

THE GRAD WORKER

Rank & File

Issue Four

of the NYU graduate
union newsletter



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caucus



Key Terms In The Union Fight

Two weeks ago, NYU finally compiled the first iteration of the Bargaining Unit list, a kind of “keys to the kingdom” for workers like us who need access to benefits. We’ve received lots of questions, so here’s a lexicon to help you get a handle on this weird world of bumbling bureaucracy:

Bargaining unit employee (BUE)

Any grad worker with a union job in a given semester is in the BU and should receive the benefits of our contract. Reasons you might not appear on the first BUE list include: shoddy paper-pushing, especially for recent hires; NYU’s denial that your position falls within the BU; NYU’s inability to make good lists.

BU(E) update

NYU hires workers all semester long. They also miss a bunch the first time around. For these reasons, we demand that NYU update the BU list frequently. If you haven’t yet but should have received benefits, let us know and we’ll try to get you on the next update!

Union card

We are ALL the union, but signing this card lets NYU know. You can also participate fully as a member of GSOC and will have your dues deducted automatically by NYU when you work. Your benefits are *not* contingent on signing a card, but it’s the right thing to do!

Benefits administration

A fancy word for paying our healthcare premiums, making sure we get raises, and disbursing childcare and dependent healthcare money. This is **NYU’s job**, and they’re pretty terrible at it. If you haven’t gotten what you deserve, get in touch and we’ll give them a shout.

Individual healthcare premium reimbursement

A mouthful that simply means: if you don’t already get health insurance with a funding package, NYU must give you 90% discount for Basic coverage when you work in the BU (XVIII.B in our contract).

StuDent

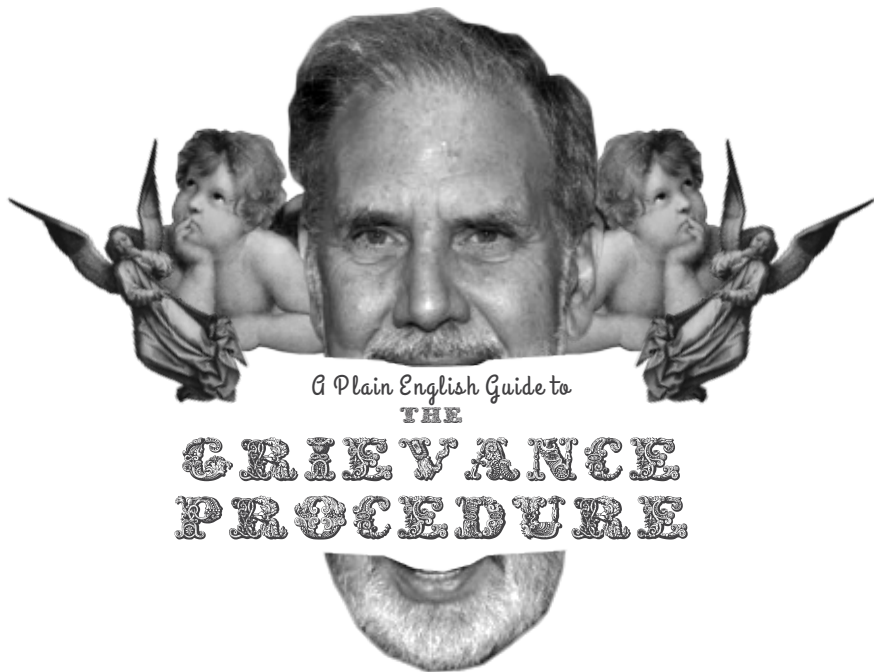
The punny name for basic dental coverage that now comes free to workers, but see opposite for the problems its clunky administration is causing.



HEALTHCARE & THE LONG ROAD AHEAD

Our contract won 90% Basic coverage for workers without health insurance included in their funding packages. But NYU persistently sets up road-blocks to us getting the money that's ours. We detail this and other ongoing problems with grad worker healthcare at NYU.

- Reimbursements should not be a thing. Our contract stipulates a *subsidy* for healthcare that NYU can't figure out how to apply before skewering us with bills they then need to reimburse when they realize we're working, often taking out tax in the reimbursement. **NYU must offer all semester-long appointment letters two weeks BEFORE the semester begins and communicate effectively with workers** about bill deadlines and consequences for nonpayment. **And no taxes out of money that should've been ours to begin with!**
- NYU administers health insurance on a semesterly basis, but StuDent is for the whole year. Until NYU modifies their own dental insurance, spring-only grad workers get half the value as fall-only workers for the same benefit won in our contract. **NYU must grant all workers year-round access to StuDent regardless of semester working.**
- Women's healthcare remains treacherous ground at the Student Health Center, despite clear evidence that it's essential to women's flourishing in higher education. We won a small victory when access to multiple months of birth control was recently made available via the health center, but students still face difficulty negotiating maternity leave and access to services for women. **NYU must demonstrate a commitment to women's health through significant grad worker policy changes.**
- Our colleagues undergoing gender reassignment surgeries have found the NYU student health benefits a nightmare to navigate, costing countless hours to avoid exorbitant fees. **NYU must make available a dedicated trans advocate at the health center and streamline this process.**
- Racism and microaggressions can add up and NYU's record on suicide prevention, particularly for students of color, leaves a lot to be desired. We echo the black and brown coalition's **demands for more diverse mental health professionals**, with experience working with communities of color.



A Plain English Guide to
THE
GRIEVANCE
PROCEDURE

We're pleased to introduce our first column to the Grad Worker Rank & File. NYU has too many ways to screw us over and no "official" recourse but this complicated grievance procedure. Read on for a basic guide to grievances, as NYU seems to see it.

So know your rights and you're sure they've been violated. Maybe it's a missing Letter of Appointment, denial of personal leave, or unreasonable termination—you're sure it's the type of thing NYU promised to cover. Should be pretty easy to reconcile, right? After all, it's right there in the agreement.

In practice, though, it's not so simple. Remember that the university is a grand, antique institution, growing over time a patchwork of Departments and Offices with overlapping sets of responsibilities. Paperwork for any given issue must be shuffled around for a period of time sufficient to justly occupy so many administrators and their inflated salaries. The University is working very hard for you, you know.

Fortunately, the official grievance process is codified in Article XX of your contract. Let's take a look—following is a plain-English translation of the text, along with some tips and tricks for navigating your complaint.

Before getting started: Are you sure your request isn't a little unreasonable? After all, you are a scholar; you don't do this for the money.

 Step 1 

The graduate employee shall discuss the grievance with the appropriate faculty member or administrator [...]. If the grievance is not adjusted satisfactorily to the graduate employee within ten (10) days, the Union may appeal the grievance to Step 2.

Translation: Wait around for ten days while your desperate emails are shuffled from office to office and back again, then proceed to Step 2.

Tips & Tricks: If your issue is related to health care coverage, try some breathing exercises. These will help you (a) through the pain, and (b) when you first view your bill.

 Step 2 

Grievances appealed to Step 2 shall be reduced to writing and sent to the Dean of the appropriate school or his / her designee[...].

Translation: Submit a detailed run-down to your Dean and Department Chair. They have ten days to make enough time in their busy schedule (fund-raising) to tell you in person that nothing can be done, and submit that response in writing. The Office of Labor Relations gets copies of all the written stuff, because they are a relevant and efficacious body and definitely won't lose your documents.

Tips & Tricks: Actually, have you tried yoga and meditation? It's important to center yourself so you don't get so thrown by life's little accidents—you know, missing paychecks, lapsed insurance, stuff like that.

 Step 3 

A grievance not settled in Step 2 may be appealed in writing to the Provost [...] within ten (10) days [...].

Translation: Repeat Step 2 but with those Labor Relations people instead of the Dean.

Tips & Tricks: Missing that StuDent refund? Check out www.cookingonabootstrap.com for healthy recipes you could make even if you were living below the poverty line—and, while you're there, a healthy reminder of how lucky you are. Things could be worse, you know.

If you've made it this far, congratulations! You have advanced to Arbitration. (Cue boss music.) Stay tuned to the Rank & File for more guidance during this exciting ordeal. In the meantime—you can just ask your parents for a loan, no?

As always, please reach out (gsoc@2110uaw.org) if you have a problem that needs fixing and don't want to go at it alone.

We're working on ways on making the grievance process work better for us (or to get around it altogether!). NYU doesn't have to have the last word here!!

ONGOING GRIEVANCES

Missing Healthcare Discount

NYU is terrible at getting working students their subsidies in a timely fashion, and they've flat-out refused to pay them for people hired in the last half of a semester, violating our contract. As a result, we have a huge file of cases to grieve. The good news? About half of our healthcare grievances recently were reported to be resolved by NYU. We are still following up on the remainder, but in the meantime, there's reason to be optimistic that more resolutions are coming.

Status: NYU denied two separate Step 3 grievances. Arbitrations pending.

Maintenance of Matriculation Fees Not Waived

In Steinhardt and the professional schools, NYU charges thousands of dollars in fees for non-existent courses, despite promising to stop this exploitative practice on the final night of bargaining.

Status: Arbitration on April 12

StuDent for Spring Workers

NYU is not issuing refunds to people who paid for StuDent (dental) last semester, but are working this semester and thus entitled to a refund. All schools are potentially affected.

Status: We will file soon. Contact us if you're affected!

Improper Dues Deductions

We've had one report so far of improper dues deductions — if you see a dues deduction in your paycheck that should not be there, please let us know.

Misclassification of Workers as Graders/Tutors

NYU is avoiding paying workers benefits by incorrectly classifying GAs and Course Assistants as graders and tutors, which aren't titles covered by the contract. This is happening in Wagner and at Tandon right now, especially the FRE department.

Status: We're waiting to hear from NYU after a Step 3 grievance.

Tandon Incubator Grievance

NYU refuses to recognize workers at the incubators as members of the bargaining unit. They are getting paid with fellowships at or well below minimum wage.

Status: NYU denied Step 3 grievance. Arbitration pending.

Cancelled Classes

NYU has been cancelling classes for adjunct workers without giving them comparable work as the contract stipulates. This problem may be ongoing, so be on the lookout.

Status: A few individual arbitrations are coming up. NYU refuses to group these cases together.

Elections

Elections will take place April 18–22 (exact times and locations TBD). These will include elections for open steward seats in all four districts.

GSAS Humanities and Social Sciences — at least one (1) open seat

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Steinhardt, Tisch, and the Professional Schools — six (6) open seats

Tandon — nine (9) open seats

Caucus Updates

ACADEMIC WORKERS FOR A DEMOCRATIC UNION (AWDU)

We are NYU-AWDU, part of a nationwide reform caucus of the UAW. We embrace an intersectional, social justice politics of the Left and are committed to supporting struggles at NYU, across NYC, and abroad, including Black Lives Matter, the Fight for \$15, and student movements in South Africa and India. We advocate for changes to the UAW's undemocratic and clientalist status quo through constitutional reform, rank-and-file participatory democracy, and financial transparency. For GSOC, we envision a strong union that leverages mass participation and the power of our labor to fight back against our corporate employer through creative, disruptive, and direct action (and not only the broken grievance procedure). Consider running for a steward or Joint Council seat on our slate! Get in touch at nyuawdu@gmail.com.

GSOC FOR BDS

Hundreds of graduate student workers at NYU signed an open letter calling on NYU and the UAW to heed calls of Palestinian civil society, including all major Palestinian trade unions, to boycott, divest, and sanction the state of Israel until it respects the rights of Palestinian refugees, ends the military occupation, dismantles the wall, and recognizes the rights of Palestinian citizens to full equality. As a union, we must support Palestinians in their struggle for justice against the Israeli occupation that violates their human and civil rights, and systematically exploits their labor. We will submit our referendum petition at the April Assembly of Stewards meeting. Vote YES on BDS this April to stand up for freedom, equality, and justice for all. <http://laborforpalestine.net/category/gsoc-uaw-2110/>

We will also hold elections for at least eight (8) seats at the Local 2110 Joint Council, a six-times-a-year leadership commitment with free dinners and great company from other shops (including media workers, art curators, and university clerical workers) in our Local. If you're interested, get in touch!

LOTS of politics going on this semester. If you want to get in on it by organizing a caucus, read our Caucus and Member List Policy and email a steward! So far, we have four registered caucuses, whose updates you can check out below and at our website.

Beers & Cheers for Union Peers

You're invited to our get together for grad union organizers across NYC. We'll swap shop stories, talk tactics, and construct cross-union solidarity between our university organizing drives. Feel free to invite your roommate from Columbia/bff from The New School.

March 24th, 7-9pm,
Peculiar Pub, 145 Bleecker St.

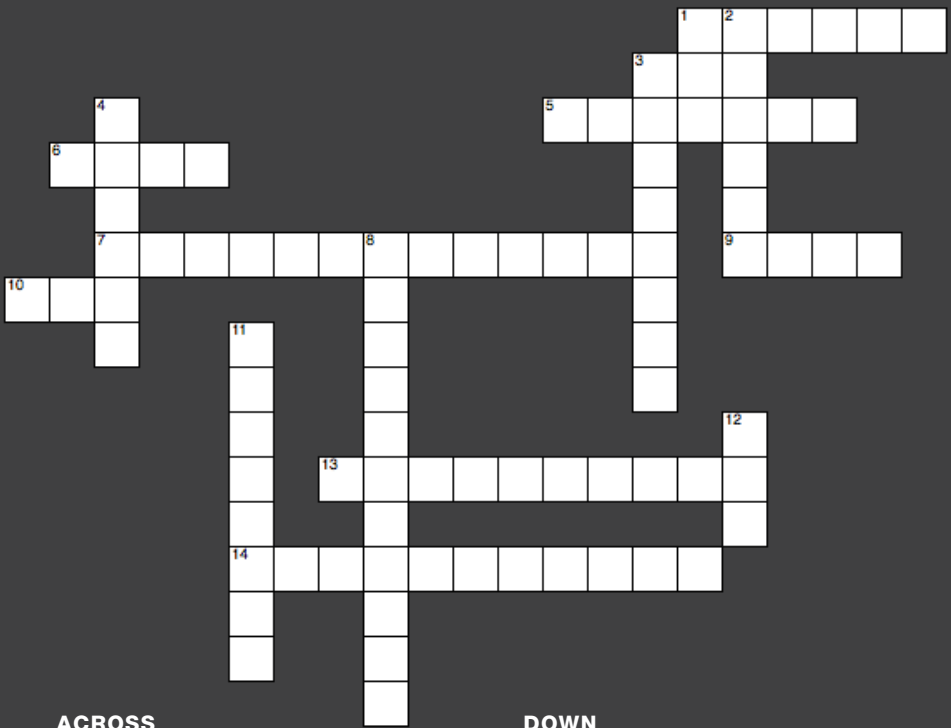
GSOC FOR OPEN DIALOGUE ON ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

We are a group of GSOC members who oppose the call for our union to endorse the global Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS). BDS violates academic freedom, shuts down dialogue, undermines co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians, and empowers radical voices on all sides. We are deeply concerned about human rights issues in Israel and Palestine and strongly support constructive dialogue towards a long-term solution. BDS systematically undermines such dialogue, in its attempt to silence all voices that don't support its destructive platform. BDS will not bring peace. By voting NO to BDS, we say YES to peace and open dialogue.

Visit our website at www.OpenDialogueNYU.com, Facebook page, or reach out by email to learn more, ask questions, or join our campaign.

GSOC FOR BERNIE

We plan to organize for Bernie on the NYU campus, raising awareness about the Bernie Sanders campaign both among GSOC members and the general graduate and undergraduate student body. We are hoping to organize a teach-in before the New York State primary and we are also working on doing some "barnstorms," events where we educate other NYU students about volunteer-working for the Bernie campaign.



ACROSS

DOWN

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| <p>1 Adjuncts are organizing at _____!</p> <p>5 NYU's terrible 3rd party tax software; also, melting b/c of climate change</p> <p>6 We pay 2% to keep the Union running</p> <p>7 Tax problems are plaguing _____ students; NYU refuses to send email clarifying</p> <p>9 Great undergrad allies</p> <p>10 Jagweed restauranteur playing hardball at Bröd, Hugo _____</p> <p>13 Our contract give us recourse to this slow system to fix NYU's problems</p> <p>14 GSOC supports student movements in this country</p> | <p>2 The not-so-friendly labor brief filed by several Ivy Leagues against grad worker unionizing</p> <p>3 Newest NYU President (read: CEO). Also a hit Broadway musical</p> <p>4 NYU is late each semester with this</p> <p>8 When we have to get lawyers involved to put NYU in its place</p> <p>11 New structure for political action within GSOC</p> <p>12 Our sibling union at CUNY fighting for a contract</p> |
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