

UUP asks for more \$\$\$ for SUNY, full-time faculty

Weeks before Gov. Eliot Spitzer introduces his first state budget, UUP President Bill Scheuerman is building momentum for additional funds for SUNY to cover continuing enrollment growth and more full-time faculty.

Scheuerman made his pitch during his testimony before the Assembly Standing Committee on Higher Education, which was studying the impact of the 2006-07 state budget on the state's public higher education system.

Scheuerman praised the Legislature for taking what he called "critical steps" to avert a further deterioration in the University's educational infrastructure.

"We believe you have set the stage for subsequent actions that would counter, over time, the impacts of historically unfunded enrollment growth and structural deficits caused by inadequate funding of mandatory costs and inflationary increases," he said.

Scheuerman clearly established how SUNY has been underfunded, explaining that in 1990-91, more than 75% of SUNY's budget came from the state, but by 2005-06, state funding had plummeted to 51%. That's led to a shortage of full-time faculty to teach a growing student body.

"If the ratio of full-time faculty to full-time equivalent students in 2005-06 was equal to the ratio that existed in the mid 1990's, the



UUP President Bill Scheuerman delivers his testimony before the Assembly Standing Committee on Higher Education, flanked by NYSUT Executive VP Alan Lubin, right, and NYSUT Director of Legislation Steve Allinger, left.

campuses would have had almost 2,000 more full-time academic faculty than was the case last year," Scheuerman said.

Scheuerman strongly requested the committee to not just maintain the current amount of state funding for SUNY in the 2007-08 state budget, but also supply new state support to offset additional mandatory expenditures and enrollment growth.

UUP's appeal drew support from its statewide affiliate at the hearing. NYSUT VP Alan Lubin called on the governor and the Legislature to reverse years of chronic underfunding.

"Improving New York's economy can be a reality, if we continue to invest in SUNY, CUNY and our community colleges," Lubin said. "Our colleges and university systems can be the engine that powers New York's economic resurgence."

Spitzer will unveil his budget Jan. 31.

UUP rides herd vs. privatization

UUP isn't about to throw in the towel in its battle against the privatization of SUNY's three public hospitals, even though the Berger Commission's recommendations became law Jan. 1.

The Legislature failed to reject the commission's report at its Dec. 13 special session, even as more than 400 members of UUP, NYSUT and other statewide unions rallied outside the Capitol urging them to just say no.

But UUP is taking a different tack to save the SUNY hospitals in Syracuse, Brooklyn and Stony Brook, working with lawmakers to amend the commission's report before its provisions are implemented.

UUP has a strong partner in the Legislature in Ron Canestrari, the newly chosen Assembly majority leader. He believes there is time to act.

"There are legal means to address the issue and the proposal, in the spirit of compromise with the Executive and his Department of Health," Canestrari said. "I do believe there are steps we can take to fine tune it if the political will is there."

UUP is also asking members to fax letters to lawmakers that are accessible through UUP's Web site. The union will also conduct an aggressive advertising campaign against privatization in Albany and Syracuse, and will organize regional legislative meetings in Brooklyn, Syracuse, Stony Brook and Buffalo to stress to local lawmakers the importance of the SUNY hospitals and health science centers.

Smith named UMU's Acting Chapter Prez

Phil Smith, VP for academics at Upstate Medical University, has been appointed acting chapter president by the chapter's Executive Board, effective Jan. 5. The move follows a request from Chapter President Ron Daloia for a two-month leave due to illness.



Smith

Smith is no stranger to UUP leadership. He previously served as UMU chapter president from 1995 to 2000, as well as statewide VP for academics

from 2000 to 2004 and chief negotiator during the last round of contract talks with the state.

Smith will continue to serve as UMU's VP for academics while assuming the duties of the chapter president during Daloia's leave of absence.

Reminders/Upcoming meetings

January

- 15—UUP Office closed for Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 30—UUP Legislative Luncheon, Albany

February

- 9-10—2007 Winter DA, The Desmond
- 19—UUP Office closed for Presidents Day
- 26-27—NYSUT Higher Ed Lobby Day

March

- 9-10—Chapter President Retreat, Mohonk Mountain House
- 9-20—NYSUT Committee of 100, The Desmond
- 29-31—AFT Higher Ed Conference, Portland, Ore.

(excerpts of selected newsclips)

The Legislative Gazette —Jan. 8

Spitzer promises to improve SUNY

During his State of the State address last week, Gov. Eliot Spitzer promised to improve the state university system by providing it with a competitive edge over private universities.

"We must begin an effort to make our higher education system the best in America," said Spitzer. "New Yorkers need more than a high school degree."

Specifically, Spitzer said he would form a Commission on Public Higher Education to create a plan of action as a first step toward solving the state university's financial woes and to ensure more access to these universities.

Spitzer's remarks were well received by advocates for the improvement of the state's higher education system.

"I'm thrilled to hear Gov. Spitzer voice his intention to make New York's public higher education system the best in America," said William E. Scheuerman, the president of United University Professions, whose members work in the state university system.

UUP represents 32,000 faculty members from 29 SUNY campuses.

"We hope Gov. Spitzer will maintain that momentum by proposing a new state budget that continues investing in SUNY's faculty and other resources students need," said Scheuerman.

Since 1994, SUNY's enrollment has increased by 44,000, but has lost 1,000 full-time professors causing the state's colleges and universities to reject qualified students in order to maintain a feasible student-to-professor ratio, according to UUP.

Scheuerman said he hopes that with proper funding more students will be inclined to choose a SUNY school over a private university, which will be a long-term investment to New York State.

About 81% of those students who attend a SUNY school stay in New York State after graduation and contribute to the culture and economic growth of New York State, Scheuerman said.

"Investing in SUNY is common sense; it's time we have a governor who is on board."

The Daily Star—Jan. 4

Education unions, groups praise spitzer

Gov. Eliot Spitzer's first State of the State address on Wednesday won praise from education leaders after he pledged to improve schools and recommended billions of dollars to pay for it.

Spitzer proposed adding \$4 billion to \$6 billion more each year in aid to New York City schools - spending prompted by a court order - and another \$1 billion or more for high-needs schools outside the city.

Many of the schools in this rural area are considered high-needs districts because of their poverty rates.

The governor also proposed longer school days and school years, after-school programs and better teachers, as well as greater accountability for school spending.

"There will be no more excuses for failure," Spitzer said. "The debate will no longer be about money, but about performance; the goal will no longer be adequacy, but excellence; the timetable will no longer be tomorrow, but today."

Timothy G. Kremer, executive director of the New York State School Boards Association, said "the new school-funding system the governor proposes should provide adequate resources, distribute them equitably and predictably according to a rationale that all can understand, and should allow local flexibility in their use."

School boards, he continued, welcomed Spitzer's acknowledgement that the system fails to provide resources adequate for every child to attain his or her educational potential.

"If armed with resources that are adequate to the task, local school boards will embrace the responsibility for using each dollar efficiently to improve the achievement of all children," Kremer said. ...

Spokesman for the School Administrators Association of New York State, however, expressed concern about "Spitzer's meaning of 'consequences for failure,' as the needs and resources of our students and schools vary greatly across this diverse state."

New York State United Teachers President Richard C. Iannuzzi said Spitzer's speech reminded him of a strong teacher's first day in front of a new class.

"Really good teachers establish a tone on that first day," he said. "The governor did that. It's good classroom management to start strong, with clear goals and responsibilities."

Iannuzzi said the 575,000-member NYSUT, the state's largest union, supports the governor's vision for change.

William E. Scheuerman, president of United University Professions, said he was "thrilled" about Spitzer's stated intention to make New York's public higher-education system the best in America.

"The State University of New York is already heading in the right direction with the hiring of more full-time faculty last year," he said. "We hope Gov. Spitzer will maintain that momentum by proposing a new state budget that continues investing in SUNY's faculty and other resources students need."

The Post-Standard—Dec. 21

Health care is not a bottom-line business

To the Editor:

The commentary from the Business Council of New York State endorsing the recommendations of the Berger Commission confirms our worst fears. They see health care as a bottom-line business.

Sadly, this is the mentality that would rule if the three SUNY hospitals, including Upstate Medical University, are privatized. If corporate bean counters take charge, most of the unique but expensive health care services - such as Upstate's burn unit - would cease to exist, sacrificed because they consume rather than create revenue.

Where would patients whose lives hang in the balance go for treatment? Saving lives should be the state's highest priority when it comes to health care.

Phillip H. Smith

United University Professions

Upstate Medical University Chapter

Vice President for Academics

Syracuse

Newsday—Dec. 12

Labor blasts health care privatizing

Union leaders representing faculty at SUNY slammed a report urging privatization and consolidation of several health care facilities across the state.

"These hospitals provide a lifeline for their communities, offering services many may not otherwise have access to," said William E. Scheuerman, president of United University Professions, in a news release yesterday.

Scheuerman testified at a hearing in Manhattan before the Assembly Standing Committee on Health, joining six other UUP leaders, activists and citizens who testified at regional hearings across the state, including Long Island.

They urged legislators to reject recommendations offered by the Berger Commission, which called for privatizing public hospitals in Brooklyn, Syracuse and Stony Brook.

If lawmakers can't arrive at a decision by Dec. 31, the recommendations will be implemented automatically.

Those recommendations include closing nine hospitals and seven nursing homes as part of a shake-up of a system in which many hospitals are in bankruptcy and most nursing homes operate at a loss. No Long Island hospitals are recommended for closing, but nine would undergo restructuring or downsizing.

Hospital officials and legislators could not be reached for comment last night, but Scheuerman said he was concerned the plan would curb access to quality health care for the poor and uninsured.

"If privatized, it is likely that many of the more expensive and unique of the critical services these hospitals provide would be cut back, or, more likely, completely abolished," he said.

Gov. George Pataki and Governor-elect Eliot Spitzer both endorse the recommendations while Senate Majority Leader Joseph Bruno (R-Brunswick) and Assembly Speaker Sheldon Silver (D-Manhattan) have not embraced it.