



RAPUP-UAW Newsletter

Issue #2 | Wednesday, March 19, 2025

Dear <<First Name>>,

We hope you are enjoying the extra hour of daylight and the warming weather! Read on for updates on the way research associates and postdocs at Penn are speaking out in support of science funding and how the benefits we receive lag behind those offered by our peer institutions, upcoming events such as an international scholars “know your rights” training, and news items from the world of higher ed organizing.

How are postdocs and research associates building our union?

On March 5th, a number of postdoctoral workers **gave testimony at the annual University Council’s Open Forum meeting**. Some of the topics addressed were:

- the inadequate retirement benefits that postdocs currently receive (in stark contrast to our unionized peers)
- the paltry number of our paid time off days (Penn staff get over twice as many as postdocs)
- the need for longer contracts and visas for international workers
- the importance of expanded childcare benefits for postdocs (Penn lags far behind what similar institutions provide)

We hope to highlight some of this testimony in future newsletters and testimonials, so stay tuned for more. Establishing better policies for postdoctoral workers is crucial, but we know that without a union these policies can be unilaterally changed by the Penn administration at any moment. **That is why we are organizing: to have a democratic say in the policy improvements we want to see and the legal protections of a contract to prevent them from being taken away!**

On March 7th, **postdocs and research associates joined more than 2,000 community members at the [Stand Up for Science rally at City Hall](#)**. The rally was part of a [nationwide effort](#), with similar events happening in nearly every state in the US. The collective power we build as academic workers is crucial when it comes to lobbying our public officials and influencing policy decisions that directly impact our work.



Thousands of higher education workers and community supporters rallying at City Hall on March 7th. Photo courtesy of Albane Thery

How can you get more involved?

Our next **[RAPUP Organizer Training](#)** will be held on **March 31st from 2-3pm on Zoom!** Please use the below link to sign up and learn about our organizing efforts in more detail!

[Click here to RSVP for our next training - March 31st, 2pm on Zoom!](#)

Other upcoming events...

Tell Penn: Don’t obey in advance!

This **Thursday, March 20th from 12-1pm at the corner of 34th and Walnut**, we are joining academic workers from six other labor organizations from across Penn in a rally to demand the university take a more forceful and proactive stance in supporting research staff, DEIA initiatives, and the rights of all members of our community in the face of the Trump administration’s harmful executive orders.

On March 20, stand together with Penn employees and tell Penn: *Don’t obey in advance!*

RALLY TO UPHOLD RESEARCH + JOBS, SANCTUARY, DEIA, AND THE RIGHTS OF ALL MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY

sign the petition

March 20 • 12–1pm
corner of 34th & Walnut

aaup Penn UAW AFSCME 590 Penn State University Committee of Interns and Residents RAPUP Postdocs

[Click here to RSVP to the March 20th “Don’t obey in advance” rally!](#)

International Scholars Know Your Rights Training

On **Wednesday, March 26 at 3pm**, UAW members will be holding an International Scholars Know Your Rights Training over zoom that focuses on the legal and contractual rights of international scholars and how academic workers can work together to enforce and expand these rights through our union.

[Click here to RSVP for the International Scholars Know Your Rights Training!](#)

RAPUP-UAW Happy Hour Social

On **Friday, April 4th, from 5:30pm at Gojjo** (4540 Baltimore Ave), come socialize with other research associates and postdocs at our monthly social event / happy hour!

How are other academic workers across the country organizing?

As scientists and academic workers at Columbia University struggle against the Trump administration’s devastating cuts to research funding, [unionized postdocs at the institution rely on crucial protections won in their contract](#):

“Some postdoctoral fellows at Columbia are protected from losing their positions despite a lack of funding because they are part of a union that has an agreement with the university. It is therefore the responsibility of university staff members such as lab leaders to try to find funding for those postdocs that have their grants terminated, says Sherida de Leeuw, a chair of the union.

‘If I did not have that protection, my last pay cheque would have been two weeks ago and I would be out on the streets now,’ says Columbia postdoc Gordon Petty, who was notified on Tuesday morning that his T32 training grant to study schizophrenia was cancelled.”

[Faculty members across all Penn State University campuses are organizing to form a union!](#) The Penn State Faculty Alliance wrote the following about the reasons for their organizing:

“Each new university administration has asked for our good will when coming on board—but what have been the results? Have these chances and our patience led to broad, meaningful improvements in working and learning conditions at Penn State? The issues are structural; as such they can only be addressed through structural changes that will come with an empowered faculty. If anything, a faculty union is long overdue. The time to act is now.”

Meet an organizer!

WE ARE RAPUP-UAW
I SUPPORT FORMING A UNION BECAUSE...



Emily Perkins
Psychology

“We need **annual pay increases that keep up with inflation, at minimum (**not the 0.8% we currently get**).”**

Join us at
pennpostdocunion.org

RAPUP **UAW**

In solidarity,

Emily Perkins, Psychology

On behalf of the RAPUP-UAW Organizing Committee



[Website](#)



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