
UCATS

MOMENTUM EXTRA!

Union of Clerical, Administrative, & Technical Staff at NYU, Local 3882, NYSUT, AFT, AFL-CIO, 636 Broadway, Rm. 606, NY NY 10012, 646-602-1485
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Contract Negotiation Bulletin #1

The UCATS contract with NYU expires on October 31. We had our first bargaining session with NYU on September 13. After the teams introduced themselves UCATS President Stephen Rechner made the following opening remarks:

Today, we will first do introductions, after which we will begin to outline our issues and establish a schedule of bargaining.

The issues we are bringing to bargaining reflect what we have experienced ourselves since 2005, as leaders, as organizers, and as employees, and what we have heard from our membership.

We have gathered this information from our contract survey, from more than a dozen meetings with our membership over the spring and summer and from the grievances and other issues that have come to the Local's attention over the past six years.

OVERVIEW OF ISSUES

There have been many changes at the University since 2005. We've gone through re-engineering 1 and 2 and we will share with you how these changes have affected our members. One consequence of reengineering has been a destaffing of departments that provide services to employees – payroll, benefits, accounts payable. The new paradigm in NYU employee relations is that employees are a constituency to whom you do not respond. If we can't solve the problem with information from the NYU website, we're almost out of luck.

The good news is that since 2005, NYU's financial condition has improved dramatically and consistently – even after the global financial meltdown of 2007-08. Excess revenue after expenses for the fiscal year ending August 31, 2010 were in excess of \$114 Million dollars – more than double the previous year's \$53 Million. Even during the worst of the fiscal crisis NYU had excess revenue of over \$38 Million. These excess revenues accrued after every employee was paid, every benefit was paid, every executive was paid and every event was paid, after all the student services were provided, the education delivered and the buildings maintained.

On August 31, 2008, NYU closed the books on its seven-year "Campaign for NYU," exceeding its \$2.5 billion goal by over \$500 million; as such, **it is the largest completed campaign in US higher education.**

In its final year, the campaign raised \$862 million, one of the largest one-year totals in the history of higher education fundraising. The total raised through the campaign — \$3,075,986,225 - was the equivalent of raising some \$1.2 million per day, seven days per week, for the entire seven-year period.

In August of 2010, the Law School "celebrated the close of 'Where We Stand,' our \$400 million campaign to help secure the Law School's future. We raised a total of \$415,064,515—on average **raising more dollars per year than any law school has ever raised in a campaign.**" (Dean Richard Revesz, August 2010)

"The efforts to re-engineer the University's administrative systems -- which began before the nation's fiscal crisis and were recently concluded -- are producing annual savings in the University's administrative budget of \$66 million a year; . . .

For NYU to achieve these savings our members have had to make tragic choices.

1. There's Pam who called me to ask if she could stop paying union dues. I asked her what was wrong; she said her husband had a brain tumor and did not have health insurance. How could he not have health insurance, I asked incredulously. Pam replied, "Well, he doesn't get health insurance where he works, and we just got married last year, and we had to get an apartment and furniture, so we thought we'd save some money by choosing not to cover him through NYU."

2. And one of our laid off workers – when she lost her apartment, she had to choose to leave her children with relatives because she now lives in her car.

And then, NYU imposes artificial austerities – fewer people doing more work, less money for programs, and every non-contractual employee benefit at risk of unilateral diminishment unless we catch you red-handed.

The University has reported regularly on their improving financial condition over the last 6 years, while our financial positions have significantly deteriorated during this same period.

Our total incomes increased just 20% over the last six

years, but the cost of being an NYU employee rose at a much faster pace. Rents have gone up a minimum of 26% -IF you were fortunate enough to have a rent stabilized apartment – something fewer and fewer of our members have the benefit of as NYU hires younger workers. For those who do not benefit from rent regulation, in just the last year rents increased an average of 8% - according to the [monthly Manhattan Rental Market Report](#) by brokerage The Real Estate Group NY. Since 2005 the cost of a monthly metro card has gone from \$76 to \$104, an increase of 37%.

Overall, the cost of living in NYC is 77% higher than the national average. That means that a salary of \$45,000 in NYC is the equivalent of living on \$25,500 in the rest of the country – on average.

We cannot continue to lose ground. It costs a person more and more to work at NYU – housing costs, transportation costs, food inflation... There was a time when the NY Times did a feature story on homeless people who work full-time and they featured an NYU clerical worker (1987). The union and the university worked hard to rectify that condition, but over the last six years the trend has not been in our favor. While we admittedly fared better than most workers during the global economic crisis we are by no measure better off today than we were in 2005.

We are an important part of the NYU community and essential to its success and wealth generation but the University treats us as a liability.

Many of our members (and other employee groups at NYU) are also increasingly frustrated with how unresponsive the University has become with many basic systems that impact us. It has become increasingly difficult to get our questions answered and errors corrected by the University – payroll errors, benefits questions, HR... and the service providers NYU outsources to are worse.

FOR EXAMPLE, when I had a question about my health care flexible spending account, NYU benefits referred me to United Healthcare (UH). UH insisted on transferring my call to Oxford. When I called UH back and insisted that they were the administrators of our flex spending accounts the UH rep. did not know that UH owns Oxford and she further insisted that NYU was not on her list of organizations whose flex spending accounts are serviced by UH. FINALLY, I called NYU benefits back and reported this experience and only then would they answer my question.

We've been facing ever greater demands at work and are also working in a far less forgiving and less collegial environment. While NYU's employee webpages wax

eloquently about thriving and collaborating and our contributions making a difference, the reality is that one oral warning for a 2 minute lateness and any dream of career advancement at NYU is torpedoed.

It costs money to be an NYU employee, money our members don't get paid. When I started working at NYU in 1986, I was able to afford (barely) an apartment in Manhattan. Today, I cannot afford to move into my apartment building. Worse, I cannot afford an apartment anywhere in Manhattan, and now even an apartment in the outer limits of the five boroughs is a stretch. Year after year I have observed NYU hire younger and younger workers for the jobs in our bargaining unit; and because these younger workers cannot benefit from rent stabilization as I do, they live farther and farther away from NYU. The consequences of these distances, combined with transportation service curtailments and the new inflexible MyTime system, is that TOGETHER we spend more of our resources on time and attendance grievances, and our members feel devalued and commoditized.

All NYU employees, staff, security officers, frontline managers, need more money to live. We cannot afford to pay more for diminishing benefits. Our needs aren't met by illusory and useless propaganda dressed up as benefits, that are in reality nothing more than another glossy brochure (Marsh Voluntary Benefits, VSN, Health Advocate, Ask Payroll).

If you think that we will accept as an article of faith that we cannot expect to earn living wages and benefits, you should think again. We will not allow you to use the economic downturn as an excuse to send NYU workers on a race to the bottom with a sweatshop approach to pay and benefits.

If you want a committed workforce, workers who can get to work on time each day, workers who can give 100% of their effort and attention for 7 hours each day, you have to provide us the compensation that is needed to meet the financial needs of 21st century workers in 21st century New York. Only by making that investment in us, can NYU hope to get the full value of all our members have to offer.

NYU's Response To Us

Your members fared better than managers and faculty who got no raise in 2009 and only 1.5% in 2010.

Stay Informed!

Read your UCATS mail and check the UCATS website www.ucats3882.org for bargaining updates.

Future bargaining sessions have been scheduled for September 22, 27, and October 5.

