

# New York University faculty strike shut down after UAW announces tentative agreement Wednesday morning

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Early Wednesday, less than 48 hours after nearly 1,000 full-time contract faculty launched a strike at New York University (NYU), the Contract Faculty United—United Auto Workers (CFU-UAW) leadership announced a tentative agreement with the NYU administration and ordered the membership back to work. The few details of the tentative agreement that have been released indicate an attempt to sell out the strike.

The International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE) in New York calls on contract faculty at NYU to reject this tentative agreement, vote “no” and prepare to resume the strike. The 2024 student worker strike at the New School, which the UAW bureaucracy shut down and sold out after only three days, must not be repeated!

For over 16 months, highly exploited full-time non-tenure track faculty at NYU have been demanding higher salaries, raises that exceed inflation, academic freedom, job security, subsidized housing and protection against artificial intelligence. These workers, many experts in their fields, struggle day to day to make ends meet in one of the most expensive cities in the world.

The union leadership announced the agreement around 2:00 a.m. on social media. Brendan Hogan, a philosophy professor and spokesperson for CFU-UAW, said in a statement, “We have won the highest minimum salaries of any unionized full-time, non-tenure track faculty in the country.”

The announcement of an agreement has received the usual bombardment of celebration from Democratic politicians and the UAW bureaucracy, which undoubtedly had a hand in cobbling together the agreement. But the details released so far do not paint such a rosy picture.

For the coming academic year, according to reports, the tentative agreement includes a \$91,000 base salary for the “assistant rank” and \$100,100 for “associate rank” and “full rank” faculty. These faculty will get a minimum raise of \$14,000 by the start of the next academic year with “more substantial” raises for longtime faculty. Starting in 2027, salaries will see annual increases of 3.5 percent. The university has also agreed to a new \$1 million family care benefit fund.

In a city where an individual requires an annual income of close to \$200,000 to live “comfortably” and child care costs between \$26,000 to \$40,000 every year, these paltry raises are already a slap in the face to academic workers.

NYU is a massive, multibillion-dollar business. The university had a consolidated operating budget of roughly \$18.8 billion for Fiscal Year 2025. It is one of New York City’s largest private landowners, holding around 14 million square feet of property with an estimated

value of \$15 billion. NYU’s President, Linda G. Mills, earns over \$1 million per year, down from previous President Andrew Hamilton’s \$3.5 million annual salary.

New York City is a playground for the corporate-financial oligarchy; the rich live like kings and queens while workers struggle every day to survive. The top 1 percent in New York City holds roughly 32 percent of the city’s wealth, while the bottom 90 percent hold only 23.8 percent. Of the city’s 2.2 million residents, 26 percent are impoverished, twice the national average.

Contract faculty at NYU, expressing the sentiments of millions of workers across the city, the United States and internationally, are determined to reverse the unlivable circumstances they confront. Their strike both continues and anticipates a rising tide of class struggle, which includes the strike by 15,000 nurses in New York City earlier this year.

This fighting sentiment is shared by hundreds of thousands of workers in New York City and millions across the country and globe. 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.

Graduate student workers at Columbia University, also organized in the UAW, have voted overwhelmingly to strike. Faculty and students at the New School in Manhattan, many represented by the same UAW Local 7902 that includes NYU faculty, face devastating layoffs and department cuts. More than 620 shipyard workers at Bath Iron Works in Bath, Maine, also in the UAW, walked off the job Monday after overwhelmingly rejecting a contract offered by General Dynamics.

The contract for tens of thousands of New York City transit workers expires in May. Tens of thousands of city workers will likewise enter into contract struggles later this year.

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.”

Lehman continued: “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.”

## Interviews from the picket line

In conversations with WSWs reporters, striking academic workers and their student supporters recognized the great potential of this strike, voicing a determination to fight and even broaden the struggle.

An undergraduate student at NYU, Saisha, told the WSWs, “We want to make sure that the administration knows that students stand with their professors. Faculty and students have always worked together, and we stand with the right for dignified work ... what they’re demanding are basic rights like fair pay and academic freedom that ensure our education as well. Administration cannot divide us. We stand with them, steadfast in their struggle.”

Eugene, a Liberal Studies professor, told reporters, “The main issue is salary. Decompression is what they are calling it when the salary for a first-year hire could be more or close to more than a contract faculty member like me with 23 years. The yearly raises you get in your 3-year or 5-year contract just don’t keep up.”

Compression is a phenomenon that involves new hires receiving higher salaries than longtime staff. Another contract faculty member explained:

So, the majority of us are hired at a set salary floor. But what happens is, every few years, or every handful of years, the floor raises. Meanwhile, those of us who’ve been working here have been earning what are called merit pay increases. At most, they tend to be two and a half percent. And they’re not just raises. They’re below the rate of inflation, and you have to prove that you’ve earned it. It’s a merit increase. Two and a half percent is not very much. So over time, the people who are hired end up making more than the people who have been working already. And so the longer you work here, the more compressed the pay rate becomes.

Eugene continued, “Contract professors work full-time, but we work on 3-year or 5-year contracts. This makes job security a big issue because we don’t have tenure. And the pay has to be enough to live in New York City. This is why pay is the main issue, because many contract faculty have to live and travel in from New Jersey or from upstate New York because housing is so expensive.”

Another faculty member, Jamie, emphasized, “There also has to be compensation sufficient to make it living affordably. Living in New York City is expensive, and we want decent wages.”

Faculty and students responded enthusiastically to WSWs reporters’ call for mobilizing the working class more broadly, specifically for the building of a general strike against the Trump administration and American imperialism.

“It sounds like a great idea,” commented one academic worker. “If Shawn Fain says 2028, that sounds like a long way off. I mean, I am concerned with the economy.”

He continued, “The Board of Trustees are absolutely people who are among the high oligarchy financially. Look at the name on the side of that building right there, Paulson. He’s a Wall Street guy. And yes,

they are tied to the military and the wars that are going on. There are things that affect us personally, like compensation and things like that that we’re talking about with NYU, but there’s a lot of issues that are much bigger than that, right? And academic freedom, the power that workers have in a time where increasingly the oligarchs, as you say, the people in power are getting more and more powerful all the time. We’re very aware that this ties into all that.”

Eugene commented, “What Trump is doing is part of the strike. The right to academic freedom is one of our issues. Corporatization of the universities didn’t start with Trump. Corporatization is not why I became a university professor. It has nothing to do with education.”

Saisha commented, “This is work for all of labor and not just labor here but across the globe. And students stand with contract faculty in this struggle, in organizing labor beyond borders, and we’re here challenging the administration and the billionaire class to ensure that our rights are protected and that our faculty is paid, paid enough wages to run their family and teach in good working conditions.”

She drew a connection to the US-Israeli war against Iran: “The US has forever been at war with different countries, especially in the Global South. Labor organizing has always been precedent setting in individual rights and the rights of the collective. I stand with the people of Iran.”

Kes, an NYU student in the UAW graduate student union, expressed opposition to the isolation of strikes and division of workers by the UAW. He continued, “I think it would be cool if we had collective power. The split of the grad student contract which has about 6 more months to go from the faculty strike is in the university’s best interest. They want us separate. What the [UAW Region 9A] did to the Columbia grad student union, denying them the right to strike if their demands included getting the police off the campus and eliminating surveillance on the campus, is unacceptable because we have the right to strike.”

Another contract faculty member added, “I am not surprised to hear that the UAW has not authorized a strike at Columbia [University] yet. People shouldn’t be fired for their support against genocide and so on.”



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