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Workshop: Training on Unionization and Collective Bargaining for Academic Labor - Handout: Scenario for private contract campaign

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Scenario:

You are a contingent lecturer at a large private college in a suburban environment. You were on the organizing committee for the newly-formed contingent faculty union, Fighting Academics. As a vocal and visible member of the OC, your fellow activists assigned you to the team preparing for bargaining, expected to start in the next couple of months. Two-thirds of the contingent faculty are part-time, hired by the course and semester. About one-third are full-time lecturers who usually teach a 3-3 load.

Your new union won an NLRB election, about 40% of the 600-person unit signed cards and the union. The university ran a 'B' anti-union campaign and the union won the election 275 to 140. Of the 325 or so faculty who did not sign, you did not have a conversation with about 150 of them because you just could not find them.

Your driving issues in the campaign were job security, academic freedom rights, health insurance, and compensation. Of course, everyone brought up the low salaries, but that concern seemed secondary to the others.

Your campaign had the quiet support of a good number of tenure-track faculty, but there was vocal opposition from a number of faculty in the college Senate. They primarily argued that efforts to gain more tenure lines in the college would be damaged if the contingent faculty were able to entrench themselves through a union contract. At one point, the Senate President gave a speech wherein he suggested that contingent faculty should be called contingent "workers," since that was how they apparently saw themselves. His motion to make this formal college policy failed.

Your campus is largely a commuter campus and students tend to be disengaged. Your union effort had the support of the student government and the Young Democratic Socialists chapter on campus, but the vast majority of the students were unaware or uninterested in your campaign.

The classified workers on campus are organized with SEIU and are loud and proud. You had strong support from the classified union and you often featured SEIU leaders at your rally. There seemed to be genuine harmony between the two unions, even if sometimes SEIU leaders would talk about "faculty fat cats" who took all the money.

The administration was strongly opposed to the union. Their anti-union rhetoric often echoed that of the Senate and the members of the OC strongly suspected collusion. You were able to use the administration's opposition to your advantage.

Using the handouts provided, begin the work of sketching out your contract campaign, bargaining plan, and post-bargaining agenda.