

The New School lays off 90 faculty and staff

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Last month, The New School in New York City terminated nearly 90 faculty and staff in the latest stage of a sweeping austerity program. At least 19 full-time faculty members and 68 university staff received layoff notices, according to a university document and information from the Lang Faculty Council reviewed by the *New School Free Press*. The laid-off faculty all teach at Eugene Lang College of Liberal Arts and the New School for Social Research (NSSR) and many are tenured.

The layoffs are part of a broader restructuring plan aimed at slashing The New School's total workforce by 20 percent to close a deficit now standing at \$60 million. The administration has already eliminated or "paused" over 23 degree majors and 16 minors, suspended doctoral admissions across nearly all PhD programs for 2026–2027, and dissolved the historic Schools of Public Engagement. Last December, 169 full-time faculty received letters offering buyouts and early retirement and giving them barely two weeks to respond.

Massive opposition to the university administration's austerity policies has been developing for over six months. However, resistance among students, faculty and staff is being diverted behind efforts to pressure The New School administration into reversing course. It is necessary for students, faculty and staff to take an entirely different approach, which requires forming independent rank-and-file committees to prepare a broad, unified struggle against the administration's cuts.

The New School Economics Student Union noted in a statement that many of the terminated faculty members "have been actively participating in ongoing efforts to organize the faculty and who have raised alarm at the erosion of faculty governance norms."

The 68 laid-off staff include 16 members of Teamsters union Local 1205, which represents library and clerical workers at the university. Nelson Nuñez, president of Local 1205, called the layoffs a "significant blow," noting that many employees received notification of the elimination of their positions through an unsigned email. However, Nuñez presented no way of opposing the layoffs other than stating that, "Local 1205 will continue to challenge the decisions

and advocate for staff."

The Economics Student Union identified the sources of the crisis as, "years of financial mismanagement, unsustainable debt burdens, declining enrollment, and strategic choices made at the highest levels of the institution." The deficit is the product of deliberate decisions. For example, a university president, James Trowels, who draws \$1 million annually and lives in a university-owned Greenwich Village townhouse; a university administration that diverts funds from instruction to executive compensation and administrative bloat; a board of trustees that serves the financial elite, not the university community.

However, as the *World Socialist Web Site* has documented, the restructuring is not merely a financial exercise. It is a politically driven assault on The New School's founding identity as a center of progressive ideas and opposition to fascism and militarism. The university administration's creation of a right-wing Center for the American Experience, bowing to the reactionary demands of the Trump White House, reveals the political orientation behind the cuts. The New School is being remade as an institution aligned more directly with the ruling capitalist class's program of war and fascist dictatorship.

These developments are part of a broader effort by university administrations and governments internationally to suffocate intellectual dissent on the campuses and align both scholarship and education with imperialist war and right-wing dictatorship. It is part of the same process as the Trump administration's policies, modelled on the Nazi's *Gleichschaltung*, to bring American higher education under direct state control.

Opposition among part and full-time faculty, teaching assistants, staff and students at The New School cannot be confined to attempts to pressure the university administration in a progressive direction. Students, faculty and staff must take up a fight against the capitalist profit system that lies at the heart of university austerity and all great problems of modern life.

This requires forming new independent organizations of struggle by workers: rank-and-file committees part of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File

Committees (IWA-RFC). The IWA-RFC, comprised of committees democratically controlled by workers themselves, will link up workers across campuses, workplaces, industries and countries in a united struggle against austerity, exploitation, inequality, fascism, war and attacks on democratic rights.

Such a mobilization requires a break with the capitalist political parties and union bureaucracies that have only worked to strangle workers' struggles against austerity and repression. At The New School, the union that ostensibly represents part-time faculty, teaching assistants, and research assistants—the United Auto Workers—has functioned as a transmission belt for the university administration's austerity program. The same is true of the Teamsters union, led by the Trump ally Sean O'Brien.

The Democratic Party, which runs New York City, is a political party of Wall Street and war. It represents the same class interests that lie behind the austerity program at The New School. Rejecting this reactionary organization includes a break with the pseudo-left politicians in and around the Democratic Party. New York Democratic Mayor Zohran Mamdani, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), is presently implementing a policy of austerity in the city and has remained silent on the ongoing university layoffs and restructuring.

In New York, the victory in last week's Democratic congressional primary elections of three Mamdani-endorsed candidates calling themselves "democratic socialists" is an expression of a political radicalization in the United States. However, the DSA and other upper-middle-class "left" groups operate as political sheepdogs for the Democratic Party.

The layoffs at The New School can be only reversed if students, faculty and staff reject these forces tying them down and build rank-and-file committees that unite full-time faculty, part-time adjuncts, graduate workers, staff and students across every division of the university. These committees must appeal directly to workers across New York City—academic workers at Columbia, NYU and CUNY, as well as transit workers, teachers and health care workers—for a united offensive.

Most importantly, students should form a chapter of the International Youth and Students for Social Equality (IYSSE), the youth and student wing of the Socialist Equality Party (SEP), at The New School to ensure the proper political and historical education and mobilization of students, faculty and staff. Only a genuinely socialist political program and perspective can guide the struggle of university workers and educators in a serious, progressive direction.

The IYSSE proposes that faculty, staff and students at The

New School advance the following demands:

- **No layoffs! Reverse all terminations immediately!** The \$60 million deficit must be closed by slashing administrative salaries and executive compensation, not by destroying jobs and academic programs. President Trowels's \$1 million salary and university-owned townhouse must be the first items cut.

- **Open the books!** Students, workers and faculty must conduct an independent, audit of the university's finances. The administration's claims of insolvency are a pretext for political restructuring—the real financial picture must be laid bare.

- **Defend tenure and academic freedom!** The retaliatory firing of Sanjay Reddy and other critics of the administration is an attack on the most basic principles of university life. All politically motivated terminations must be rescinded.

- **No to the two-college model and the Center for the American Experience!** These are instruments of right-wing ideological restructuring. The PhD pause must end. All eliminated majors and minors must be restored.

- **Full wage recovery and equal pay for equal work!** End the tier system that discriminates against part-time faculty and performing arts instructors. All academic workers must receive a living wage with a cost-of-living escalator, employer-paid healthcare, and retirement security.

- **Abolish the no-strike clauses!** These are shackles imposed by the union bureaucracy in past contracts to prevent workers from fighting. Rank-and-file committees must declare them null and void and prepare for strike action.

- **For the international unity of academic workers!** The assault on The New School is part of a global offensive against higher education, from Sheffield to Sydney, Australia to California. Rank-and-file committees must establish direct links with academic workers internationally, building a common struggle against the capitalist assault on education everywhere.

The layoffs at The New School are fundamentally a political attack. They must be met with an independent political response from workers and students. The working class is the only force with the social power to reverse the devastating attacks on education and, more broadly, the turn to war, genocide, repression and fascism by the capitalist class. What has been missing is not the power of workers in struggle, but the political leadership to wield it.



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