

Our strike is your fault! Challenges and opportunities for academic unions

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Academic labor organizing is on the rise as a means to advance living wages and working conditions, thereby addressing critical barriers to the participation of marginalized groups in geochemical research and other fields. This presentation examines the University of California academic workers' strike of fall 2022, the largest academic strike in the United States with 48,000 unionized workers on strike for six weeks across nine campuses. Mass participation was largely driven by the spiraling cost of living across the state, including 30-80% increases in graduate housing costs at the San Diego campus in 2021. At the Scripps Institution of Oceanography, a department at UC San Diego, challenges included insufficient strategic preparation, faculty relations and political consciousness, and isolation from other departments. Positive outcomes beyond the contract include the growth of student and postdoctoral community and strong autonomous organizing.