

US - NEW YORK - NYU Graduate Students Now on Strike For More Than 100 Days: Update From the Strikers (nyuinc.org)

Sunday 19 February 2006, posted by [John Malone](#)

Hello GSOC supporters!

Today, Thursday, February 16, is the 100th day of our strike. We will remain on strike until the NYU administration agrees to negotiate with our union in good faith for a second contract.

Here are some of the things that we have been doing this semester, in order to convince President Sexton, the NYU Board of Trustees and the administration to bargain with our union.

- We have been picketing and leafleting President Sexton and the NYU Trustees wherever they go. Sexton has encountered GSOC supporters in Poughkeepsie, NY and as far away as Miami, FL. We've also been leafleting on a regular basis outside the office of NYU Board of Trustees Chair Martin Lipton, and at several high-profile events where trustees were speaking. Additionally, several weeks of 6:00 am picketing on West 3rd Street resulted in refusals by city workers to collect NYU's garbage, and we've also been picketing in front of NYU buildings, where unionized delivery truck drivers have been refusing to cross the picket line.

We have also cut back regular picketing hours because of the cold weather and because many strikers have taken off-campus jobs this semester to prepare for anticipated loss of pay. In general, there is picketing 10 am - 2 pm at Bobst Mondays through Fridays. We will update you with changes to the schedule, and we encourage you to join us on the line, or to stop by if you have any questions or suggestions.

- We have been working with city and state officials to put pressure on NYU to negotiate. At our labor rally in front of Bobst on January 26th, attended by about 1000 people, City Council Speaker Christine Quinn told us that we have the full resources of the City Council until we win a contract. Quinn reminded the crowd that she helped GSOC win our first contract, and that she was also instrumental in settling the five-month strike by our fellow UAW Local 2110 members at MoMA in 2000. She pledged to do all she can to help us now from her new position of increased power.

This past week, striking GSOC members joined a contingent of UAW members from throughout the state, gathered in Albany to lobby state senators and assembly members about labor issues. We met with dozens of elected officials and updated them on our strike. Most, including several Republicans, pledged support and agreed to pressure NYU to negotiate. Several officials from the city made plans to visit our picket line, and many agreed not to cross the NYU picket line until we have a second contract.

Our fellow UAW members were incredibly supportive of our strike, often making it the top issue for discussion in meetings with officials, and insisting that NYU's refusal to bargain with us is an affront to the entire UAW and broader labor movement.

- We have earned the support of prominent religious leaders. Last Tuesday a contingent of religious leaders met with President Sexton to urge him to negotiate with our union. The delegation included the Rev. Mark Hallinan, Society of Jesus, Imam Samer Alraey, Rev. David Dyson, Rabbi Michael Feinberg, Rev. Earl Kooperkamp, Avram Lyon of the Jewish Labor Committee and the Rev. Donna Schaper of Judson Memorial Church. After their meeting, on February 13, Rev. Hallinan sent Sexton a follow-up letter on behalf of the contingent who met with him, stating:

"The plight of graduate employees at NYU is not going to just go away. Whether it is a new upsurge of activism or a new Labor Board down the road, the matter must be resolved in some equitable manner. It is here that we are offering our modest offices to facilitate a re-opening of dialogue. We propose that you and the University leadership meet with those leaders of the labor movement whom you indicated to us that you trust, namely John Sweeney [president, national AFL-CIO], Brian McLaughlin [president, the NYC Central Labor Council] and Denis Hughes [president, New York State AFL-CIO]. We would be willing to be present at such a meeting."

For the full text as well as an open letter to Sexton signed by over 100 clergy, go to: http://www.2110uaw.org/gsoc/religious_leaders.htm

President Sexton and the NYU administration have continued their union-busting campaign, relying on familiar tactics used by corporations and other employers trying to prevent their workers from having collective bargaining rights. Here are a couple of their primary tactics:

- They have continued to increase threatened penalties against strikers.

This semester 8 strikers have been threatened with loss of pay and ineligibility to teach for two semesters. These threatened penalties are far more severe than lost pay for struck work - a penalty all strikers are prepared to face. These penalties amount to a one-year blacklist against strikers, and withholding of pay for prospective striking. Such penalties are not only unheard of for university strikes, but they are also unprecedented in corporate America. Such penalties also strip academic departments and faculty of the right to hire whoever they think is best for GA positions next year, and they would be illegal if the Bush-appointed federal labor board had not stripped us of our rights as workers.

- They have also tried to replace our union with a "company union" that would be controlled by the administration. The proposal submitted by the Graduate Affairs Committee (GAC) last December grants us no legal protection, would not be able to secure our rights as employees, and would not provide any of the professional staff, leadership, lawyers and other resources, clout and power of our union.

Last week the Graduate Student Council held a town hall meeting to discuss grad issues. Over a hundred people attended, and the crowd was almost unanimous in demanding that the administration settle the strike by agreeing to bargain with our union. Dozens of GSOC members spoke in favor of our union and condemned the administration's refusal to bargain, the

increased penalties against strikers, the administration's anti-union rhetoric and its attempt to circumvent real collective bargaining by setting up a powerless internal association as laid out in the GAC proposal.

During the course of the meeting, several members spoke about the importance of having a real union and the bad faith of the administration in presenting the GAC proposal as a replacement for a union contract. Members pointed to the level of resources and clout our union provides, its experience with university organizing, and most important, the necessity of having representation that is independent of our employer.

How you can help

You can stay informed by visiting our website www.2110uaw.org/gsoc and also www.nyuinc.org.

GUS (Grad-Undergrad Solidarity) continues to meet weekly at 7 pm Wednesday nights in the Kimmel Center. See future updates or email arc280 at nyu.edu for room numbers, as they change weekly.

We also encourage students to ask your professor to invite a striker and/or a GUS representative to speak to your class about the strike. Request a class visit at: gsoc@2110uaw.org

<http://nyuinc.org/2006/02/17/101-days-of-striking>