

# Strike date announced for New York University contract faculty

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About 950 full-time, non-tenure-track professors at New York University will begin a strike on March 23 if no bargaining agreement has been reached, officials from Contract Faculty United-United Auto Workers (CFU-UAW) announced at a rally Friday.

Negotiations have dragged on for 16 months. The workers' main demands include higher salaries, raises that exceed inflation, academic freedom, job security, housing and protection against artificial intelligence. Officials also announced that the union will file for arbitration over the administration's refusal to negotiate housing benefits, retiree benefits and other issues.

Salary is a major concern for NYU's contract faculty. "There is a gap of, on average, 30 to 35 percent between us and tenure-track faculty, despite the fact that we do more or less the same amount of work," an economics professor told the *World Socialist Web Site*. "We end up seeing that our real wages are going down over the years" due to inflation, he added.

For each course, each student pays about \$8,000, the economics professor continued. "If you teach 100 students a year, that means that the courses that you teach generate revenue of \$800,000 for NYU." But for most contract faculty members, annual salaries range between \$80,000 and \$95,000. "We don't even get 10 percent of the revenue that we generate for NYU through our classes," said the professor.

"We're struggling to make ends meet," said another contract faculty member. "I'm single. I don't have kids, but my colleagues with kids are melting their credit cards paying for childcare, while they provide this top-notch education. They're realizing that it's not idealistic to want to be paid a living wage in New York City." The administration's proposals have not recognized workers' length of service either, he added.

"Housing accounts for a fundamental share of our monthly budget, and [NYU] even refused to bargain on housing," said the economics professor. "They didn't make it a part of the bargaining process for a year and a half. They said they don't have the physical infrastructure for that."

"We have asked for increased benefits in terms of childcare and elder care," said a professor of design. "We are asking for academic freedom to protect what we teach, how we teach it and the materials that we use," she added.

When asked about President Donald Trump's attacks on education, the professor of architectural history replied, "It's a travesty, a complete erosion of academic freedom." He cited the effort to abolish the US Department of Education, as well as many universities' capitulations to Trump. "This past week, NYU has been announcing, of course, their compliance with what they think the administration wants."

The contract faculty's demand for academic freedom is inseparable from their demand for job security. "Everyone, not just universities, is self-censoring," the professor of architectural history continued. "You don't know what you can say and what you might get in trouble for doing."

"Shared governance is also a huge topic because, since the recognition of our union, they've been trying to remove us from a lot of bodies of governance within the university that we've always been an integral part of," said the professor of design.

NYU President Linda Mills has sent several emails to the entire university community "complaining that the union has neglected their call for including a mediator, which we don't want to have," said the economics professor. Mediation results in the imposition of a pro-management contract on workers by a "neutral" third

party who often has connections to the state or federal government.

Mills also has been attempting to scare faculty and students. “She said something like, ‘Faculty not associated with the union is required to keep working,’ which is intimidation of workers who support the unionized workers in their strike decision,” said the economics professor. “She has been really offensive, I must say. But as far as I can see, the only result it produces is to unite more and more people with the struggle for our contract.” He added that students and tenure-track faculty have shown significant support for the contract faculty members.

NYU’s contract faculty must be warned, however, that the UAW apparatus will not lead the fight to meet workers’ needs in one of the most expensive American cities in which to live. Instead, it will do everything possible to sabotage the contract faculty’s struggle and impose terms with which Mills and the NYU administration are comfortable.

In 2024, academic student workers at the New School, who are in the same local as NYU’s contract faculty, launched a strike for higher wages, improved benefits, support for international students and access to a childcare fund. After only three days, the UAW leadership unilaterally ended the strike because it had reached what it called a “groundbreaking” tentative agreement. No vote on whether to end the strike was held, and the full details of the agreement were not released.

The terms of the agreement related to raises, assistance for international students and healthcare were later revealed to be completely inadequate. Moreover, the agreement included a “no strike, no lockout” clause intended to prevent workers from rebelling against their exploitation. The New School administration and the UAW bureaucracy use such terms to isolate and divide workers.

Will Lehman, an auto worker in Macungie, Pennsylvania, is running for president of the UAW on a program of abolishing the union bureaucracy and returning power to workers on the shop floor. Lehman is campaigning to “promote the creation of a network of rank-and-file committees” under workers’ democratic control. These committees, which exclude union bureaucrats and pledge no allegiance to either capitalist party, are the means through which workers

can develop fighting strategies to win their demands.

To win their first agreement, the contract faculty at NYU must form a rank-and-file committee and mobilize the support they have among tenured faculty, students and other workers. This is the strategy through which they can prevent the UAW leadership from isolating and betraying their struggle.



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