

WINNING A RECORD CONTRACT



**A Case Study of the
2023 Contract Bargaining
Campaign at Mt. Sinai**

Climbing the Campaign Mountain

UAW Local 4100 represents over 500 postdoctoral scientists as SPOC (Sinai Postdoctoral Organizing Committee) at Mt. Sinai hospital who, after winning an NLRB election with 90% support, ran an aggressive contract campaign led by a broad, representative leadership group capable of generating majority-based actions to win a record-setting first contract in 2023.

What's a contract campaign?

A contract campaign is a collective action plan with a beginning, middle, and end, working towards specific demands that we are trying to win.

A contract campaign has a target—someone who can give us what we want. And a contract campaign involves a series of escalating actions over time which progressively turn up the heat on the target and create the conditions for winning our demands.

Below is what is called a “campaign mountain.” This is a visual representation of some different phases of a typical contract campaign.

The campaign mountain helps us identify and plan in advance some of the ingredients we need to win, so that we can put them together in a way that maximizes our success.

Campaigns are critical to shifting the balance of power in our workplaces and industries. They also help us build confidence in each other and our ability to win when we are united.

They win in the short term, and they build our muscle for winning in the long term.

The Peak of Our Strength

Escalation Period

Resolution

Kick-off

Foundation

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Jumper Cables

Bargaining Updates

During bargaining, the SPOC bargaining committee sent regular updates to membership after each negotiation session with management. SPOC also posted these updates online so that members could access past updates.

Jumper Cables

Bringing Members to the Table

All of SPOC's bargaining sessions with the employer were open to all members to attend as they were held online. In order to attend an open bargaining session, members had to register to participate and then were oriented to the rules and purpose of open bargaining in a special observer room, then entered the actual bargaining room together in a massive show of collective power. SPOC would pick specific important bargaining sessions to do mass turnout to demonstrate to Mt. Sinai how serious our membership was about achieving their demands.

Bringing the Table to the Members and Members to the Table with Feedback & Networks

As bargaining went on, SPOC utilized the network built during the organizing drive to activate membership to get involved in the union. They assigned each lab a "floor leader." Floor leaders were responsible for conducting one-on-ones to organize the membership into action, turning out a majority of coworkers for repeated public actions and bargaining sessions, and giving updates on the latest bargaining sessions. Additionally, members formed working groups to provide feedback on how the bargaining committee should respond to particular proposals so that the bargaining committee could bargain from an informed position always connected to the membership.



Another bargaining session 1

sinaipostdocunion.org/2023/09/22/another-bargaining-session-to-resolve-non-economic-articles/

SPOC
SINAI POSTDOCTORAL ORGANIZING COMMITTEE


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Another bargaining session to resolve non-economic articles

by guest | Sep 22, 2023 | Bargaining, Emails

Yesterday, we had a short bargaining session to make progress on non-economic proposals before Sinai's anticipated response to our economic proposals on September 29. We continued to discuss just cause protections, with Sinai reiterating their desire to retain the right to fire postdocs without a performance-related reason at the beginning of our appointments. We pushed back, emphasizing the importance of just cause protections for our entire appointments. We will keep fighting for the same basic just cause standards that exist in all other postdoc union contracts.

RSVP for our informational picket Thursday at noon – to demonstrate to Sinai that we are serious about reaching a fair contract that includes real job security.

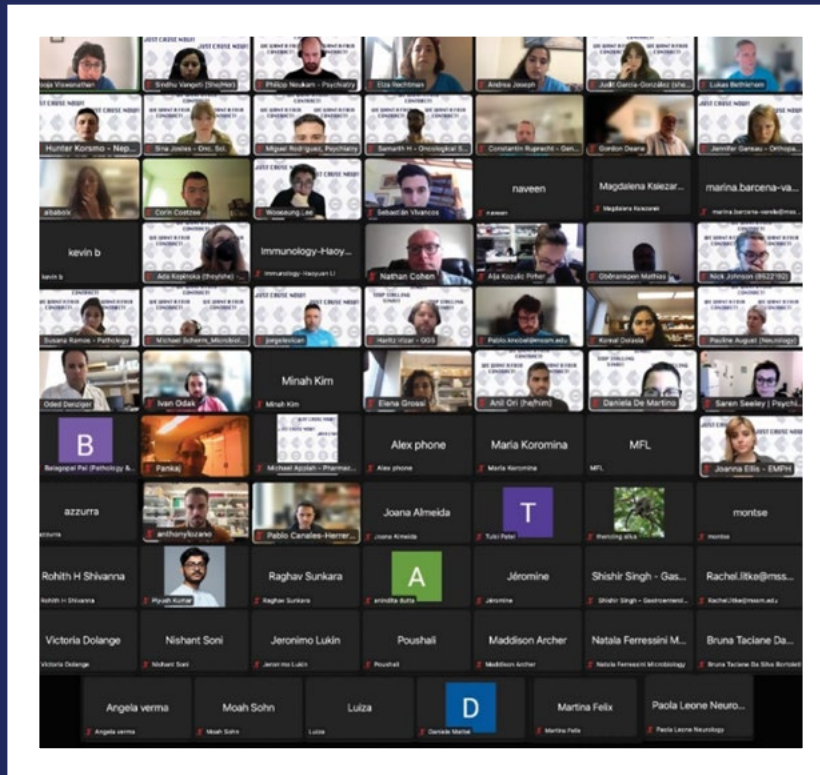


It was disappointing to hear Sinai's position, arguing that terminating postdocs with a just cause is "a burden that the institution is not prepared to assume", because it takes a lot of time and effort to terminate with a just cause, and that they want to preserve their ability to "cut the cord" when it needs to be cut. I wonder: what about the burden of moving to a different country or continent, usually with a family, and being terminated without just cause? — **Judit Garcia Gonzalez, Genetics and Genomic Sciences**

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Recent Posts

Tomorrow: August Membership Meeting!
RSVP: August Membership Meeting and Local 4100 Retreat!
Urge Sinai to Approve Funding for Postdocs Facing Financial Emergencies
[Reminder] Deadline to Accept Nomination for 4100 Elections: Monday, 06/24 at 11:59pm EST
NYC Council FARE Act hearing, Canvass for Claire Valdez, and Queer Liberation March!



Escalation

Majority Participation

Our members are the source of power in our union. An engaged membership is the key to power at the bargaining table! When Mt. Sinai refused to agree to key demands, SPOC decided to escalate by including the membership in every step along the way. SPOC delivered petitions to the administration signed by a majority of the membership, organized members to email the deans, and held mass rallies on the Mt. Sinai campus. When the time came to hold a strike authorization vote (“SAV”), SPOC organized a mass meeting outside of Mt. Sinai where the membership voted overwhelmingly to call on the bargaining committee to hold an SAV.



Strike Authorization

SPOC not only made sure that they cleared the two-thirds of voters required by the UAW Constitution to authorize a strike, but also ensured that a supermajority (~70%) of all members voted yes in the SAV. When the time came, SPOC held another mass public meeting and membership vote to authorize a strike deadline of December 8th, instead of deciding this behind closed doors.



Peak of Strength

Standing United to Create a Crisis for the Employer That Would Only Be Solved by Agreeing with Our Demands

The point of the escalation was not to strike. The purpose was to pressure Mt. Sinai to agree to a first contract that addressed our members' demands. But if Mt. Sinai was not going to agree peacefully, they left our members with no choice but to take to the streets. SPOC became the first ever postdoc union in the private sector to go on strike. When SPOC members hit the bricks, they did not stop escalating, keeping the picket line alive outside Mt. Sinai, picketing deliveries, enlisting the assistance of "the illuminator", and even flying outside the workplaces of the trustees of Mt. Sinai Hospital with their faces on the flyers. Just the threat of a disruptive majority strike had forced management to make progress on economic issues such as wages on parental leave. Once the strike started, SPOC solidified members' demands and made clear that the focus in the strike would be housing access and equity for women and families. After a 12-day strike, SPOC-UAW won a record contract!



Highlights

Running a contract campaign, with mass majority participation throughout, gave SPOC members the power to set a new precedent in Higher Education with the highest minimum salaries for postdocs in the country, the first ever contract article guaranteeing postdoc housing for three years, and increased parental leave that would promote gender equity. On all their issues—pay, housing, and gender equity—Sinai made historic gains for themselves and academic workers across the country!



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For more info, scan the QR code or go to: uaw.us/winning

