

Media Advisory for Thursday, March 28, 2024, at 10:45 AM

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Occidental College Students to Walk Out of Class Thursday in Support of Union Demand; Student Workers and Allies to March to Campus President's Office and Call for Voluntary Recognition of a Union of Roughly 800 Undergraduate Employees

Demand for Voluntary Recognition Through Card Check Comes After Undergraduate Student Workers Collect Union Cards from a Supermajority of Their Colleagues; Walkout Comes on the Heels of Announcement that New College President Will Start July 1

Los Angeles — Occidental College students will walk out of class on Thursday and march to campus President Harry J. Elam Jr.'s office to demand voluntary recognition of a wall-to-wall union of roughly 800 undergraduate student workers.

The student employees — who are resident advisors, baristas, tour guides, tutors, photographers, mail clerks, lifeguards, researchers, information technology service technicians, circulation desk workers, conference assistants, and many more — have collected a supermajority of union cards from undergraduate employees to form their union with SEIU Local 721. Last Friday, the workers [filed for an election](#) with the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB).

Still, the students are demanding that President Elam and other college leaders voluntarily recognize their union through a card check process so that employees can start addressing their workplace issues immediately. Under card check, a neutral party would review the union authorization cards gathered by Occidental student workers. If a majority of undergraduate workers have signed cards, then the college would immediately recognize the union without any need for an NLRB election.

- **Who:** Occidental students and undergraduate workers who have launched a movement called Rising Occidental Student Employees (R.O.S.E.) and are forming a union with SEIU Local 721.
- **What:** Occidental College students will walk out of class on Thursday and march to campus President Harry J. Elam Jr.'s office to demand voluntary recognition of a wall-to-wall union of roughly 800 undergraduate student workers.
- **When:** **Thursday, March 28, 2024, at 10:45 AM**
- **Where:** Walkout and march to start in the quad in the center of campus — Occidental College, [1600 Campus Road, Los Angeles, California 90041](#).
- **Visuals/Sounds:** Students walking out of class and marching, chanting, playing music, and holding signs and banners with pro-worker slogans. [Click here to see photos of a past rally and march!](#)
- **Parking:** There is plenty of unrestricted parking on Campus Road.

The walkout and union demand comes on the [heels of an announcement that Tom Stritikus](#), currently the president of Fort Lewis College in Durango, Colorado, will succeed Elam as Occidental College's president. Stritikus will start on July 1.

"We're walking out of class today and calling on President Elam and Occidental's leaders to do the right thing and recognize our union through card check," says Nicholas Solimene, a senior at Occidental College, who works as a barista at a campus coffee shop and is a senior senator in the student government. "Even with a transition in leadership coming, don't kick the can down the road."

Solimene added: "My message to our new president: When you start, do not contest us, do not ignore us, and do not pretend we are a third party. We are student workers, we are hundreds strong, we are the union. Our movement has support from a supermajority of undergraduate student workers, and that support will only grow."

The union campaign — which student workers have called Rising Occidental Student Employees (R.O.S.E.) — launched on Wednesday, March 20, [at a kick-off rally attended by hundreds of students](#). Last Friday, [Occidental students marched to the college's administration building](#) to call for voluntary recognition through a card check process, but workers have still heard no response from anyone in leadership.

The union drive comes after years of Occidental's undergraduate student workers facing low wages, inconsistent hours, job insecurity, and dismissiveness from management over concerns about their working conditions. It also comes amid a [recent uptick in the number of union campaigns led by undergraduate workers on campuses](#) across the country as support for unionization grows among young people. Historically, such campaigns have been rare at colleges.

"Undergraduate student workers are rising up," says Wren Andres, a senior at Occidental who works as a mail clerk at the college. "We will no longer be ignored and disrespected. We will no longer accept caps on our earnings. We will no longer accept dismissiveness from management. We will no longer accept having no say in our working conditions."

Andres added: "At Occidental, it's time for our leaders to show that they are serious about fostering equity and cultivating a community of care. They can do that by recognizing our union without delay and working with us in good faith to address our concerns."

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