

Hundreds of contract faculty at New York University begin strike

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On Monday, around 950 New York University (NYU) full-time contract faculty launched a strike after over a year of stonewalling from the multi-billion-dollar Manhattan university. The faculty are members of the Contract Faculty United-United Auto Workers (CFU-UAW) union.

Contract faculty, highly exploited full-time non-tenure-track educators, are demanding higher salaries, raises that exceed inflation, academic freedom, job security, subsidized housing and protection against artificial intelligence in one of the most expensive cities in the world.

The cost of living in New York City, long unaffordable for workers and their families, is skyrocketing. In 2026, living costs in New York City are approximately 75 percent higher than the national average according to Salary.com, with single adults needing to earn over \$150,000 annually to live comfortably. New York is home to Wall Street and the corporate-financial oligarchy who live like royalty while workers in New York struggle every day to survive even on the outskirts of the city, where most now reside.

Meanwhile, New York City faces a record-high 26 percent poverty rate (2.2 million people), twice the national average. Workers labor at between \$17 and \$25 an hour when a living wage in the city is estimated at well over \$40 per hour.

Expressing the sentiments of millions of workers across the country and internationally, contract faculty are determined to reverse their increasingly dire circumstances. These workers make up around half of the full-time faculty at NYU, doing the bulk of teaching for significantly lower pay and fewer rights and benefits.

But for over 16 months, NYU administration has

insisted on inadequate pay and benefits, poor job security, enforced overwork and denied strong academic freedom protections at the bargaining table. Union officials engaged in a 27-hour bargaining session spanning Sunday and Monday and even granted the university an extra three hours to make a deal, pushing back the strike's start time. Agreements have been reportedly reached on issues including academic freedom, job security and retirement benefits, but not compensation and research funding.

Over 2,000 NYU students and community members have signed an open letter standing with contract faculty. UPS delivery drivers under Teamsters Local 804 have issued a letter stating they will not cross the picket line to deliver packages to NYU.

There is potential for an explosive struggle of workers against the current conditions that exist. On Monday evening, socialist autoworker and candidate for UAW president Will Lehman issued a statement calling for broad support for the NYU academic workers' strike. "As a rank-and-file autoworker and UAW presidential candidate, I fully support your strike," he wrote. "Your fight is not an isolated campus dispute, but part of the developing offensive of the working class against austerity, dictatorship and war."

He continued: "Your strike is also a courageous fight to defend academic freedom and basic democratic rights. NYU has repeatedly disciplined and silenced both faculty and students who speak out against the genocide in Gaza. These attacks are part of a nationwide and bipartisan effort to criminalize opposition to war and bring universities into ever closer alignment with the military and intelligence apparatus, of which NYU has many connections, while gutting research funding. Defending the right to teach, research and protest without censorship or retaliation is

inseparable from the struggle for decent pay and job security.”

“This is why your strike must be understood as part of a common struggle of academic workers—in New York City and beyond, including at University of California (UC)—as well as industrial, logistics and healthcare workers more broadly.”

But Lehman warned that academic workers can place no trust in the UAW bureaucracy to lead their struggle to victory. At Columbia, “the UAW bureaucracy under Region 9A Director Brandon Mancilla—a Democratic Socialist of America (DSA) member installed by UAW President Shawn Fain—has intervened to block this struggle: threatening receivership if student workers did not gut their demands, and making clear that no strike would be allowed by the UAW International Executive Board (IEB) if they insisted on challenging the university’s collaboration with police and intelligence agencies.”

Lehman continues: “Such anti-worker actions by UAW leadership are not isolated incidents, but the norm. A 2024 student worker strike at the New School was shut down by the UAW apparatus after only three days, without a membership vote and without releasing the full contract which proved completely inadequate. UAW California Local 4811 kept 40,000 UC academic workers on the job this month for nearly three weeks after their contract expired, defying the members’ overwhelming strike mandate, and forced through a sellout agreement.

In response, Lehman advocated that workers oppose the bureaucracy through “the creation of a network of rank-and-file committees, democratically controlled by workers themselves.”

“The ruling class, led by the fascist Trump, attacks higher education as part of the drive toward dictatorship and repression at home while waging global imperialist war abroad. The resources stolen by war and corporate profit must be returned to education, healthcare and social needs. This requires a movement of the working class. A movement with political independence from the pro-war, capitalist parties and the union bureaucracies that defend and promote them.”

He concluded by emphasizing, “To NYU contract faculty members on strike today: Your struggle can be won, but only if it is consciously expanded and placed in the hands of the rank-and-file, away from the deadly

grasp of UAW Region 9A. I urge you to form a rank-and-file strike committee and reach out to academic workers at Columbia, the New School and campuses throughout New York City and beyond.”



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