



CPW-UAW 4100

THE UNION FOR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS AT
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Better Working Conditions For Better Research

Columbia Postdoctoral Workers - UAW 4100

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1,600 researchers at Columbia University voted 98% in favor of authorizing a strike; November 1st strike deadline looms

Bargaining teams scramble to reach an agreement and avoid a stoppage that could halt hundreds of research teams and put millions of dollars on the line in public and private funding.

MORNINGSIDE and WASHINGTON HEIGHTS, NEW YORK, NY – 1,600 members of Columbia Postdoctoral Workers (CPW-UAW 4100) will go on strike on November 1st unless Columbia puts forth a reasonable and comprehensive economic package and engages in good faith bargaining.

Postdoctoral and associate researchers at Columbia conduct groundbreaking, award-winning research in various fields: from [curing cancer](#) or [neurodegenerative diseases](#) to tackling the most pressing [environmental threats](#) or [public health crises](#). To do so, they bring millions of dollars through research grants awarded from public and private agencies.

The union has been in over twenty five bargaining sessions with the university, but no meaningful progress has been made on the top priority contract areas: **a living wage, a stipend to alleviate the current housing crisis and enhanced support for parents.**

The decision to give Columbia University an ultimatum comes after an overwhelming majority of members voted in favor of authorizing a strike in August, with 98% of YES vote. In September, the union filed an Unfair Labor Practice on the grounds of bad faith bargaining by delaying discussion on key topics such as compensation, and breaching the status quo after contract expiration pressuring members to settle for a dismal contract.

“The university’s failure to negotiate in good faith, remedy its labor law violations, and agree to a fair contract for postdoctoral workers is leading us to a strike that we have been trying to avoid,” said **the president of the local union, Cora Bergantiños-Crespo.**

Currently, the University pays postdoctoral workers a minimum of \$60,000, [a salary that is considered low income when adjusted for rent burden in New York City](#). Columbia's last offer of \$64,500 still falls short of the compensation needed to dedicate 30% of salary towards rent, according to affordable housing standards.

CPW-UAW 4100 picket line kickoff will take place **Nov. 1st, from 9.30 am to 1.30 pm** on both Medical Center (168th and Broadway) and Morningside campus (116th and Broadway), both located in Manhattan.

Postdoctoral workers say they believe a strike is the only path forward to securing a fair contract. "We can still avoid this strike, but the University has been dismissing our demands for more than 6 months and we need to focus on our research projects, so we will strike until the University brings a proposal that truly meets our needs and recognizes the value we bring to this institution," says **Michael Mauro, a postdoc in the Department of Pathology and Cell Biology**.

Postdoctoral and associate researchers are the principal workforce behind the groundbreaking research Columbia touts on a daily basis. According to the most recent financial statement released by the University Board of Trustees, between July 2022 and June 2023, postdocs and associate research scientists (ARSs) helped bring in [\\$1.8 billion](#) in research funding from private and public agencies. That is \$300 million more than the revenue Columbia collected from tuition across all of its schools in the same period.

November 5th is the final deadline for grant renewals and resubmissions to the National Institutes of Health (NIH). But a strike as short as one week will overlap with this day, leading to millions of dollars in lost funding and potentially causing great turmoil in a university that is world-renowned for its research and scientific breakthroughs.

In addition, postdocs and ARSs were particularly motivated to strike after seeing that the University is more than financially capable of meeting their demands. According to the most recent financial report of FY22, **only 0.2% of its \$8.3 billion in unrestricted funds** would be required to foot the bill for the workers' contract demands.

Panos Oikonomou, an associate researcher in the **Department of Biological Sciences**, said that "Columbia is one of the wealthiest institutions in the country and largest landowners in NYC, and getting richer every year. It would only cost a tiny fraction of their net assets to give us workers a decent, living wage". Yet Dan Driscoll, the Vice President of Human Resources at Columbia University, and lead negotiator for the University, thinks the solution is in the hands of the postdocs and ARSs, not the university: "You need to learn how to budget," he said during a bargaining session. "Postdocs and ARSs have grown tired of being looked down upon", said Dr. Oikonomou.