

Reject The New School-UAW sellout contract! Resume the strike by academic student workers!

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29 March 2024

Academic student workers at The New School in New York City are voting this week on a tentative agreement cobbled together by the United Auto Workers (UAW) union and the university administration. The decision by the UAW bureaucracy to endorse this pro-university agreement and shut down the strike is a betrayal that must be opposed.

The UAW, operating through its affiliate Student Employees at The New School (SENS) union, kept student workers on the job for over six months without a contract. These more than 500 teaching assistants and fellows, research assistants and associates, course assistants and tutors went out on strike on March 6.

On March 8—only two days later—SENS-UAW announced a “groundbreaking” tentative agreement that had been reached with the university and called off the strike, telling workers to return to work without any vote by the membership or finalized contract language.

There is nothing “historic” or “groundbreaking” about this proposed contract, which includes a no-strike clause and amounts to crumbs offered up by the university. It falls far short of the livable wages, adequate healthcare benefits, access to childcare funds and improved support for international students that student workers have been demanding for over a year.

Last August, the UAW claimed it had secured another “historic” contract at the US-based automakers. But within a matter of weeks, it was revealed the contract paved the way for mass layoffs. More than 8,000 jobs have already been cut since the start of the year in the auto industry, with tens of thousands more on the chopping block in the next few years as the industry moves toward electric vehicle production.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) urges academic student workers at The New School to campaign for a rejection of this rotten contract and fight for the immediate resumption of the strike. This can only be achieved through the formation of an independent rank-and-file strike committee, controlled democratically by academic

student workers, free from the talons of the UAW bureaucracy and mobilizing full- and part-time faculty, staff and broader sections of the working class in New York City.

The union has touted that the tentative agreement, which lasts until August 2026, gives raises between 24 to 31 percent. But this is only due to the miserable pay academic workers earn currently, which is a product of six years of below-inflation raises agreed to by SENS-UAW in the previous contract. Course assistants currently earn only \$17.76/hour, research assistants and associates \$22.08/hour and teaching assistants \$33.12/hour.

Following an initial pay bump serving as an admission of how inadequate the current compensation is, the TA only provides 4 percent raises a year. By 2026, academic student workers will be making, depending on their position, between \$25.13 and \$59.49 per hour. The majority of these workers are capped at 150-160 official work hours per course appointment, which means they will only take in between \$1,884.41 and \$9,518 per course per semester by the end of the contract.

This is far from adequate to provide a livable income in New York City and still does not make up for years of below-inflation raises. A teaching fellow, the highest paid position in the proposed agreement, would have to teach at least six courses per semester to get by. Tutors, who would be earning \$29.20 per hour by the end of the proposed contract, are most likely restricted to 20 work hours per week, like all non-academic student employees at The New School.

SENS-UAW failed to win retroactive wage increases for 2023-2024. Instead, it celebrated a mere \$750 contract signing bonus to bribe its members into ratification.

A \$25,000 annual healthcare fund, with up to 60 percent reimbursement of dependent coverage premiums, is also insufficient for the over 500 academic student workers, even with the tiered healthcare discounts ranging from 50-80 percent. Average healthcare costs for a single person in New York is around \$600 per month.

Healthcare discounts will only be granted to academic student workers working 10 or more hours per week. Weekly work hours are assigned at the discretion of area supervisors, who could lower or raise hours. SENS dropped a proposal that would have ensured all workers access to dental care.

The proposed agreement establishes a paltry legal assistance fund of \$10,000, about the cost of a single deportation case in New York for international students. Despite language about keeping “federal agencies” off campus to prevent detention and deportation, international and immigrant students will remain at the mercy of ICE and NYPD officers with warrants or working under cover.

A university-wide pilot childcare fund of \$25,000 would also be established under the proposed contract. According to a recently published report by the United Way of New York City and the Fund for the City of New York, an adult and two school-age children in New York require \$5,000 every month just to survive in the city.

Overall, the amount of money being spent by The New School is a tiny fraction of the financial resources commanded by the private university. The New School has an endowment and other assets of over \$1.2 billion and vast private equity, real estate and other investments. Its board of trustees includes former and current executives from corporate giants like Avon Products and Duracell, along with various financial firms controlling massive assets.

The fight for better living and working conditions by student workers requires a turn out to the working class. In New York City and beyond, there is tremendous social anger among workers and deep opposition to unprecedented social inequality and exploitation, which is erupting to the surface.

According to the United Way and the Fund for the City of New York, 50 percent of working-age New Yorkers are having serious difficulty covering costs. This is driving millions of workers in transit, education, healthcare, logistics and other critical industries into struggle.

However, this tremendous social force is held back by the pro-company trade union apparatus. Student workers must draw the critical lessons of past struggles on the university campuses. Over the last four years, the UAW bureaucracy has been instrumental in the isolation, betrayal and sellout of countless campus strikes, including at New York University, Columbia University and the University of California .

In 2022, part-time faculty at The New School courageously struck against the university for four weeks before the UAW announced a sellout contract and shut down the strike without a vote or release of the full agreement. UAW Local 7902, which includes part-time faculty at The New School, SENS and adjunct instructors at NYU, refused to unite the struggles of all its members, keeping part-time

faculty completely isolated.

Academic student workers should have no illusions. This betrayal will be repeated unless the leadership of their fight is taken out of the hands of the UAW bureaucracy!

In their battle against the university, student workers are up against The New School administration, the trade union apparatus and the capitalist state. This is a direct fight against the pro-war Democratic Party and the powerful corporate and financial interests for which it speaks.

As the ruling class toboggans towards world war, it faces an unprecedented political crisis which demands that the working class pay for the deepening financial crisis of capitalism and its wars abroad. Within this context, the AFL-CIO trade union bureaucracy is employed as a labor police force to discipline the working class, suppress the class struggle and herd workers and youth back into the deadly arms of the Democratic Party.

A rejection of the Democrats and the union police officers includes a break with all their pseudo-left appendages, including the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA). This fake socialist organization has been behind almost every sellout labor agreement on the university campuses, promoting each pro-university sellout as “historic” and backing the suppression of strikes over the last four years.

In a statement on X/Twitter, Jerry White, Vice Presidential candidate for the Socialist Equality Party in the 2024 US presidential elections, wrote, “I urge The New School academic workers to reject the sellout contract pushed by UAW President Shawn Fain, Region 9A Director and DSA member Brandon Mancilla and the rest of the UAW bureaucracy—who are nothing but Genocide Joe Biden’s campaign frontmen.”

He called on academic student workers to “Unite with transit workers and other workers in the city to fight both parties of war, capitalist exploitation and dictatorship.”

This can only be achieved through the formation of independent rank-and-file committees, part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), democratically controlled by rank-and-file workers and oriented towards the growing movement of the international working class against the attacks on wages, jobs and working conditions. This orientation to the working class must be based on a socialist program in opposition to imperialist war, fascism and capitalist barbarism.



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