

To the Presidents, Trustees, and administrators of Columbia University, Barnard College, and Teachers College:

We are a group of students attending Columbia across a wide range of schools and programs. We are writing to address several key fronts on which the University is acutely failing its students and the local community, which have only been exacerbated by the inaction with which your administration has met popular demands and referendums in the past eight months.

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March, students immediately began [demonstrating against the injustice of exorbitant tuition rates](#), which constitute a significant source of financial hardship during this economic depression. As national protests of an unprecedented scale expressed outrage over structural racism, Mobilized African Diaspora and the nearly [1500 supporters](#) of [its demands](#) called for the University to address its own role in upholding racist policing practices, damaging local communities, and inadequately supporting Black students. Last semester, almost a thousand students, faculty, and alumni signed on in support of [full divestment from fossil fuels](#), along with referendums at [Barnard](#) and [Columbia College](#) in which students voted overwhelmingly to divest from companies involved in human rights violations. Finally, the University continues to refuse to meet the demands of [thousands of academic student-workers](#) when it comes to fair wages, healthcare, international student protections, access to grievance and arbitration for discrimination, harassment, and other complaints, union shop, and union recognition for MA and undergrad student-workers.

These issues are united by a shared root cause: a flagrant disregard for initiatives democratically supported within the community. Your administration's unilateral decision-making process has perpetuated the existence of these injustices in our community despite possessing ample resources to confront them with structural solutions. **Should the University continue to remain silent in the face of the pressing demands detailed below, we and a thousand of fellow students are prepared to withhold tuition payments for the Spring semester and not to donate to the University at any point in the future. As a first step toward satisfying our demands, we request a meeting with the Presidents and key administrators across Columbia, Barnard, and Teachers College.**

Our demands are as follows:

- 1) Columbia must **alleviate the economic burden on students by reducing the cost of attendance and increasing financial aid.**
 - a) Reduce the cost of attendance (including tuition, fees, and room & board) by at least 10%.
 - b) Increase financial aid by at least 10%.
 - c) Replace the [“student responsibility”](#) with grants.

- d) We also demand that this reduction and increased aid should not come at the expense of instructor or worker pay, but rather at the expense of bloated administrative salaries, expansion projects, and other expenses that don't benefit students and workers.
- 2) Columbia must **fulfill its responsibilities to the people of West Harlem** by **committing to provide employment, education & affordable housing, and to end expansion.**
 - 3) Columbia must **defund Public Safety and invest in community safety solutions** that prioritize the safety of Black students and West Harlem residents, and repair harm caused by prior racist practices of Public Safety.
 - 4) Columbia must **commit to complete transparency about the University's investments and respect the democratic votes of the student body regarding investment and divestment decisions.** This includes respecting the referendums at Barnard and Columbia College to divest from companies involved in human rights violations, **divesting fully from fossil fuels**, and respecting the results of future referendums relating to investment decisions.
 - 5) Columbia **must bargain in good faith with unions on campus around their key demands for improved compensation, benefits, and protections.** This includes guaranteeing protections to international students and granting union recognition for MA and undergrad student-workers.

[Columbia students - sign on here: <https://bit.ly/tuitionstrike>]