

THE GRAD WORKER

Rank & File

Issue Three

of the NYU graduate
union newsletter

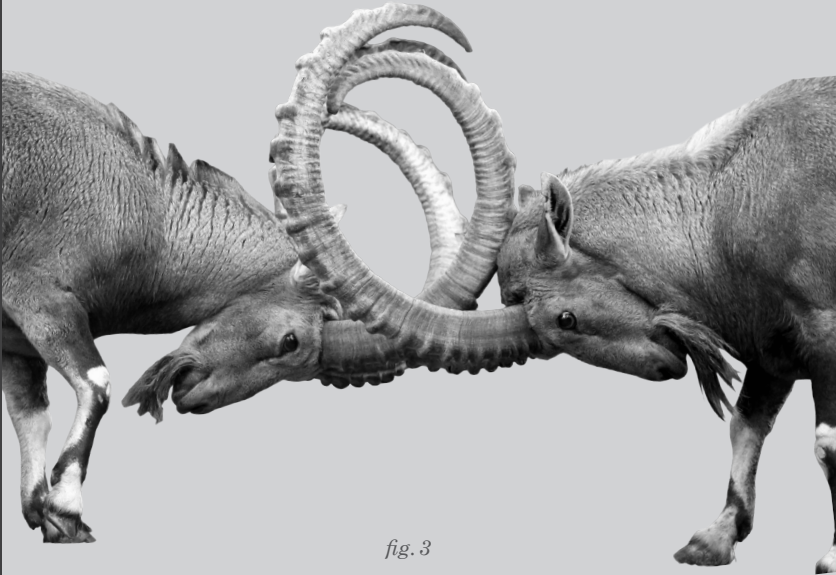


fig. 3

grievance



GSOC Presents FASP's *The Art of the Gouge*

We are pleased to distribute this issue of *The Graduate Worker Rank & File* along with *The Art of the Gouge*, a publication written and produced by NYU's Faculty Against the Sexton Plan (FASP). This group of professors has long been at work researching and contesting the inequities of NYU's governance structures and real estate initiatives. We hold them in high esteem and count them among our close allies. Their latest publication highlights the ways NYU's financial structures exert enormous pressures on graduate and undergraduate students, resulting in record amounts of student debt (and administrative profiteering off student debt). We're distributing this book along with our newsletter because we see our struggles as closely linked. We also want to highlight to you the many efforts on campus to build a better, more equitable NYU.

A Note from FASP

Throughout the years that NYU has been transformed into a global racket—a change directed by NYU's Board, and sparking ever more resistance by the faculty, students, staff and neighbors—NYU's managers have always sought to kill that rising opposition by dividing it.

Thus they've tried repeatedly to hobble GSOC, by attempting to divide its membership against itself, and also by inciting undergraduate resentment, with the propaganda claim that higher pay for graduate workers must mean (even) higher tuition for the undergraduates.

Time and time again, NYU's managers have also worked to split the full-time faculty: most often, by rewarding those who push the Board's agenda, while casting those who question it as "rude," "uncivil," and (worse yet) dishonest—prone to "make up their own facts."

And those in charge have also done their best to turn the contract faculty against their tenured colleagues, pretending to respect their grievances (with no intention of resolving them), and sometimes even offering to empower them (as Pres. Sexton did, reportedly, after the five votes of no confidence in 2012).

These are just a few examples of the strategy that NYU's administration has consistently deployed against the rest of us, instead of working with us, as would happen at a proper university, devoted not to higher profits for a few but to the ever better education of our whole community.

It's in the hope that we can finally beat their strategy—and realize our shared ideal—that FASP is proud to stand with GSOC now, and through the fights to come.

-NYU Faculty Against the Sexton Plan

A Note from Our Undergraduate Allies at SLAM

The Student Labor Action Movement is a student group dedicated to advancing student power and worker rights. NYU's number one priority should be decreasing the financial burden on students, rather than its current priority of real estate development. We demand that NYU redistribute its resources and prioritize its students' needs, not its administrators' greed.

Currently NYU invests its \$100 million annual surplus into NYU 2031 instead of financial aid (which it would boost by 25%). NYU currently suffers from a bloat of administrative compensation through 7-figure salaries, loan forgiveness programs, enormous bonuses, and unparalleled severance packages. President Sexton's \$1.5 million salary alone could pay for full scholarships for 31 students.

SLAM also demands that NYU institute a living wage of \$15 an hour for all student workers. Many undergrad work-study students receive a package that promise up to \$3,000 a year. However, hour limits and poverty wages often make it impossible for them to ever earn the entirety of their work study package. NYU ensures that the money they promised to provide will instead come out of the students' pockets. In doing so, they exploit their most vulnerable students, who are often shackled to thousands of dollars in student debt. SLAM calls for NYU to protect and respect both undergraduate and graduate workers.

-Student Labor Action Movement



Stand with your fellow workers

GSOC needs your help—we must protest this ill-treatment together. Sign our petition demanding better treatment and more respect from our employer: <http://bit.ly/1NujJSW>.

We are also preparing a letter writing campaign to address job losses and a large, collective action that highlights the lowlights of NYU's behaviour across its campuses. Stay tuned for more on the forthcoming NYU Walk of Shame, a candid tour of our university's sordid financial practices and labor violations.

Serve on Local 2110's Joint Council

GSOC is the largest unit in our amalgamated Local, UAW 2110, which represents workers in offices, universities, and cultural institutions across NYC. As dues paying workers of the Local, we are entitled to about 24 seats on their Joint Council (JC), exact numbers to be confirmed once dues start coming in. JC members must be specifically elected as such by the general membership. The JC meets six (6) times a year in Midtown, so the time commitment for this role is pretty small. Serving on the JC is a great way to learn more about the larger labor movement in our city and state, and how graduate workers fit into the big picture.

Updates on Elections

Our first-ever bylaws were ratified by a wide margin in a vote concluding Friday, October 16. We look forward to working together to build a stronger GSOC with the support of this new structure!

We have delayed formal Assembly of Steward and Joint Council elections until the spring so we can focus on contract enforcement and organizing our new union. Please consider joining us as an **interim steward** in the meantime! It's a great no-strings-attached way to see if representing your colleagues is right for you.

If you still want to get involved, but not quite to the same degree, we are also looking for **departmental stewards** to serve as advocates for given departments or cohorts on a casual basis. Anyone can become a departmental steward. Just complete steward training and make yourself available to your colleagues if they ever have a workplace problem.

We particularly need departmental stewards in: Mathematics, Psychology, Chemistry, Creative Writing, Music & Performing Arts Professions, Chemical & Biomolecular Engineering, Computer Science Engineering, Electrical & Computer Engineering, Financial & Risk Engineering, Mechanical Engineering, Technology Management & Innovation

(if your department is not on the list we still welcome your involvement!)



GSOC Speaks Up About NYU' s Outrageous Labor Practices



In the two short months since all the new provisions of our contract took effect, NYU has dropped the ball many times because of the ignorance, recalcitrance, and/or mismanagement of its administrators. Dealing with these shortcomings as a union is a two-fold problem.

First, many of these issues violate our contract and are thus grievable, but by the time we see the grievance process through, the damage has already been done. Perhaps naively, we took it at good faith that the university would be able to efficiently execute our contract, and that the grievance procedure would be an effective tool to correct any missteps. Instead, there have been multiple, still outstanding failures on the part of management to efficiently deliver key material

gains. We have been vocal in our protests both within the grievance procedure and beyond, yet change is frustratingly slow. We have received many apologies and promises of action, but very little results.

Second, NYU departments and managers have taken steps to reduce graduate employment opportunities across campus in troubling ways that often fall outside the purview of our grievance procedure. We condemn these shameful practices of NYU, and pledge ourselves to new tactics to oppose them.

To varying degrees, these problems may or may not violate our contract's legal terms. However, all of them violate its spirit and our sense of decency. Here are the highlights of NYU's shameful behaviour.

Ongoing pay delays

Some workers, grad and undergrad, had to wait ten weeks for their first paycheck, many more waited over a month. When we pressured NYU about this violation of our contract (IV.E), they released a victim-blaming statement and stalled for weeks. We won this grievance, with the university agreeing that it was in the wrong and to pay its workers. However the university has not taken any concrete steps to prevent this issue from recurring. We must be vigilant in future semesters.

GRIEVED & WON

Replacement of grad worker positions with underpaid undergrads

At “administrative units” across campus including Coles and the Law School, jobs once given to grad workers and verbally promised to them again for the fall have been replaced instead by underpaid undergrads. Whether through the “honest mistake” of failing to request extra funds to pay grad workers under the new contract or more nefarious designs of “unit erosion,” NYU has not followed the spirit of our contract, giving us one more reason to support the undergrad Fight for Fifteen efforts. More info at www.nyuslam.wordpress.com

Have you been affected by this kind of job loss? We want to hear about it. Please fill out our job loss survey (tinyurl.com/pxnouof4) or contact us directly.

REQUIRES COLLECTIVE ACTION

Poly Incubator Jobs

As if the challenges for working engineering students weren't bad enough, this same population is being targeted in another way. Highly skilled workers at Poly/Tandon have long been hired as interns for tech firms in the school's Incubator programs. Our contract raised the minimum wage from \$10 to \$15 immediately, so NYU responded by converting these positions into “fellowships” with a lump sum per semester. The problem? These meager stipends work out to less than minimum wage for the 20hrs/week job. This treatment is deplorable, and NYU should be ashamed. We will fight this. Please contact us if this issue affects you.

GRIEVANCE IN PROGRESS

International Students paying OASDI and Medicare taxes

On October 2 we brought to NYU's attention that the IRS Code specifies F-1 and J-1 visa holders as exempt from withholding of OASDI (Social Security) and Medicare taxes. Yet all international students to our knowledge have had these taxes withheld, representing a substantial portion of workers' income. NYU delayed responding to us on this crucial issue for a month and on Nov. 4 told us they were doing everything properly. We have had no response to our request for details on the specific legal loophole they are using to hold more of our members' money than is legal.

GRIEVANCE IN PROGRESS

Ongoing delays with bonus payments and health insurance refunds

We began sending NYU information of people who should've but didn't receive bonuses the day after they went out (already belated on July 26). We provided over 140 names and have only at the end of October received NYU's decisions on under 100 of them. Only approximately 55 of them are approved and the rest will have to be arbitrated. These ongoing delays and poor numbers testify to NYU's incompetence.

NYU has also tied the health insurance subsidy to their Bargaining Unit Employee (BUE) list, which they legally don't have to provide until 30 days into the semester. Because of this NYU didn't adjust student worker bills to reflect the health insurance subsidy (now a refund) until 15 days after the our bills were due, with many still outstanding. Tying union benefits to BUE serves as an inefficient gatekeeper. NYU's data management skills continue to be abysmal, producing major negative effects on workers. If you're a grad worker missing these or any other benefits, get in touch with us immediately.

GRIEVANCE IN PROGRESS

NYU is clearly not respecting the contract or its workers. Join us in voicing outrage at their unacceptable behavior across NYU's many campuses. It's time to walk

**THE NYU WALK OF SHAME
Wednesday, December 2nd,
at 12:30**

A dissident tour of the university. Tell your friends.



Success Stories!

A few short months into this contract, we've also won several important fights. Here are the highlights:

Many grader positions, which would have otherwise been excluded from the union, have been reclassified as course assistants. This gives these workers access to much-needed union benefits such as health insurance and free dental services.

Grad workers in many departments were missing their pre-semester training pay for the days they spent learning how to do their jobs (that's worth \$150/day now!). We have followed up on these cases wherever we've found them, and gotten most people the pay they deserve. We're working hard to finish off the lingering problem cases!

Executive Vice President of Finance and IT, Martin Dorph, sent out an insulting memorandum to the student body regarding pay delays. He offered an apology for NYU's management of the situation, but then went on to argue that most students were at fault for the delays, owing to allegedly late paperwork. We fired back with a statement taking him to task about this lie. His subsequent communications about pay delays have been much more respectful.

Spotlight on GSOC Solidarity Actions

Mutual aid and solidarity make for a stronger union and a better world. We could not have won our contract without the support of multiple groups standing beside us. Today, we lend our support to other struggles and actions across NYU.

Since the last issue, we joined the Coalition to Protect Chinatown & the LES in a march against gentrification. We supported their call to the mayor's office for a rezoning proposal that would prevent astronomical rent hikes and luxury housing in these communities.

We issued a solidarity statement with student protesters in South Africa contesting tuition hikes and government violence. We highlighted the racial inequities in access to education that persist in both our continents, as well as the shared financial scandal of rising university executive compensation.

We also joined CUNY Adjuncts fighting for a better contract and greater job security. These colleagues haven't had a raise in five years, and current contract proposals include rates tantamount to a pay cut. All university instructors, public or private, deserve a living wage.

In collaboration with NYU Law Students for Justice in Palestine, NYU Students for Justice in Palestine, and the NYU Branch of the International Socialist Organization, our members have helped organize a series of teach-ins about labor issues in Palestine.

We participated in a nation-wide day of action

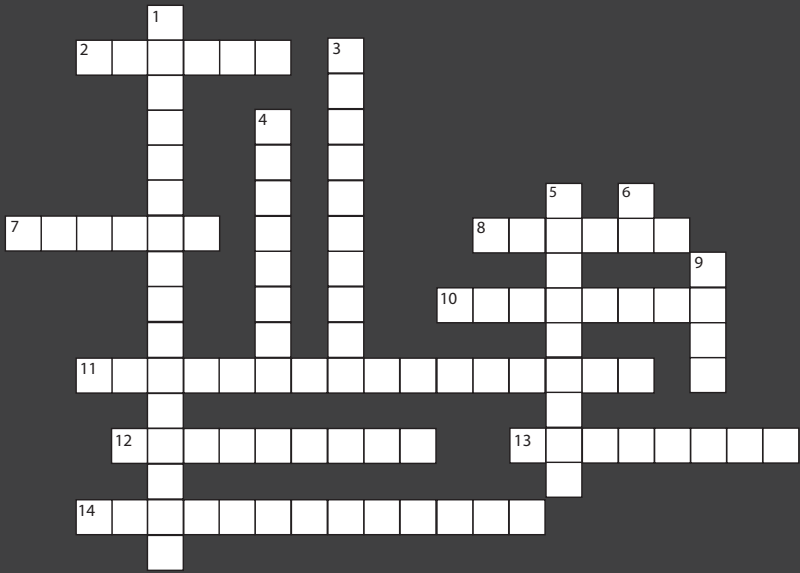
calling for the recognition of graduate workers as workers, entitled to unionization rights like so many other worksites. We were able to negotiate private recognition from NYU, but not every graduate student body has. Columbia and the New School are currently challenging the legal status quo, and we support them in their fight.

We've circulated several petitions in support of labor efforts within NYU. We invite you to join us in calling for better working conditions for library staff at Bobst and adjuncts at the Tandon School of Engineering. As researchers and students at NYU, we all benefit from better supports for our colleagues here in campus.

On November 10th stood with our undergraduate allies SLAM for their Fight for \$15 rally. Bringing the undergrad minimum wage up to the same level as graduate labor foils NYU's attempt to undercut grad students with nonunionized, cheap labor. Moreover, in the context of NYU's outrageous levels of student debt, it's clearly the right thing to do.

Finally, on November 13th we joined students from universities in NYC at a solidarity rally for anti-racist, black student organizing at Yale, Mizzou, and across the country. This follows from our resolution to support #BlackLivesMatter as well as our continued admiration of these activists' work.

Do you have a question? Are you part of an organization with allied interests that could use a hand? Contact the GSOC Political Solidarity Committee: gsocpoliticalsolidarity@gmail.com



ACROSS

DOWN

- 1. NYU patron, anti-semite, child-molester
- 3. The school with 72% Women PhDs and >\$4000 out of pocket annual doctoral fees
- 4. New administrator, same over-blown salary
- 5. NYU program determined to pay less than the legal minimum wage
- 6. Let's be honest here, is NYU HR doing its best?
- 9. Fantastic faculty allies

- 2. The school with 85% women and >\$4000 out of pocket annual doctoral fees
- 7. Site of inspiring anti-racist activism
- 8. It's hard to keep up with all these name changes
- 10. All the best to you in your labor board case!
- 11. Long haunted by gentrification, now with actual skeletons
- 12. Income promised to undergrads, rarely delivered in full
- 13. NYU plans on knocking this building down long before a replacement is built
- 14. No it wasn't late paperwork that delayed our pay, it was...



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