



2025 Year in Review

United Campus Workers of Arizona

CWA Local 7065

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Letter from our President

I know many of us are breathing a sigh of relief that 2025 is finally coming to an end. We fought back in numerous battles against Trump's seemingly ceaseless attack on higher education: international student and worker visa revocations, the anti-DEI Executive Order, the Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education, to name a few. Many articulated the sensation of un-escapable burnout; after putting out one fire, another three seemed to appear on the horizon.

Let's celebrate our wins. We successfully delayed [university administrations' compact negotiations](#) with the Trump administration. We represented our general membership's legislative priorities to Arizona lawmakers at our first [Higher Education Legislative Advocacy](#) day. We shed light on the [government's opaque attack on international students and workers](#) at American universities. We hosted [Dis-Orientation](#) at all three of Arizona's public universities for the first time ever, engaging dozens of on and off campus groups and nearly a hundred students and workers. Three delegates from our Local 7065 attended [CWA's 80th convention](#) in Pittsburgh and voted on national priorities. As of this month, membership voted to create a new chapter for [Maricopa County Community Colleges District \(MCCCD\)](#) workers.

Across the country, labor unions have adapted and found ways to fight back. This first year of Trump's second presidential administration reinforced the age-old truth that **a bad boss is a good organizer**. The rise of grassroots organizing, particularly in the public sector, is a testament to the fact that unions aren't relics of the past. In industries like ours, workers are finding solidarity through more informal organizing methods. Despite numerous challenges, we are always better off when we band together with our colleagues to continue to push for better working and learning conditions.

Solidarity is more important now than ever before; as we've seen this past year, together we really are stronger. Let's continue to sharpen our vision for our organizing efforts in 2026 and beyond. We can look to the ongoing [University of California contract negotiations](#) to see what is possible for higher education workers. We can take

inspiration from UCW Colorado's attempts to codify [collective bargaining rights](#) statewide. We deserve a higher education system that's treated as a public good, that protects academic freedom, and provides a thriving wage for all workers. And we know that **when we organize, we win.**

Yours,

Marcos Esparza

Incoming 2026 CWA Local 7065 President



Federal Attacks on Higher Education

International Student and Worker Protections

This year, the U.S. government began a yet ongoing attack on international students and workers. The Trump administration revoked the visas of and deported thousands of international students and higher ed workers across the country. University administration remained largely silent or, when pressed to comment, claimed to be uninvolved. We combatted this attack on academic freedom with higher education and civil rights organizations across the country. We [worked with reporters across the state](#) to get the facts out in the face of the universities' silence. We hosted multiple Know Your Rights trainings, in English and Spanish, on your rights as non-citizens and as workers in Arizona. We signed on to a [statewide letter with CAIR-AZ](#) and forty other organizations calling on Governor Hobbs to protect free speech. [We called on ASU, NAU, and UA's presidents to sign on to the American Association of Colleges and Universities Call for Constructive Engagement](#). We continue to provide [educational information and legal resources on our website](#).

Attacks on DEI

The Trump administration's ongoing demonization of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs in public education has changed life at our Arizona institutions immensely. [U of A's president Garimella quietly scrubbed DEI language](#) from the university's websites before abruptly [closing and "consolidating" all of campuses' Cultural Resource Centers \(CRCs\)](#). [ASU and NAU were quick to follow](#). Nationally, research funding was hit hugely: grants with particular words or focuses of research like "transition" or "disability" were cut. This affected higher education first.

We pushed back by joining in protests, circulating petitions to reinstate fired CRC directors, and by [taking our issues straight to the Arizona Board of Regents in June](#). Many departments and colleges have simply changed some language in their program descriptions to carry on the same work under the radar.

Trump's "Compact for Excellence in Higher Education"

In October, the Trump administration issued a letter to nine American universities called the ["Compact for Academic Excellence in Higher Education."](#) Essentially, the letter

promised “preferential” federal funding in exchange for radical far-right shifts via federal oversight on campus. The University of Arizona was one of the nine chosen initially; as weeks passed, the Trump administration opened the compact agreement up to all American universities.

We immediately publicly [urged U of A president Garimella to reject the compact](#), later pushing for [ASU's Crow and NAU's Cruz Rivera to do the same](#).

We held teach-ins at ASU and U of A to educate the campus community about the compact and its promised harmful effects. We created pamphlets explaining point by point why the compact would be detrimental to life on campus as we know it that we distributed across all three campuses.

Though all three universities have publicly “rejected” the compact in some way or another, [we are watching to prevent backdoor negotiations](#).

First [Higher Education Legislative Advocacy \(HELA\) Day](#)

Higher Education Legislative Advocacy (HELA) Day is a multi-day event around our union's political advocacy efforts. This March, we took our membership to the offices of legislators in Arizona's capitol to push for pro-union and pro-worker relationships and policies. This year's Lobby Day was graciously co-hosted by the [Arizona Students Association](#) (ASA) and [Higher Education Labor United](#) (HELU).

We had an incredible time at the Arizona State Capitol, training together on Sunday and speaking to legislators in their offices together on Monday. Monday morning, we co-hosted a press conference with the Arizona Students' Association. We were joined by special guests [Margaret Cook](#), CWA Vice President of the Public, Healthcare, and Education Workers unit, and proud union member [Senator Lauren Kuby](#).

Last February, to inform our upcoming HELA day, our local voted on our legislative priorities. They include, in order of importance:

1. Increase public state funding for universities
2. Protect academic freedom at our public university campuses

3. Raise workers wages and benefits and lower the cost of living
4. Collective bargaining of public employees at universities
5. Respect 1st amendment right to free speech on public university campuses
6. Support K-12 public education and funding
7. Graduate student fees elimination/bundling
8. Protect voting rights and make voting registration more accessible
9. Support student representation across the state in rural, urban, and underserved communities

Many of our union's legislative priorities will be lobbied for and eventually signed into law. To bargain with our bosses, we will codify collective bargaining into Arizona state law. To increase funding at our universities, we will urge legislators to increase the annual budget allocated to higher education by the state. These are wins we CAN and WILL achieve. Together, we can change the law!

[Dis-Orientation at all three universities](#)

Every year, a group of new students, new employees, and new faculty start at our Arizona higher education institutions with access to limited resources and no idea how to connect with folks around them. Every fall, we host Dis-Orientation, a local organizations fair that unites community groups on (and off) campus as a coalition to explain what REALLY happens at our universities. This year, we hosted a Dis-Orientation event at ALL THREE of Arizona's public universities: ASU, NAU, and UA. At this year's Dis-Orientation events, we got over 100 new workers and students tapped into organizing, mutual aid opportunities, and advocacy groups at our universities.

Local 7065 at CWA 80th Convention in Philadelphia

In August, three UCWAZ, CWA Local 7065 delegates attended the CWA 80th Convention in Pittsburgh, PA. Delegates voted in nationwide resolutions, received an organizing award on behalf of our local, and picketed the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette's publisher John Block's home in solidarity with strikers (who have been striking for over 1,000 days). As CWA President Claude Cummings so aptly put, "Our momentum is strong! We will not be stopped by billionaires or bullies!" You can watch his full speech [here](#).



Delegates approved the following resolutions (you can read the full resolutions [here](#)):

- [Ten-year Project to Unionize Our Fellow Telecommunications Workers](#) reaffirms our commitment to organizing in our industry of origin.
- [Fighting the Trump Administration's Anti-Union Project 2025 Playbook](#)
- [Protecting Our Public Services](#)
- [Trans Rights are Workers' Rights](#)
- [A Generational Fight for Our Freedoms](#)
- [Restoring Federal Funding for the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Local Public Media](#)
- [International Solidarity](#)

Delegates voted in favor of making the CWA budget an annual process rather than bi-annual, and to continue using excess strike funds for organizing direct join unions across the country. They also heard from Gwynne Wilcox who was illegally dismissed by the Trump administration earlier this year and is fighting to return to her position as NLRB Chair.

From their conversations with delegates and staff from other unions around the country, UCWAZ has made excellent progress in recruitment over the past two years.

Mini Organizing Drives & ABOR

This year, we hosted mini-organizing drives alongside our regular visits to the Arizona Board of Regents (ABOR) board meetings.

In June, we gathered one of our biggest ABOR public comment coalitions ever at the University of Arizona. Students and workers from organizations across campus and from around the state joined us to flood the public comments section. One student worker affected by Garimella's DEI shutdowns on campus, Francisco, filibustered for 14 minutes and was threatened with arrest. You can read Francisco's full speech [here](#). In the weeks following, several of our members sent this [linked editorial](#), "Public comment as a structure test", to Higher Education Labor United (HELU) for display on their blog.



We hosted three mini-organizing drives this year at ASU, NAU, and UA. In the spring of 2026, we plan to host our first organizing drive at our newest chapter, MCCCCD!

We're Growing!

Maricopa County Community Colleges District (MCCCCD)!

In November, our local's general membership voted to update our bylaws to include the addition of a new chapter: the Maricopa Community Colleges District chapter. Our local now officially organizes with higher education workers at all three of Arizona's public universities and with Arizona's largest community college district! You can read more about our chapter at MCCCCD and how to join [here on our website](#).

Welcoming our new part-time NAU Organizer, Zoe Jacoby!

This fall, we hired a new part-time Organizer for our Northern Arizona University (NAU) Chapter, Zoe Jacoby!

Zoe Jacoby (she/they) is our new UCW-AZ NAU organizer. She is originally from Phoenix, AZ, but has been living in Flagstaff for 9 years. They are currently a graduate student at NAU completing their master's in social work. Previously they worked as an organizer with NextGen America during the 2022 election and later trained organizers and volunteers in Arizona to help raise the minimum wage. Most recently, Zoe was the deputy campaign manager for Joshua Polacheck during his AZ corporation commission campaign. Zoe strives to fight for better working conditions and equity of all university staff, faculty, and students. When not organizing, Zoe likes to create art, hang out with their cat, and get involved in the community! Zoe can be reached by phone at (928) 224-9268 or by email at zoe@ucwaz.org.

What's next: visioning for 2026

As we leave infancy and move into our teenage years, United Campus Workers of Arizona is shifting from building awareness to targeted recruitment and long-term campaigns. Our organizing work will focus on higher education as a free and accessible public good that advances the fight for racial, gender, 2SLGBTQA+, and disability labor justice.

Through our efforts, we are building power to improve working conditions and the livelihoods of ourselves, our students, and our families. With updated bylaws, a newly elected Steering Committee, and years of organizing experience under our belts, we plan to take 2026 by storm.

Stay Connected!

There are so many ways to stay up to date with our ongoing activities! You can check out our website, follow us on social media, and find our updated campaigns and petitions on Action Network.

Want to talk to a staff organizer? Reach out to info@ucwaz.org and we'll get you connected.

You can find us on all platforms @UCWARizona

- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/UCWARizona>
- Instagram: <https://instagram.com/ucwarizona>
- X: <https://x.com/UCWARizona>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/ucwaz/>
- Youtube: <https://www.youtube.com/@UCWAZ>
- Website: <https://ucwarizona.org/>
- Linktree: <https://linktr.ee/UCWARizona>

Remember, WE are the union and together, we are stronger. [Join us](#) to build worker power in your workplace.

