



GSOC-UAW LOCAL 2110

MAKING A BETTER NYU SINCE 1998

The Union for Graduate Employees at New York University

GSOC supports GWC in their right to bargain for a fair contract!

Reject the pre-contract no-strike clause!

The NYU Graduate Student Organizing Committee is inspired by the Graduate Workers of Columbia, our fellow members in Local 2110 of the United Auto Workers, in their fight for the right to a fair contract. Yesterday GWC took an important step in this direction with the Columbia administration's proposal for a framework to bargain. It is a step not only for your campaign but for the entire academic sector, which is experiencing numerous organizing drives around the country, even in the midst of a hostile National Labor Relations Board.

We stand with you as you negotiate this framework, and we believe that you can and must expand its parameters. In particular, we urge that you reject the pledge to not strike until April 6, 2020, and we support our fellow union members who are campaigning against this pledge. This support is based on our negotiations for a contract that now covers over 2000 graduate workers.

We believe this no-strike pledge will undermine the power of GWC and set a negative precedent for graduate unions, for the following reasons:

- *A strong and plausible strike threat is the path to a strong contract; without the power of a strike, GWC will have significantly less leverage to bargain a strong contract.* It has been said that, in your case, public relations is your main leverage. It is certainly an aspect of your leverage, but we maintain that that is contingent on a strike threat. Indeed, underlying Columbia's concern for bad press is the strike action you took last semester and that you threaten to take this semester. For years Columbia did not budge, even as it effectively collaborated with a Trump NLRB in what should have been a scandal for a liberal elite university in a liberal city. It is because of your strike threat, and the image of disorder it creates, that Columbia is responding to a public relations threat.
- *This clause effectively strips your union of its strike threat.* The language in the proposed framework is standard and unambiguously clear and enforceable no-strike language. Under it, a strike before April 6, 2020, will be an unprotected action under the National Labor Relations Act. The employer can discipline or terminate workers and can sue the union for the costs of the strike incurred by the employer, a fact of which Columbia, as an employer familiar with unions and advised by anti-union law firms, is surely aware. From their perspective, proposing this framework, and getting the union to agree to it, will further discourage workers to strike.
- *Your strike threat most likely will erode if you wait to leverage it after April 6, 2020.* As we experienced in our negotiations, an escalation strategy in a contract campaign presumes a strike threat. Without such a threat, you cannot escalate, and you cannot create a plan for mobilizing workers. In the meantime, the administration will continue pressuring you to settle,

as it is in their interest to do so. That interest will outweigh whatever hypothetical capacity remains if and when you do not settle by April 6, 2020.

- *There is little evidence that a strong contract has been won without a strong strike threat.* The only negotiation to date that has included such a pledge was at Georgetown, and this was for the right of graduate workers merely to bargain; a contract has yet to be negotiated there and thus is not relevant to the task here, which is to bargain a strong contract.

Further, we believe GWC has the capacity to reject this clause, for the following reasons:

- *By insisting on this clause, the Columbia administration reveals that they are threatened by the real possibility of a strike that would include not only graduate workers but also postdoctoral and clerical workers.* They are calling on a no-strike pledge precisely because they realize that a strike is the most powerful weapon available to workers. A strike has great potential to disrupt the functioning of the university, and it is that disruption that the administration desperately wants to avoid. At the very least, it is a test for the administration to gauge you union's capacity and willingness to fight back.
- *Our experience in GSOC-UAW Local 2110 has taught us that union democracy is a powerful weapon in the fight for fair and strong contracts.* Voting down this agreement is an opportunity to exercise democratic practice *and* strengthen the bargaining power of the union. A number of our fellow workers at GWC have raised concerns about the process of how this agreement was negotiated and the lack of membership involvement in the process. Voting on this agreement must be more than a rubber stamp approval, but a chance for substantive deliberation and debate among the membership. We hope our experience and solidarity support this process in GWC.

As NYU graduate workers, our own contract expires in 2020. We look forward to entering into bargaining soon. We fear that agreeing to this framework for recognition will erode the bargaining power not only for GWC, but for all graduate workers. The struggle for graduate worker unions will continue for newly recognized and still unrecognized unions and the vote on this agreement will have implications for hundreds of thousands of graduate workers. We are in this fight together, as Local 2110 members, as graduate workers organizing with other workers in the city to support you when you strike, as comrades in the struggle for a better workplace and a better life.

Yours in Solidarity,
GSOC-UAW Local 2110