



# GSOC-UAW LOCAL 2110

## MAKING A BETTER NYU SINCE 1998

The Union for Graduate Employees at New York University

To: Sandi Dubin (Director of Labor Relations), Barbara Cardeli-Arroyo (Assistant Vice President, Employee Relations), Dominic Brewer (Dean of Steinhardt), Ted Magder (Vice Dean for Academic Affairs, NYU Steinhardt), Patricia M. Carey (Associate Dean for Student Affairs, NYU Steinhardt), and members of the Steinhardt Doctoral Affairs Committee.

August 26 2015

To All Concerned,

We, the stewards and members of GSOC UAW Local 2110, are writing to you with sharp concern regarding the ongoing financial inequities experienced by students and student workers at the Steinhardt School and the administration's failure to address them despite promises made at the end of bargaining over our contract.

Although they undertake comparable courses of study, graduate students at Steinhardt face vastly disproportionate financial challenges compared to their colleagues in the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Because of Steinhardt's unique mixture of fellowship and scholarship years, students in their third year and beyond must pay for health insurance, tuition, and fees out of pocket, a situation that GSAS students do not encounter until their sixth or seventh year of study. The stipend for scholarship years at Steinhardt does not adequately compensate for these additional expenses, resulting in paychecks that are doubly diminished by taxes and the university's internal charges. Although recruited on the premise of a full ride package, students in these later years discover a situation of considerable financial precarity due to these hidden fees.

By far the most insulting part of Steinhardt's fee structure is the one-credit advisement courses it requires all graduate students to enroll and pay for each Fall and Spring semester after their real coursework is completed. These advisement courses are courses in name only; they are not part of the academic credit requirement of graduation and in many departments they are not even taught by faculty. Students often must organize and run their own departmental colloquia to meet the requirements of this dummy course---work that students essentially pay the university to perform themselves. Other departments simply charge this fee without offering any kind of instruction. This arrangement is exploitative and disrespectful to both student academics and labor.

Steinhardt refers to these one-credit courses as a means of [maintaining matriculation](#). However, Steinhardt students are also charged a \$470 non-refundable maintenance of matriculation fee every Fall and Spring, in addition to the \$1,538 tuition costs of dummy courses each semester. As a result, **scholarship students at Steinhardt can expect to pay \$4016 in extra costs this year**, not including the additional expense of health insurance. These are fees that students at GSAS do not face, establishing a serious inequity between the schools. We are thus forced to



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ask: Does the administration of NYU at large regard Steinhardt as a second-rate school? On what basis does it charge students twice for matriculation? How, moreover, does it justify these sham courses at all?

Although these fees have long been paid by working and nonworking students alike, with the recognition of GSOC in 2013 it seemed that there would now be a way to negotiate some manner of redress. During bargaining this spring, one of the union's demands was that NYU take action on these inequitable fees. Perhaps simply to avoid a strike, the university did make this commitment. Our contract contains stipulations to waive maintenance of matriculation and related fees. Furthermore, the Steinhardt representative of NYU's bargaining team made a verbal promise, twice in the last night of bargaining, to look into and amend the situation. Characterizing the nature of this demand as more than a question of labor, the university committed to looking beyond our contract for ways to address this inequity, thereby reaching more than just working students with its future reforms.

However, as the bursar's deadline for paying these fees approaches, it appears that the university intends to simply ignore this promise. Today we heard from Sandi Dubin, NYU's Director of Labor Relations, and Barbara Cardeli-Arroyo, Assistant Vice President of Employee Relations, that the extent of the university's action will be to waive only the \$470 fees, and only for doctoral students working in the bargaining unit. This leaves unaddressed the significantly higher costs of the one credit advisement "courses" and the very real structural inequities of the Steinhardt funding packages. This is an unacceptable and insufficient response.

It is the union's position that both the \$470 fees and \$1,538 tuition costs of matriculation can and should be waived as part of Article IV Section F of the contract, at a minimum. Both costs are similarly described by the university as maintenance of matriculation and, experientially to the students that must pay these expenses, **these sham courses are the same as fees**. We intend to grieve this matter to the fullest extent of our ability.

We also expect the university to keep the promise it made during bargaining and seriously address the inequities faced by students in Steinhardt. The current structure of the funding packages is deceptive and exploitative. **Using all its academic and structural tools, the University must make substantial changes to the financial structures at Steinhardt.** As a union, and as a larger body of concerned students, we condemn the University's willingness to break its promises and pledge ourselves to direct action in protest.

With Conviction,

GSOC-UAW-Local 2110 Assembly of Stewards



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