

Concerns raised in “Open Letter” from some Rossier deans and faculty	Responsive information from faculty organizing with United Faculty-UAW
We represent the RTPC full-time faculty at USC Rossier School of Education who are opposed to being included in the United Auto Workers’ proposed collective bargaining unit of USC RTPC full-time, part-time, adjunct faculty, and librarians. While we support the right of faculty across the university to pursue unionization, we personally believe that inclusion in this particular bargaining unit would not serve and <i>may ultimately harm</i> the working conditions, governance structures, and collaborative culture that define our work at USC Rossier. There are significant reasons why we will be voting no and believe the current effort is inappropriate for Rossier RTPC full-time faculty:	We encourage all faculty to make an informed decision about voting on unionization. Recently, the Provost and now some Deans and faculty have raised questions about how a union and collective bargaining can address the interests of faculty across 22 different schools. We believe these questions are best addressed by reference to <i>empirical evidence</i>, rather than speculation, when that is possible. Fortunately, there are a substantial number of examples that help us understand how collective bargaining has actually worked. Across the U.S., large, diverse faculties have successfully negotiated union contracts that improve pay and working conditions broadly while also accommodating the distinct wants and needs of specific groups.
1. The collective bargaining unit that is currently proposed by the United Auto Workers is large and diverse—representing 22 academic units and faculty of varying roles and types (full-time, part-time, adjunct; research, clinical, teaching, practitioner; librarians). As a unique and smaller professional school, we do not believe our interests will be adequately represented by such a large, complex bargaining unit. And, we worry that the interests of larger schools or larger faculty groups will drive bargaining priorities.	UAW represents over 100,000 academic workers at higher ed institutions across the country. Faculty at numerous colleges and universities have negotiated fair union contracts covering comparably diverse workforces to our faculty unit at USC. There are many examples, including grad workers at USC. Looking more closely at NYU, for example, full-time non-tenure-track faculty work in well over 100 different departments and programs. NYU faculty negotiated major improvements to pay, benefits and working conditions, preserved the right to participate in shared governance on non-bargaining topics, and protected an array of local/departmental practices where that was important. If the USC administration bargains in good faith, we are confident we can do the same. It is important to note that 81% of all 931 represented faculty voted to approve this collective bargaining agreement (meaning 83% participated, and 98% voted yes). The NYU contract includes provisions that address problems specific to particular

	schools or programs and protect practices or benefits that existed prior to bargaining and are better than the minimums negotiated in the contract. You can see a list of locally-specific provisions in the NYU contract, and their contract highlights here.
2. As a professional school, we train educators, administrators, and organizational leaders. Therefore, our RTPC faculty—composed of expert practitioners with extensive field experience—are instrumental to the creation, development, and oversight of our undergraduate, master’s, and EdD programs. In fact, of the 15 professional programs we offer at Rossier, RTPC full-time faculty are designated as program leads and governance chairs for all of them. Moreover, RTPC faculty occupy nearly all seats on our professional program governance committees. In addition to leading our programs, 5 out of 7 faculty positions at the Assistant Dean, Associate Dean, or Vice Dean-levels are occupied by RTPC full-time faculty. We believe that unionization, as proposed, may jeopardize our roles at USC Rossier, and we are not willing to take that risk.	This point assumes that someone besides RTPC faculty will decide what to bargain for; in reality, all RTPC faculty will have the opportunity to democratically decide our bargaining priorities, which could strengthen faculty governance at USC. For a great example of the participatory nature of collective bargaining, read “How bargaining works: notes from our colleagues at NYU.” It also assumes a zero-sum tradeoff between unionization and input into academic and curricular matters, which simply isn’t borne out by the tens of thousands of other faculty who engage in collective bargaining. Faculty at many other Universities and colleges have negotiated union contracts that improve their working conditions while preserving their role in academic and curricular matters. For instance, the NYU contract includes a provision that expressly affirms that faculty members will “<i>continue to provide input at all levels of shared governance on the academic quality of programs, curricula, courses, syllabi, and methods of instruction; teaching goals; enhancements to the educational experience within and outside of the classroom; standards of behavior in the classroom; the objectives and outcomes of student learning and assessment; methods of evaluation of students and grading; the review of educational and course materials, policies, and guidelines; and other matters of academic and pedagogical concern.</i>”
3. RTPC full-time faculty are also actively involved in hiring, merit review, and promotion practices at Rossier. Our Salary, Promotion, Tenure (SPT) committee is composed of both tenure-line and RTPC faculty;	A collective bargaining agreement is a product of negotiation. RTPC will democratically determine our priorities, including where to establish specific rights, protections, economic improvements, and where to NOT to change anything. All RTPC

an RTPC full-time faculty member co-chairs SPT. Moreover, we serve on hiring committees for both tenure-line and RTPC faculty positions. Our course coordinators and program leads, who are RTPC full-time faculty, are responsible for staffing and hiring for courses in our professional programs. RTPC faculty engage in merit reviews annually for their peers. The USC faculty handbook and our own Rossier guidelines protect these rights; a collective bargaining agreement would supersede existing policies.	faculty will have the opportunity to participate through bargaining surveys, town halls, ratifying initial bargaining goals, and voting on the final contract. The contract that faculty at NYU negotiated preserved the right of faculty to participate in: • Elected reappointment and promotion committees composed of mixed non-tenure-track and tenured/tenured-track faculty. • Hiring and search committees
4. Rossier has intentionally developed structures that demonstrate a long-term commitment to full-time RTPC faculty. Promotion pathways are transparent and include 3- and 5-year contracts. Moreover, 5 of our full-time RTPC faculty have been promoted to Professor of Distinction and have continuing appointments. We are well-represented on our Faculty Council, with 13 out of 16 seats currently filled by RTPC full-time faculty; the position of Faculty Council Chair alternates between tenure-line and RTPC faculty every 2 years. RTPC faculty work regularly alongside our tenure-line colleagues and administrators on committees and in concentrations. We do not want to lose what has already been established.	During collective bargaining, nothing can be unilaterally taken away. As mentioned in the previous answer, we - as RTPC faculty - would democratically set priorities, including what we would like to bargain to change and what NOT to change. A collective bargaining agreement could protect popular policies so USC could not change them unilaterally. As one example from the NYU contract, faculty negotiated to preserve popular sabbatical benefits available to only faculty in two divisions of NYU (Gallatin and Tisch), while establishing a new professional development leave benefit for faculty who were not entitled to one prior to unionization.
5. As a highly collaborative community, we value the ability we have to negotiate individually with the Rossier administration over such matters as leaves of absence, teaching loads, and job descriptions. With unionization, such decisions would be negotiated centrally through the union, resulting in standardized terms that could limit flexibility for special circumstances. We do not want to risk losing our agency and are not	As a dynamic and democratic process, collective bargaining can accommodate “flexibility for special circumstances.” Again, the NYU contract provides numerous examples. On the question of teaching loads, for example, NYU faculty negotiated the following: <i>“The parties acknowledge that the Department Chair or equivalent may engage directly with individual Contract Faculty Members on their teaching schedules, including course assignment, meeting days, times, and semester, consistent with this</i>

interested in working through union structures to meet our individual needs.	<i>Agreement.</i>"On the question of leaves, as another example, NYU faculty strengthened baseline leave protections while ensuring that nothing <i>"restricts a school, college, or department from offering a leave of absence or workload relief to a Contract Faculty Member in excess"</i> of the minimums set in the contract, providing faculty continued flexibility on this topic.
6. It is also important to consider the financial implications of unionization beyond headline salary increases. While negotiated raises may be achieved, they can be influenced by factors such as bargaining timelines, union dues, and broader institutional constraints. Given the finite resources available within USC Rossier and across USC, we are concerned about how these dynamics could affect long-term resource allocation, staffing, and program stability.	Collective bargaining is a bilateral process. Faculty would determine priorities democratically, participate in the bargaining process and, ultimately, vote whether to ratify any agreements reached between our elected bargaining committee and USC administration. As part of bargaining, the administration would have obligations to share information about finances so that faculty could make informed judgements about what is possible within existing constraints. At NYU, this process produced a final agreement that the faculty and the administration both celebrated. The NYU administration said <i>"The agreement recognizes the vital contributions our unionized contract faculty make to our students and our academic life, and it is sustainable for the University. It includes meaningful raises and comprehensive benefits that will improve the lives of every member."</i>
7. We respect and support the efforts of RTPC faculty across USC seeking greater stability, improved compensation, and stronger working conditions, and we recognize that there are real opportunities for improvement both across the university and within our own school. At the same time, we are mindful that faculty roles, responsibilities, and compensation vary significantly across USC's schools. Given this variation, we are concerned that a single, university-wide bargaining structure may not be well positioned to effectively represent or prioritize the	See our response to #1.

distinct needs of all groups. We also worry that such a structure could create tension among faculty with different starting points and priorities, rather than allowing schools to address their needs more directly within their own contexts.	
8. Finally, as a professional school focused on teaching, learning, and leadership, we place a high value on our agency to make context-specific decisions in the best interests of our students. We have concerns about how inclusion in a large, diverse bargaining unit could limit our ability to make decisions that are responsive to student needs, including those related to curriculum, the quality of instruction, and faculty hiring, evaluation, and promotion.	Again, collective bargaining would not limit our ability to participate in curriculum and the quality of instruction. As mentioned earlier, the NYU agreement preserves participation on shared governance committees that address these issues. RTPC faculty who meet the statutory definition of supervisory, e.g. have power to hire, promote, etc, would be excluded from the bargaining unit per the NLRB decision.
For these reasons, we are opposed to the United Auto Workers' petition to represent us as part of a single, university-wide collective bargaining unit.	The faculty organizers of UF-UAW petitioned for a unit inclusive of all schools with sufficient support for the union and holding an election because we know the most inclusive union will have the most power to improve conditions for all faculty.