

# SWC Contract Update

Dear fellow members of the Columbia community,

**This morning, Student Workers of Columbia presented a proposal designed to end the strike while still securing a fair contract for our workers.** The package includes pay increases and enhanced protections against harassment and discrimination.

The package we presented today also represents dramatic compromises on issues that the University identified as concerns. Today's package costs \$15.7 million less (21.5%) than our December 7 proposal and \$30.4 million less (34.7%) than our November 2 proposal. It has a total cost of approximately \$57.2 million over the status quo over 3 years—about \$19 million per year. That's just 0.6% of the \$3.33 billion Columbia's assets appreciated in the past year alone.

These cost-saving moves, along with the many non-economic compromises made by the Union, demonstrate SWC's good-faith effort towards reaching an agreement. **We invite faculty to attend an [information session](#) on the union's package proposal today at 5pm. We have also created a [brief, shareable explainer](#) on our contract hub at [bit.ly/swc-contract](http://bit.ly/swc-contract).**

**SWC's  
Dec. 22  
Package  
Unwrapped**



**[bit.ly/swc-contract](http://bit.ly/swc-contract)**

# Compensation

- **Compromise: Prorated 9-month pay based on 12-month appointments**
  - Proration bringing base compensation down to \$33,750 for student workers on 9 and 10 month appointments ( $\$45,000 * 0.75$ ). This is a \$1,750 reduction per student from our Dec. 7 proposal.
- **Yearly raises of 3%**
  - With 3% yearly increases, 9 and 10-month pay would reach \$35,805 by academic year 2023-24, or \$42,701 with a \$6,500 summer stipend.
- **Compromise: Retroactive summer stipend**
  - No longer instituting a retroactive stipend increase to \$6,500 for summer 2021.
- **Compromise: M&F tuition and fees**
  - We are extending the GSAS policy to all schools, which stipulates reasonable efforts by the university and departments to cover M&F tuition and fees for students beyond year 5 without significant external awards. This is a compromise from our Dec. 7 proposal which eliminated M&F tuition and fees for PhD students in years 6 and 7.
- **Compromise: Hourly rates reduced**
  - January 1, 2022: \$22 per hour (reduced from \$24/hr, and begins in January rather than retroactive application)
  - August 1, 2022: \$23 per hour (reduced from \$25/hr)
  - August 1, 2023: \$24 per hour (reduced from \$26/hr)

Overall, compensation compromises reflect a \$12.2 million decrease from our Dec. 7 proposal, saving the University money while allowing departments to competitively recruit potential graduate students who cannot rely on intergenerational wealth. For comparison: NYU graduate workers on 9-month appointments receive a minimum pay of \$42,500, substantially more than what Columbia graduate workers would receive in the first year of this proposal.

# Non-Discrimination & Harassment

- **Compromise: Moving to postdoc union process**
  - SWC has made a significant compromise by largely basing our proposal on [the contract between the University and the Columbia Postdoctoral Workers-UAW union](#).
  - [A complainant may take a case to grievance and arbitration:](#)
    - Non-Title IX: After the conclusion of the EOAA process, or if it takes longer than 75 days following the complaint.

- For Title IX: After the exhaustion of the internal EOAA procedures, including the EOAA appeals process.
- **Extending protections**
  - Building on [the University's existing protections](#), our proposal adds other vital protections for categories for a diverse workplace such as: caste, gender expression, parental status, pregnancy-related conditions, medical conditions, physical or mental disabilities, class background, source of income, and genetic information.
- **Compromise: Mediation alternative**
  - To address management concerns that arbitration is an adversarial process, a complainant may choose to enter mediation instead of neutral arbitration.
  - Mediation may be a less confrontational way to resolve remaining concerns between the University, the complainant, a Union representative, and a mediator approved by both parties.
- **Neutral arbitrator specialists**
  - The Union and University work together to nominate neutral arbitrators who are legal specialists in discrimination and harassment policy. This addresses university concerns that students will “abuse” accusations of discrimination and harassment to avoid accountability for academic matters.
- **Compromise: Transition funding side letter**
  - Student workers in unhealthy advising relationships are ensured 5 months of continued funding and expanded timelines for meeting program requirements.
  - Transitional funding is no longer subject to grievance and arbitration.
  - Students make the final decision of whether or not to transition to a new advisor. A Transition Coordinator (appointed by the University) assists students through the process of accessing transitional funding and support.

## Health Care and Benefits

- **100% dental coverage for PhD student workers and their dependents under Emblem**
  - This plan is 60% the cost of the previously proposed Aetna plan for individuals.
- **Ability to opt into Aetna plan at student's cost**
  - The University will cover premiums up to the value of the Emblem Preferred Dental Plan and PhD students will be responsible for covering the remaining premium costs.
- **Student health fund**

- August 1, 2021: \$300k
- August 1, 2022: \$350k
- August 1, 2023: \$400k
- **Compromise:** Rollover of leftover funds between years no longer an ask.
- **Dependent health fund**
  - August 1, 2021: \$150k
  - August 1, 2022: \$175k
  - August 1, 2023: \$200k
- **Compromise: Cops/ICE off-campus side letter**
  - The side letter is no longer subject to the Agreement's Grievance and Arbitration provisions.
- **Childcare subsidy (per child under the age of 6)**
  - August 1, 2021: \$5,000
  - August 1, 2022: \$5,500
  - August 1, 2023: \$6,000
- **Compromise: Stop-the-clock for parental leave**
  - Suspension of all academic requirements for a twelve week period for doctoral students who take parental leave
  - This provision was changed from an additional semester of guaranteed funding to an additional semester of funding eligibility.

## Member Recognition and Union Shop

- **Compromise: Return to NLRB language**
  - The University recognizes the Student Workers of Columbia - UAW as the bargaining representative with regard to wages, hours and working conditions of employment for *all* student employees in the bargaining unit, as [ruled and certified by the National Labor Relations Board in 2016](#) and [acknowledged by Columbia in 2018](#).
  - This is a significant compromise from our previous proposal – the Union is now giving the University room to advocate for their own interpretation of the NLRB certification decision.
- **Adopting union security language which guarantees support for SWC**
  - Student workers covered by the Agreement can choose to either join the Union or pay agency fees. Student workers who choose not to join the Union or pay agency fees will be charged \$250 by the University for a Support Fund to cover out-of-pocket medical expenses for student workers. This fee will be reversed if the student worker pays union dues or agency fees at any future date.

Student Workers of Columbia took great care to draft this final and comprehensive package that we believe will be acceptable to both our members and the University. We look forward to the University's response in the hopes that we can quickly ratify a tentative agreement and return to teaching and research.

**A second [mediation session](#) has also been scheduled for Thursday, December 23 at 1 pm with the aim of finalizing the agreement. All students and faculty are welcome to attend. Pre-mediation [caucus](#) begins at 12:30 pm.**

Sincerely,  
Student Workers of Columbia