

# Expand the California State University strike of 29,000 lecturers, faculty, counselors and coaches! Build rank-and-file committees!

Academic Workers Rank-and-File Committee at SDSU  
21 January 2024

Dear Fellow California State University Workers,

This week 29,000 CSU professors, lecturers, counselors and coaches are beginning a powerful strike to demand significant wage increases and benefits in the face of skyrocketing costs of living and casualization of jobs.

The Academic Workers Rank-and-File Committee at San Diego State University (AWRFC-SDSU) calls for an expansion of this struggle and for rank-and-file control. Faculty, lecturers, counselors and coaches at every CSU location must organize now to fight for an open-ended strike, to stay out until their demands are met, and for an expansion of the strike.

Across the CSU system, many sections of workers desire to struggle against deteriorating working conditions set against the backdrop of rising costs of living and inflation. Those looking for a way forward include 10,000 academic workers as well as 14,500 university employees with the California State University Employees Union (CSUEU) who recently had concession agreements pushed on them.

Meanwhile the strike action by 1,100 skilled trades workers under Teamsters 2010 scheduled to begin Monday was called off late Friday night. Skilled trade workers betrayed by Teamsters 2010 should reject the tentative agreement and expand the strike, not avert it!

All together we comprise 55,000 workers, and naturally we should be fighting together not just for our immediate demands, but uniting against the continued gutting of public education, which is being done in the name of profit. This struggle requires the support of all workers, including academic workers, graduate and undergraduate students, professors, lecturers and all staff.

The expansion of the strike also requires a definitive break with the Democratic Party. It is the political establishment of the entire state of California, led by Democratic Governor Gavin Newsom, and it is fully responsible for the destruction of our living standards.

Our fight is part of a global rebellion and wave of

workers' struggles all over the world against poverty wages and terrible working conditions, which is merging with a powerful anti-war movement against the Israeli genocide in Gaza. In California the attacks on public education and the casualization of labor within academic institutions is spearheaded by the Democratic Party, the same capitalist politicians who funnel billions towards war and claim there is no money for public education.

In order to be victorious, however, workers must form their own independent organizations, rank-and-file committees. Such committees are required now to ensure the ongoing struggle is not betrayed by the California Faculty Association (CFA) union bureaucracy, which hopes that the five-day strike will be enough for workers to "let off steam." The CFA leadership will use the lack of strike pay and the poverty of workers—which the CFA accepts—as justification to end the struggle and will attempt to impose on workers a concession agreement.

The CFA is prepared to accept far below even its most recent wage counter of 12 percent. Furthermore, wages for the 2025 and 2026 academic years have not even been indicated, and there is every reason to believe that their payment, like that of our brothers and sisters sold out by UAW Local 4123 in December 2022, will be dependent on the CSU's budget. This means that nothing beyond 2024 is guaranteed.

Months after the passage of that infamous UAW contract, it is still impossible for academic workers to get by. Now, more than ever, the Academic Workers Rank-and-File Committee continues to call for a unified struggle with all CSU workers—faculty, lecturers, counselors, librarians, along with staff employees who were similarly betrayed by the concessions contract accepted by the CSUEU.

The acceptance of the tentative agreement of a 5 percent annual raise between the UAW Local 4123 bureaucracy and CSU has kept us in precarious positions and struggling to meet the high costs of inflation, housing, food, gas, parking,

tuition and fees. The agreement was touted as a so-called “victory.” However, for most of us who make \$17–18 an hour, this 5 percent put only about \$70 dollars a month into our pockets, which is still poverty for us. We rely on the food banks. The insignificant raise has not prevented many of us from having to skip meals and remaining housing insecure. It was for this reason we, the Academic Workers Rank-and-File Committee at SDSU, campaigned for a NO Vote.

Adding insult to injury, the CSU Board of Trustees multi-year plan to raise tuition 6 percent for the upcoming school year, and by a total of 34 percent by the end of the plan, will mean that this next year nearly half of our raise will be recouped by tuition. Tuition is expected to increase by \$342, from \$5,742 to \$6,084, for the 2024–25 academic year.

Both CFA and Teamsters workers voted by 95 and 94 percent to authorize a strike in November and October, but your strikes have been contained to either one-day strikes or four isolated one-day strikes at only four campuses.

This losing strategy is modeled after the United Auto Workers theatrical “stand-up” strikes organized by the UAW’s bureaucracy under President Shawn Fain. Last fall, the UAW similarly kept the vast majority of the workforce on the job while striking only a few auto plants that were further down the chain of manufacturing. Keeping the majority of workers on the job meant that profits for the auto bosses continued to flow despite the nominal “strike.”

The CFA apparatus is containing the strike to five days at the beginning of the semester in order to straitjacket this fight. But throughout history, workers have needed to stay out until their demands are met. Strike pay is the supposed purpose of union dues, but the CFA claims it does not have strike pay or cannot provide it, despite the monthly dues which come out of your checks. The move to limit the strike to one week has already received immense criticism from the rank and file on social media.

The CFA and its parent organizations, the California Teachers Association (CTA) and National Education Association (NEA), are closely allied and interwoven with the Biden administration, Governor Newsom, and the Democratic Party-controlled state legislature.

Newsom is also a member of the CSU Board of Trustees, which is composed of state officials at the upper echelons of the Democratic Party.

The Democratic Party, to which our union dues are funneled without our approval, is a capitalist party of imperialist war, austerity and genocide. In California in particular it is this party which has been at the forefront of attacks on the public education system, and it is hostile to the working class, youth and students. Such attacks include tuition hikes for the rest of the decade as well as an

inadequate 5 percent increase in funding for 2022 and 2023, with no guarantee for future years.

We are connected to rank-and-file committees in the auto industry where the UAW has given the green light to mass firings taking place, which include the recent mass termination of more than 500 Stellantis workers at auto plants in Metro Detroit and Kokomo, Indiana. Large numbers of layoffs are on the horizon around the globe in the transition to electric vehicles. The UAW bureaucracy has proven it will not only accept the layoffs but work as labor police to try to ensure that the rank and file remain constrained.

Unlike the CFA, UAW and the rest of the trade union apparatus, we outright reject the lie that there is “no money” for student and faculty workers or public education. This was the essential issue of the accepted furlough and previous years of paltry 2 to 3 percent “raises” that have equated to pay cuts against the backdrop of rising costs of living and inflation. Meanwhile, the Biden administration has made the case for a national security package of \$105 billion that includes funding for both the wars in Israel and Ukraine. The imperialist wars abroad aimed at Iran, Russia and ultimately China are to redivide the world in the interest of the United States.

We call on workers to take the struggle into their own hands if they are to ensure their demands are met and expanded. The rank-and-file committees across the CSU system will organize together, share information and coordinate common action, in preparation for wider actions to call for truly transformative working conditions for students, faculty and other workers within the CSU and beyond.



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