ dues—be made available so that our full wages are paid to enable us to weather this strike until our demands are met. We are fighting for all workers and are certain our allies among rank-and-file autoworkers would support us, as we would them, to ensure none of us is starved out on the line.

To win we must know who we are up against. The UC is run by the top echelons of the state’s Democratic Party, with the majority being handpicked by the governor of California.

Both parties insist “there is no money” for public education, housing, living wages, free tuition, universal health care and child care, but they have no problems finding tens of billions to be handed over for war, weaponry and militarism. The California Master Plan,

which built the CSU and UC systems in the 1960s with taxpayer money to guarantee the rights of future generations to attend college, has been turned into a dead letter by the financial elite who run this state.

California is home to 186 billionaires, who live next to millions of working people struggling to live. There is more than enough money, but it is made at our expense. The dropping of all COVID-19 mitigations showed the degree to which human life was and continues to be subordinated to private profit. These officials do not care if we contract COVID-19, get Long COVID, if we eat or if we cannot afford rent.

The Regents and the state officials would prefer nothing more than to keep us contained to the university, starving and tiring ourselves out marching around campus for a paltry strike pay of \$400 a week, while the UAW could pay us our full wages to ensure we can hold out. Various stunts at chancellor’s residences are no substitute for a real fight to mobilize the broadest support from the working class for our demands.

The UC Rank-and-File Strike Committee calls for a turn to dock workers, autoworkers and railroad workers, health care workers, educators and other sections of the working class. That begins here and now with us supporting railroad workers, who are also in a direct fight against the state and the companies. We must reach out to the rank and file and also solidarize ourselves with the thousands of academic workers currently on strike in the UK and Scotland.

We are in no mood to surrender, but a fight requires strategy. We call on our fellow striking workers to build independent rank-and-file strike committees to see this forward.

*To join the committee, email [ucstrikerfc@gmail.com](mailto:ucstrikerfc@gmail.com).*



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

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