

2021 Bargaining Framework

Student Workers of Columbia

Last spring, our unit voted to reject a contract that failed to meet the priorities voiced by workers – the same pressing issues that drove us to strike in the weeks leading up to the Tentative Agreement’s proposal. Whether you voted “No” or “Yes” on the previous agreement, we are here to fight for you.

This semester bargaining with CU, we have a chance to build upon the momentum of the historical Tentative Agreement rejection, while bearing in mind the urgency of a strong contract. Our strategy needs both perseverance and expediency, which is why we are centering an engaged unit and a democratic, transparent process. This is the only way to win the strong contract we deserve.

Our goal, and the aim of this framework, is to have a strong contract by the end of the fall semester.

1. Process

This campaign is a unit-led campaign. For that we need YOU, the unit! **We need your voices and your energy to win a contract we deserve.** Join a working group today, attend weekly BC strategy meetings, and/or come to weekly Organizing Committee meetings. All such meetings are listed on [the SWC calendar](#). If you have a question about any of this, reach out to us at gwc.bargaining@gmail.com or attend our weekly office hours Thursdays at Noon ET.

- **Working groups**, open to all unit members, are currently co-drafting our contract language with BC, because we believe that affected workers have the best understanding of what they need. Join a working group today to contribute your ideas (no previous experience required)! [Here](#) is a sign-up sheet listing the available groups.
- **Regular updates and open discussion** on the bargaining process with membership through Town Halls and General Body Meetings. These will be used to discuss bargaining strategies, priorities, and voting on any major changes to our bargaining strategy.
- **Open bargaining** is the only venue where we will negotiate with Columbia. This is a crucial aspect of union transparency, mandated by our [referendum](#), and we believe it makes us stronger at the table! When you have a direct view into bargaining, we can all strategize with a more clear picture of what’s going on.

- **Surveys, polls, and asynchronous forums** will provide opportunities to give input on our strategy, if you cannot attend meetings.
- **Office hours and open-door BC** ensure that any questions and concerns that slip through the cracks are answered and addressed.

2. Strike Demands

Articles

- **Non discrimination and harrasment**
 - Grievance and neutral arbitration for discrimination and harassment. This means you can seek recourse outside of Columbia's internal process and have a neutral arbitrator (lawyer) investigate your case and determine if the University failed to provide a workplace free from discrimination and harassment.
 - Can go to arbitration without any internal CU process required (EOAA) [or in parallel with EOAA for Title IX cases as legally required].
 - Grievance and neutral arbitration for power-based harassment (PBH; bullying)
 - Prohibit PBH using interim definition until official recommendations are created.
 - Interim Measures like in [Brown SUGSE Article IX.8](#) (i.e. options beyond those determined and administered by EOAA).
 - Flexible bridge funding for advisor transfers with minimal bureaucracy.
- **Compensation:**
 - **A complete description of our compensation proposals & history can be accessed here: [link](#)**
 - Payroll Compensation:
 - \$45k for 12m appointments, \$35.5k for 9m appointments + Pay Parity conditional on the length of appointment (12m or 9m) - across all programs and schools,
 - Yearly increases of 3% in the second and third year of the contract,
 - Hourly rates: \$26 for hourly workers — annual increase by \$1.5
 - Those above these minimum rates (post-increase) get a 3% increase
 - Summer stipends:
 - 6,5k for summer 2021 for all PhD workers on a 9m or 10m stipend (extending summer stipends to students past year 5, and to programs currently not getting a summer stipend while being on a 9m appointment like Social Work)
 - Yearly increase by 3% in the second, and in the third year of the contract
 - Funding extensions :
 - Specific criteria giving right to a funding extension - specifically for:

- those who were prevented from having access to research collections or sites, including lab spaces;
 - those who were forced to depart from research locations;
 - those who were sick with COVID-19 resulting in research interruption;
 - those who were primary caretakers for an immediate family member.
 - Possibility to appeal if extension request is refused.
 - Childcare:
 - increase in childcare subsidy, beyond the 4k obtained in February,
 - funding extensions for parents giving birth during the course of the program, and taking their parental leave,
 - extended leave of absence,
 - Fee and Tuition Waivers:
 - All fees and tuition waived (including Matriculation and Facility charges) with the exception of the student activity fee - for all doctoral students in years 1 through 7.
- **Health Care**
 - A \$300k union-controlled health care fund for student workers, that can be accessed retroactively, in addition to a dependent support fund. A university commitment to improve health care services by expanding provider networks to include LGBTQIA+ friendly providers.
 - Comprehensive health benefits that include dental and vision coverage for student workers and dependents as well as an agreement to provide advance notice before any changes to the plans.
 - Accessible and affordable access to mental health care (\$0 copays!) including a commitment by the university to improve mental health care services by expanding provider networks to include LGBTQIA+ friendly providers.
 - The university and union will each contribute to Columbia's Food Pantry every semester.
 - Health and safety protections for international and immigrant student workers from governmental agencies at Columbia, including ICE and NYPD.
- **Recognition:**
 - Include all members legally recognized as part of our bargaining unit. This means unit recognition in the fullest interpretation of the [NLRB certification](#):
 - All student workers who provide instructional services, (including but not limited to Teaching Assistants, Teaching Fellows, Preceptors, Course Assistants, Readers, and Graders)
 - Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) and Departmental Research Assistants (DRAs).

- Provisions in the Titles and Classifications article to classify all graduate researchers as GRAs or DRAs.
- Provisions in the Titles and Classifications article to ensure that student workers across all degree programs performing comparable work, regardless of appointment status, are included in the unit.

Additional articles could be reopened because they are directly linked to changes to the 4 main open articles. These include: Titles and Classifications, Union Security, Childcare, Fees & Tuition Waivers, and Leaves of Absence

Unfair Labor Practices

In addition to the above changes to our working conditions, we also demand that Columbia remedy the series of unfair labor practices it has committed against SWC and its members, including the unilateral wage freeze imposed after the rejection of the Spring TA and the unilateral change to our stipend disbursement schedule.

3. Strike

In accordance with the unit's bylaws, decisions about whether to authorize, begin, and end a strike are made by unit members through democratic procedures. A strike authorization requires $\frac{2}{3}$ majority of all voters, and ending a strike requires a simple majority.

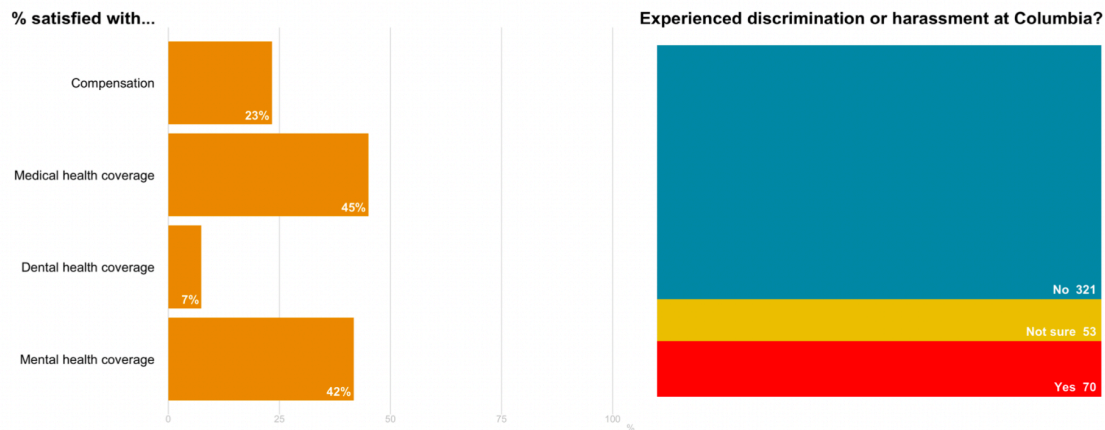
Each week while on strike, the union will hold a special membership meeting to determine if the strike should continue. Members will be able to vote at these meetings. If attendance is too low at these meetings, a poll will be conducted asynchronously.

Appendix

From Bargaining Survey

Most respondents were not satisfied by their compensation level, health insurance, dental, and mental health coverage. 16% of respondents said they have experienced discrimination or harassment at Columbia, and 12% said they were not sure.

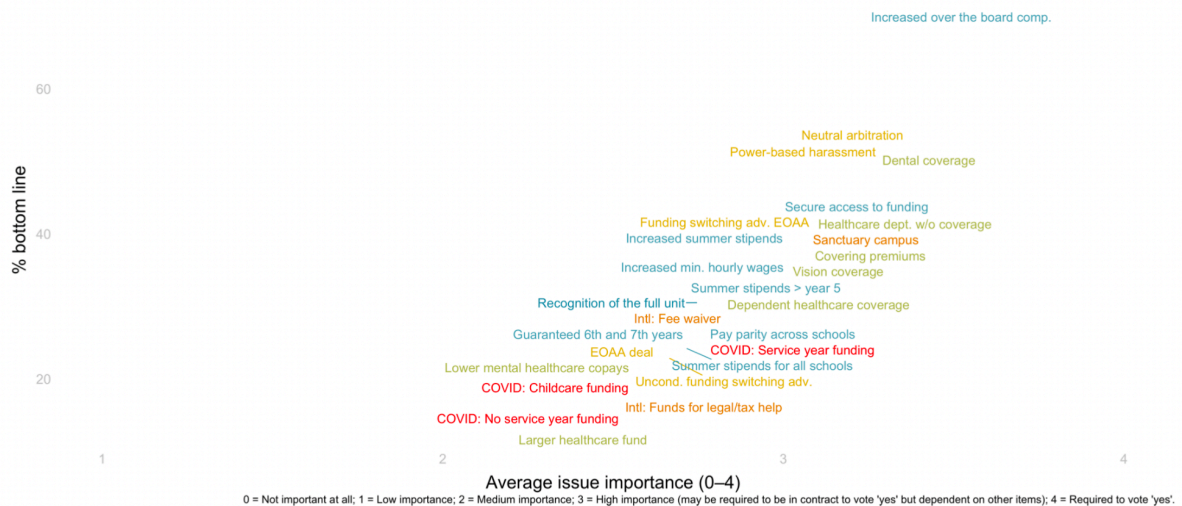
Current situation | All respondents (N = 446)



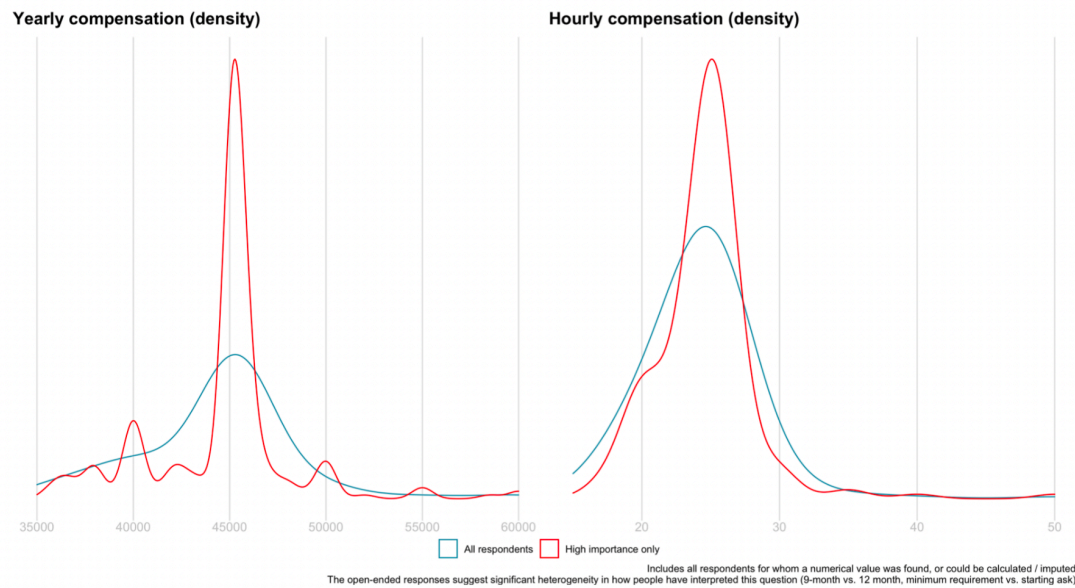
Highest priority: increase in over the board compensation, followed by neutral arbitration, power-based harassment, and dental coverage.

When asked about the minimum compensation a majority answered around \$45,000 annual income, which is in line with the MIT living wage indicator.

Priorities | All respondents (N = 446)



Minimum compensation | All respondents (N = 446)



This is in line with the results from the previous bargaining demands survey that had more than 1000 respondents.