

September AoS / Member Meeting agenda

Tuesday September 20, 4:30pm at Judson

Facilitating: Seana

Notetaking: Anne

Present:

STEWARDS: Colette, Nathan, Patrick, Nate, Anne, Maida, Chris, Nate, Ziad, Alex, Hazem, Seana, Abhinav, Shreenath, Jess, Tim

LOCAL 2110: Patrick and Maida

MEMBERS: many... which I wasn't able to write down because the wifi is bad here.

Executive summary: Stewards and activists need to organize their departments---and others! Check in with Organizing for support and to help map our coverage. The healthcare issues are myriad and awful. We are going to build a big campaign to this end over the next 2-3 months, and we need to be organized. We want to put pressure on NYU executives through public-facing, institution-shaming displays, pointing to the concerns of the most marginalized (new and expecting mothers; late semester-hires at Tandon) and what we have in common (bad rates for health insurance!). Targets and methods are currently unspecified, but we have ideas on the table.

Introductions, agenda review, & announcements (5 min)

Overview & approval of August minutes (5 min)

It passes unanimously

Committee Reports (25 min)

- Unit Reps

Training for new stewards upcoming. Unit Chair elections will come soon (a position for a person to also liaise with the HC), November Assembly of Stewards and Members meeting (the 3rd tuesday, here in Judson Memorial, at 4:30).

Unit Reps met with HR in meeting, which included a discussion about jobs in Tandon given to people through word of mouth rather than Wasserman. However, our contract says that this can't continue---everyone should get an equal opportunity to apply. We are collecting evidence, and it looks pretty definitive. Proctor eligibility for health insurance was also discussed. Some proctors have gotten this before. We expect this to be tied up by next month.

We won an arbitration about the Steinhardt/Silver doctoral advisement fees, saving working students >\$3,000 a year. The arbitrator's write up on the case was very strongly worded. Retroactive payments will be issued and no worker will be charged for this going further. This will help with future interpretation of grievances. (Special clap for Anne. I blushed).

The university is "working on calculations now" for the retroactive refunds. The retroactive payments will be made before the Fall semester charges first. No timeline has yet been given.

The service and registration fee is linked to this one. The university thinks that they are “related” to the 1 credit, which is why they refused to hear a grievance about this... so now that language is coming back to haunt them.

In general, however, October 5th is the date at which bursar bills will be adjusted for workers. Folks should contact us + the bursar on the 6th if anything weird is still on there. It’s fine (and easier) just not to pay the things you think should be waived. The health insurance part is due on the 19th.

- Bylaws

Chris: Over the summer we’ve been working on revisions to our bylaws (which are almost a year old). We’ll be making a recommendation to membership probably next week. They will include: responsibilities for JC delegates, the unit chair; an official caucus policy; and changes to how referenda work. There will be 2 open feedback sessions in the end of this week/start of October. The final version will come out on the 7th. We’ll open the vote on the 7th or 10th and have 5 or 7 days to run the vote online.

- PoliSoli

Ziad: We have most recently been active in a Labor for Black Lives coalition, solidarity with LIU locked out workers, and coming up, the Barnard College 20th anniversary commemoration of a successful strike (next week, 12-2). The Barnard contingent factory is bargaining, so this is a way to send a message to the admin.

- Communications

Tim: We have new members and have a much nicer division of labor now. It’s really just the greatest. We’re starting up another year of the Grad Worker Rank & File with Tim in charge. We’d like to have a meeting next week to brainstorm content, looking to publish the first issue in the start of October. If you have ideas, contact me/Anne! We are also looking for more GSOC newsies to help with distribution.

- Organizing

What is the organizing committee? Folks who coordinate discussion and action. Recently we’ve been organizing/training organizers and activists to go out and visit departments to spread awareness about the union and report on problems that we might not otherwise hear about. We want to see a department squad structure, so that we can mobilize the whole campus, to have a broad base of rank and file members who can be activated/easily can find the information they need if they have a problem. The healthcare campaign is helping us build this structure and it’s a huge priority. Everyone should be an organizer, not just the committee.

- Joint Council

Ziad: Not much happened. A letter was passed to the JC from Barnard and Columbia folks in support of our member definition.

Local 2110 Update (10 min)

Maida: Congratulations again on the arbitration, especially because it’s the first arbitration. It well inclines NYU to resolve things better in the future. Nationally, the union just won a huge decision at the NLRB; Graduate Employees are workers, covered fully by the Labor Relations

Act. This effects GSOC because it gives us additional protections than our contract stipulates (no more disastrous refusals of recognition) and STEM RAs (+ those funded by external grants) are eligible to organize (so might form their own union). It would be a long process, but it's one that we should be talking about (tho maybe only after Columbia's election is done--we expect that will be short). This would be a substantial unit (1000 workers) so we'd have even more collective bargaining power.

The Barnard contingent faculty are getting terrible offers on the bargaining table, and may have to go on strike, so please come out to the celebration events.

The Honeywell workers are locked out in Indiana & New York and have been since May 9. The corporation isn't hurting financially, but they want to gut almost all of its provisions. Local 2110 is going to a rally in Greenpoint tomorrow. The bus leaves at 7:30 am.

Colette asked what's up with the New School grad workers, and why the Columbia decision doesn't apply. Maida couldn't speak to that because they're organizing in another Local, but they Colombia ruling should open the door for them as everyone else. Any delays at this point would be on procedural issues. Additional campaigns that have started (including, in the UAW, Harvard and Boston College).

Healthcare campaign strategy (45 min)

Seana: Here's a brief overview of the myriad disasters that we've experienced.

- One of the most frustrating is that NYU isn't giving health insurance benefits to everyone working a union job. The contract language is quite clear. However, NYU decided that you need to have been hired within particular dates (the first 8 weeks of a semester), which creates a lot of problems, especially if you started in the late spring.
- Proctors aren't always recognized in the bargaining unit
- Some people have weird titles, but union job descriptions
- Stu-Dent is a source of confusion. It's an annual plan, so people who work in the spring but bought it before, NYU is not always granting a refund. Access is generally confusing. Anyone who is working is eligible under our contract, so members should try to make appointments and refuse to pay. Members who know that they're going to work should not sign up for Stu-Dent when they're buying health insurance.
- The healthcare costs rose quite sharply this year.
- Paid leave is hard to get. "A reasonable duration" is guaranteed under the contract, s long as you need more than 5 days, but NYU says that no the maximum is 5 days.
- Reimbursements are inconsistent, late, poorly executed
- Things that should have been subsidies are becoming reimbursements

Vinay: How you're treated really depends on your department. I think that administrators are performing to different standards; we might look to intervene on that level.

Seana: This is part of why this problem is so tricky to map and address. We want to hear how things are in different departments. I anticipate that there will be a lot of people with issues on the 6th.

Colette: How can we tie these individual issues together; to attack the problem at the source by organizing together. What is our target? We can't just rely on the grievance and arbitration procedure?

Alex: I hear a lot of frustration with the administration and how they drag things out. Maybe the Bursar should be pressured to be faster and more public about what it's doing to respond.

Seana: One of NYU's HR's favorite tactics is to claim that they don't know or control what the Bursar is up to.

Nathan: That might be true right now, but what would we need to do as a group in order to change that? To make NYU implement the contract appropriately, with inter-office coordination?

Seana: Information flow between HR and departmental admin is broken.

Member: What about the massive increase in healthcare costs? There's a cascade of conferences because of that. What about raises? Does that exist? Who has received that?

Seana/Shreenath: This is happening in most places, but if anyone is left out they should contact us.

[redacted]

Member: What about the price? Will it keep going up 20%?

Seana: It might. There's no guarantees or explanations. It's CHP.

Anne: NYU takes all our buying power to the table. They aren't doing a good job bargaining for a good deal.

Patrick: One the leave issue, it shouldn't be overstated how bad this issue is. It's clearly reading the contract *wrong*. We've filed for arbitration in one of these cases. The date is not firm, but it's an important case. Why you try to apply for New York State short term disability insurance, NYU says that we're not eligible, and are refusing to participate without providing written records. NY State Law should be on our side, but it's a very vulnerable population and this will keep happening again and again.

Chris: I think one of the reason why the fee grievance succeeded is because it looked at arbitration as complementary to organizing.

Anne: I imagine a public and angry face to this campaign. I want executives to be held accountable. I want them to fear for their jobs, so they will do a better job.

Maida: Denying leave to pregnant women makes them look really bad immediately. The late hire issue makes me suspicious; why are they hired late? Is NYU being really cheap here, cramming work into the end of the semester, motivated because they can get out paying benefits? The department should be held accountable. The cost of healthcare itself is an issue that should be pursued. Anne's FOIL information came in and the UAW used it to draft another FOIL request to the university. This is where the NLRB helps us; if NYU refuses we can file a charge on the Labor Board.

[redacted]

Nathan: I agree with Anne. We've been trying our hardest the past year to go case by case, but it doesn't seem like a winning or easy or quick strategy. If we put pressure on the administrators, we might be able to make more progress. That could be a big event. We don't just want 50

people. We want 200! 500! What do we need to do between now and 2-3 months from now when we launch such a thing? How do we build up pressure?

[discussion redacted]

We're over on time at 6:30 pm!