

# THE VOICE



Fall/Winter 2020

## COVID-19

***Surge in cases taking toll  
on Upstate, Western NY***

— Page 4

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# THE Voice

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The Voice is the official publication of United University Professions (UUP), bargaining agent for the more than 37,000 academic and professional employees of the State University of New York.

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## TO THE EDITOR

### Identify the author, please

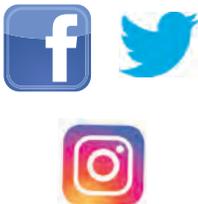
#### To the Editor:

Why is the author of "To the Point" on page 3 not identified? Certainly the squiggle at the end of the piece cannot be read as a name by 99 percent of the readers. The picture may, or may not, be one of those identified on page 2, but the identity is uncertain.

The author of any factual comment or opinion in a published article should always be identified, unless there is some reason for secrecy. In that case, that reason should be explained.

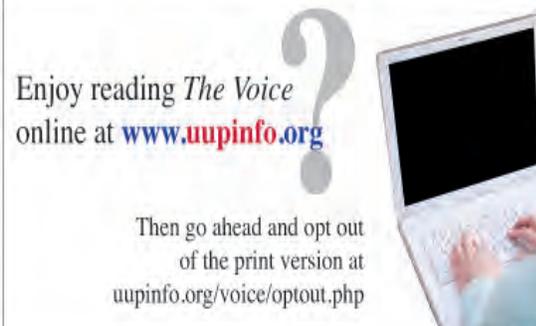
— **Richard F. Schwartz**  
Binghamton Chapter retiree

*(Editor's note: We heard you and we added it. If you check out page 3, you'll see that the header now reads, "To the Point: A Message from UUP President Fred Kowal." The "squiggle" is President Kowal's signature.)*



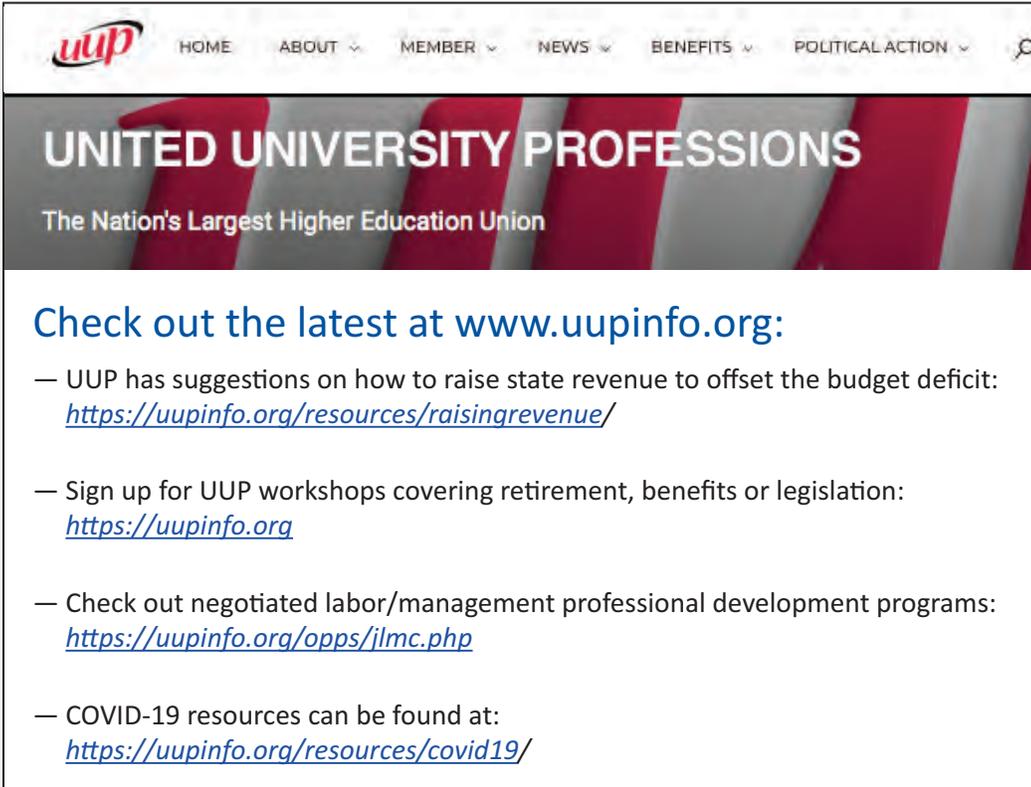
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UUP HOME ABOUT MEMBER NEWS BENEFITS POLITICAL ACTION

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**Check out the latest at [www.uupinfo.org](http://www.uupinfo.org):**

- UUP has suggestions on how to raise state revenue to offset the budget deficit:  
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- Check out negotiated labor/management professional development programs:  
<https://uupinfo.org/opps/jlmc.php>
- COVID-19 resources can be found at:  
<https://uupinfo.org/resources/covid19/>

## Together we hurt; together we heal

One of the pleasures of this job is to read chapter newsletters, as they often have remarkably good writing that truly stirs my soul. So, I read with great interest Cortland Chapter President Jackie Pittsley's column in the December issue of *The Cortland Cause*, the chapter's membership newsletter.

She titled it "What It Is," and for the next 1,267 words, she proceeded to give voice to the struggles and helplessness that so many of us feel.

"We are all exhausted," she wrote. "We are all worried about the financial health of Cortland and SUNY. We are worried about our jobs. We are worried about enrollment. We are worried about our students. We are worried about the safety of our families and friends, and, of course, we are concerned about our own well-being."

From residence hall directors to counseling center workers, Jackie thanks everyone for their efforts. She empathizes with employees, some of whom have worked at SUNY Cortland for years, who aren't being renewed.

And she closes speaking from the heart: "There is UUP, and the solidarity that binds us together," she wrote. "We will never stop fighting for you."

Jackie's right. The year 2020 has been a tough year and there's no sugar-coating it. We are tired, we are worried and we are bracing for what's coming next. We're concerned about our families, our jobs and our lives. We are hurting; too many of us have lost loved ones to this dreaded disease. Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers.

Yet, we have persevered. We've risen to each occasion, met each task and succeeded. And while more challenges await, I want to thank you for all that you've done. Your efforts were—and are—Herculean.

### HOME WORK

Thankfully, many of us have been able to work safely from home; a telecommuting agreement negotiated by UUP with the state saw to that, though we continue

to fight for it to be used liberally by all campuses. Our essential workers stepped up, securing their campuses after in-person classes were canceled in March, and heading back to campus months later to welcome students for the fall semester.

Through it all, our members showed tenacity, flexibility, patience and a never-ceasing drive and energy to provide our students with the world-class education they deserve. For that, you all have my gratitude and thanks.

It hasn't been easy, but we've learned a lot. And we have a solid working relationship with SUNY Chancellor Jim Malatras, who has worked closely with UUP to put necessary safety measures in place.

### SO MUCH PAIN

As our campuses closed, the emergency rooms at our public teaching hospitals filled with COVID-19 patients. The early days of the pandemic were a horror show for our frontline workers at SUNY's academic medical centers, especially in Brooklyn and Stony Brook.

These dedicated professionals put their lives and the lives of their families on the line, working double shifts and extra shifts to care for the COVID-19 patients who flooded our hospitals. They did so while enduring severe shortages of personal protective equipment, reusing N95 masks for days at a time and even using garbage bags as surgical gowns.

Your bravery and your dedication—to your patients and to your work—shines brightly in these dark times. You are an inspiration to us all.

We at UUP did all we could to help; we provided hotel rooms for those who worked extra shifts and feared infecting their families by returning home each night. We sent large shipments of isolation gowns, masks, gowns and other PPE to our frontline workers.

Across the state, UUP members sprang into action, using ingenuity and whatever was available to make face shields and face masks. Dr. Frank Middleton, an Upstate Medical University Chapter member, created a coronavirus-detecting saliva test ranked No. 1 by the U.S. Food



and Drug Administration. You can read his story on page 7.

Others, like UMU Chapter member Becky Hogle, volunteered for clinical trials of the Pfizer vaccine, which is being distributed across America. You can read her story on page 9.

Yet, the pain continues. As *The Voice* went to press, nearly 320,000 Americans had died—at a rate that exceeded 3,000 deaths a day for the first time in early December—due to complications from COVID-19. It didn't have to be this way. But with President-elect Joe Biden set to take office Jan. 20, I am hopeful that things will begin to change for the better.

### DARKEST BEFORE THE DAWN

Until then, we must brace for the worst. Thankfully, health care workers nationwide are receiving COVID-19 vaccines and widespread distribution of vaccines will start soon. At last, there is light at the end of the tunnel.

Until we reach the end, please stay safe. Wear a face mask, wash your hands and social distance. When the vaccine becomes available, get it.

Take time for yourselves during the break. Relax and do things that make you happy. You deserve it.

Finally, know this: Your union is always there for you. I, along with your state-wide officers, will continue to reach out to you. That works both ways.

UUP is a strong family. We take care of each other. We will walk this road together.

And we will get through this. Together.

# Exhausted but undaunted

## Upstate, Buffalo HSC members respond to regional COVID-19 surge

BY DARRYL McGRATH

**T**he 24-year-old woman had trouble breathing when she arrived in November at the emergency department of Upstate Community Hospital, one of two hospitals on the Upstate Medical University campus in Syracuse.

The emergency department staff quickly determined that she was in acute respiratory distress; she was laboring to pull enough air into her lungs to remain conscious. Her condition crashed before anyone could figure out why. When she stopped breathing, the doctors and nurses treating her gave their all to a resuscitation effort that had a terrible ending. The woman never regained consciousness, and she died.

It was only after her death that Dr. Jay Brenner, a UUP member and the director of Community Hospital's emergency department who was part of that resuscitation effort, learned that the young woman had COVID-19, which apparently neither she nor her family knew. He also learned that her family had been worried about her symptoms, but that she had refused to seek medical treatment sooner. Why did she wait? Would she have lived if she had heeded her family's concern? She happened to be Black, a demographic that has suffered terribly during the pandemic. Had an earlier experience at a hospital made her distrustful of the system? Did she fear that she could not afford her care, even

though SUNY hospitals treat all patients, regardless of their ability to pay? The unanswered questions and the tragic death of such a young adult haunted Brenner.

And situations like this are likely

to happen again and again this winter at Upstate.



BRENNER



PHOTO COURTESY OF UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

HOSPITAL WORKERS MUST PASS THROUGH A TEMPERATURE SCREENING STATION BEFORE ENTERING. HOSPITALS AND HEALTH SYSTEMS ARE REQUIRED TO ACTIVELY SCREEN EMPLOYEES FOR COVID-19 SYMPTOMS AND FEVER PRIOR TO EACH SHIFT OR EVERY TWELVE HOURS.

“We are very much in the midst of our second wave of COVID,” Brenner said. “We have been seeing a surge of patients like never before.”

This surge has been characterized by a mixture of tragedy and hope, and it's the glimmers of hope that keep UUP members in Syracuse and Buffalo going. Ten days later, another woman came into the Upstate Community Hospital emergency department with shortness of breath. She got to the hospital before her body ran low on oxygen, and she was also found to have COVID-19, but at a much less critical stage than the young woman who had died. This second patient was a candidate for the antibody infusion treatment that the FDA had just authorized for mildly to moderately ill coronavirus patients, and her prognosis was good. She was able to avoid hospitalization.

These two examples illustrate the difficult, exhausting and often-uncertain path that UUP members at SUNY's two academic medical centers in Syracuse and Buffalo face in this second surge. One is

a story of heartbreaking loss that leaves its mark on medical experts who know they must focus on the next patient, the one who might be saved. The other is a story of how much has improved with the new treatments and better understanding of COVID-19 that have evolved since the coronavirus first tore through the country in the spring.

### TRAGIC RECORDS REPEATEDLY BROKEN

This fall surge has affected large swaths of New York. The difference this time is that central upstate and Western New York have been hit in a way that they never were last spring, when New York City and Long Island became hot spots. Back then, Gov. Andrew Cuomo designated SUNY Downstate Health Sciences Center's University Hospital in Brooklyn as a COVID-19-only treatment center—a designation that hospital still holds—and at one point, there were so many critically ill patients in the emergency department and the intensive care unit that Dr.

Michael Augenbraun, a UUP member and chief of Downstate's division of infectious diseases, described the scene as a "charnel house."

This fall, the coronavirus expanded into states that were barely touched in the spring, and into rural regions of states whose major cities had been overwhelmed in the first round, as has happened in New York. Each day sets terrible new national and statewide records for numbers of cases diagnosed, hospitalizations and deaths. In these historic circumstances, records quickly become meaningless—such as Dec. 9, which generated headlines when more than 3,000 people died in one day in the United States, making that the largest one-day national death toll of the pandemic—because these records are often broken a day or two later. The headlines in late May, when the United States reached 100,000 deaths, now seem almost quaint for the disbelief they conveyed. As *The Voice* went to press, the country was approaching 320,000 COVID-19 deaths.

What does this national catastrophe mean for the 150 miles between Syracuse and Buffalo, an area that covers three major cities, including Rochester; rural land; and countless small towns?

"The problems are different from the spring," said Robert Corona, a medical doctor, chief executive officer of Upstate University Hospital and a former UUP member. "Now what keeps me up at night is the exhaustion of our staff."



CORONA

He believes that staff members at the two hospitals at Upstate are admirably coping. He is proud of the fact that an Upstate researcher and UUP member, Frank Middleton, had a lead role in the development of a highly accurate and nationally acclaimed saliva-based coronavirus test. Middleton worked in cooperation with Quadrant Biosciences, a firm based at the Upstate campus as part of the state's START-UP NY public-private partnership program. Corona is gratified that Upstate

was able to help SUNY with the daunting task of using that test for more than 140,000 students before the Thanksgiving break. He is grateful for the help that Upstate has received from UUP at the chapter and statewide levels, in everything from the procurement of personal protective equipment, to UUP's role as a channel of communication between administration and staff.

But he is upset that Upstate employees have been expected to do so much without the hazard pay that many other workers have received from private hospital networks in the state. UUP pressed hard for the hazard pay, to no avail.

"I know there have been policies floated that would provide additional support for these frontline workers," Corona said. "I hope we can find a way to enact some of these programs and provide the extra protections or pay for these workers who give so much every day only to return the next day and give more of themselves."

### BUFFALO BRACED FOR OUTBREAK

At Buffalo HSC, UUP Chapter President Phil Glick, a pediatric surgeon, said that because "we learned so much in the spring," UUP members "are feeling a lot more comfortable now than we ever did in the spring." Among the lessons that are helping now: Hospitals have learned how to quickly add intensive care unit rooms, as well as when to do so; and they stockpiled personal protective gear to prevent the shortages that plagued health care workers nine months ago.

Buffalo HSC is the only one of SUNY's four academic medical centers that does not have a dedicated SUNY teaching hospital; instead, practitioners and medical students use private hospitals in the Buffalo region. UUP members are following the precautions and protocols of whatever hospital they enter, but those hospitals, Glick said, "are doing a fantastic job."

Although the caseload in Western New York is much higher now than in the spring, area hospitals—at least as of Thanksgiving—had not yet reached capacity. The fall count of positive COVID-19 tests includes more young people, who are usually not hospitalized with the disease as often as older people, Glick said. And the grim reason that more young people are



GLICK

now infected may be that the coronavirus already hit the more vulnerable older people in the spring, in the highly efficient way that viruses have evolved to succeed. The eight-county region of Western New York exceeded 1,300 deaths in the pandemic as of Dec. 22, according to the *Buffalo News*. Gov. Cuomo announced Nov. 30 that elective surgeries would be halted in Erie County, to ensure enough hospital space to handle the growing surge.

Glick chairs UUP's ad hoc statewide Health and Safety Committee, which UUP created to help the union respond to the pandemic. The committee reviewed UUP's recommendations for the spring semester at SUNY as they were being developed. Among the recommendations: that the mental health effects of the pandemic on members be taken into consideration, and that information about mental health resources be made widely available.

### STAFF NEED HELP

That same concern has been part of Upstate Medical University's response to the pandemic.

"From what I hear, our nurses are exhausted," said SarahLee Ritchie, a UUP member and the Employee Assistance Program coordinator at Upstate. "They can't relax when they are off."

Ritchie is the sole EAP staff member at Upstate, so she has fielded many phone calls from medical staff who sometimes "just need to vent." She said the hospital has provided excellent internal support for staff, and that if someone wants to connect with a counselor outside of the hospital, she tries to match that staff member to a counselor who meets their preference—such as a counselor who is male or female, Christian, or affiliated with a particular coverage plan. The problem, she said, has been finding counselors whose schedules can accommodate new clients.

Because she understands the stresses

see COVID-19, page 6

## COVID-19 ...

continued from page 5

that medical staff face, she used to respond to phone calls and emails at all times, including nights and weekends. Eventually, she said, “I had to learn how to set limits in my home environment, and not look at my email at night or on the weekends.” Even so, she is usually up before daybreak, checking messages that came in overnight.

“There’s times it’s been difficult,” Ritchie said. “I think people are learning to support each other. They’ve had to learn how to do that differently. It’s not, ‘Let’s go and grab a cup of coffee or lunch.’ They’re doing FaceTime.”

### STAFF SICK, QUARANTINED AND RUNNING SHORT

Staff shortages have added to the anxiety, Ritchie said. And they are a real worry. UUP Chapter President Rich Veenstra described in a Nov. 23 email a day of caseload records at Upstate—a situation which was, he added, “expected to get worse after Thanksgiving.” On that day, Upstate had 62 COVID-19 inpatients, with 22 of them in intensive care units—higher numbers than the hospital had ever seen in the spring. On that same day, 142 staff members were unable to work, because they had either tested positive for the coronavirus or were in quarantine.

“This is our springtime surge,” Veenstra wrote.

His prediction that the crisis would worsen after Thanksgiving proved correct. By the time he again described the surge in a Dec. 11 email, Upstate had canceled elective surgeries, and “that means a budget shortfall will likely develop again.” With so many staff members either sick or in quarantine because of exposure to the coronavirus, the hospital faced the real possibility that it would barely have enough staff to treat patients.

Although Gov. Cuomo has issued a call for retired nurses and doctors to step up and help ease staffing shortages, this is more difficult to do than it sounds. Many retired medical professionals are either working at a job they took since leaving Upstate, or, as Veenstra noted, “they haven’t been practicing bedside for



PHOTO COURTESY OF UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

SUNY UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY EMPLOYEES HAVE RISEN TO THE CHALLENGE OF SERVING THEIR STUDENTS, PATIENTS AND COMMUNITIES DURING THE NEARLY YEARLONG CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC.

years.” Instead, the hospital is using non-clinical faculty and staff as “runners” to get supplies to the COVID units so that clinical staff don’t have to interrupt patient care. Retired medical professionals who do not feel up to providing bedside care on their own are acting as “helpers” to the nurses. And some are volunteering at Upstate’s COVID-19 testing site for symptomatic employees, at the New York State Fairgrounds.

“This surge is triple what we experienced in the spring and is stretching our staff and resources to the maximum,”

Veenstra added. Onondaga County hit a record daily high of 466 new positive cases Dec. 11, and the seven-day positive rate in central upstate New York had reached 6.73 percent that

week. Veenstra feared that the hospital would also reach a record number of daily deaths, hospitalizations and patients in intensive care units that week.

“We have way more patients now in the hospital than we ever did in the spring,” said Leslie Kohman, a longtime thoracic surgeon at Upstate who is now the hospital’s first chief wellness officer. “We’re looking at a very bad December.”

### STAFF SUPPORT

Kohman started as chief wellness officer in early October, just as the fall surge had begun. She knew that under the best of times, medicine is a high-stress field, that doctors have higher-than-average rates of suicide, and that “the well-being of medical staff influences the quality of care.” And it’s not an easy problem to address, she said, because “physicians don’t seek help, and we think we can solve our own problems.”

She has helped develop a number of support systems for the staff, including asking doctors who normally work with outpatients to help care for inpatients. She set up some small but helpful gestures, such as having the hospital provide free takeout Thanksgiving meals to staff. The hospital set aside a space for medical staff that in any other time would be considered a break lounge, but which is now serving as a place for staff members to decompress by talking to colleagues. The hospital has provided counseling opportunities to medical residents and fellows, many of whom are having an unexpectedly brutal introduction to their careers in medicine. She has assembled a list of resources that staff can access by calling a COVID-19 resource line at the hospital. And Upstate has 24 trained staff members who are providing peer support to colleagues on a dedicated phone line. Some



# Upstate member hailed for ‘highly accurate’ COVID-19 test

BY DARRYL MCGRATH

One of the most outstanding characteristics of UUP members as they have responded to the coronavirus pandemic is how quickly they have risen to the incredible challenge of serving their students and their fellow New Yorkers during the worst imaginable time.

Even by that high standard, the work of UUPer Frank Middleton of Upstate Medical University in helping to develop a highly accurate saliva-based test for the coronavirus is noteworthy for receiving statewide and national accolades. He developed the test with Quadrant Biosciences, a research firm based on the Upstate campus as part of the state’s START-UP NY public-private partnership program.

“New York’s medical experts are second to none, and from the very beginning of this pandemic, we have relied on their vast knowledge and expertise to inform our response,” Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in a statement. “On behalf of the family of New York, I thank SUNY Upstate Medical, Quadrant Biosciences and Dr. Frank Middleton for their diligence and steadfast commitment to fighting this common enemy.”

The [U.S. Food and Drug Administration](#) gave the test a No. 1 ranking for its ability to detect the virus in its earliest stages. The FDA also hailed the test as one of the most sensitive; it ranks sixth worldwide in detecting the virus.

The test was also used in SUNY’s daunting effort to check more than 140,000 students for COVID-19 before they went home for



PHOTO COURTESY OF UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY

UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY CHAPTER MEMBER DR. FRANK MIDDLETON TALKS ABOUT THE SALIVA-BASED COVID-19 TEST HE HELPED TO DEVELOP WITH QUADRANT BIOSCIENCES, A RESEARCH FIRM LOCATED ON THE SUNY UPSTATE CAMPUS.

the Thanksgiving break that marked the end of their fall semester.

“Now we’ve got schools all across the country using it,” said Robert Corona, Upstate’s CEO and a longtime former UUP member. He called the development of the test at Upstate a perfect example of academic and private-sector collaboration, as well as a compelling argument for why this is such an important time for the state to invest in SUNY.

Middleton holds numerous academic appointments at Upstate as an associate professor of neuroscience and physiology, biochemistry and molecular biology, pediatrics, and psychiatry and behavioral sciences. His research areas include the link among genetics, the nervous system, and neurological and psychiatric disorders.

of the clinical staff are also participating in peer-support outreach to different hospitals in the area.

“They are really, really stretched,” Kohman said of the medical staff. “And it’s different from in the spring, when everybody was gung-ho. Now, it’s, ‘Here we go again.’ People are at their limit, with no end in sight. So, I’m really worried about everybody. They’re being asked to give a lot.”

She also knows that her colleagues will, in fact, continue to give—to their patients, to each other and to over-worked and much smaller hospitals in the region— by taking the patients those hospitals cannot care for, as Upstate puts into place plans it developed in March to respond to the surge.

And the hospital is responding, despite

the fact that CEO Robert Corona estimates that Upstate absorbed a \$60 million to \$70 million loss in the spring, a loss that was barely touched by the \$20.3 million Upstate got in the first round of federal pandemic relief for hospitals that began to go out in mid-April. The shortfall for Upstate occurred because of a quirk in the formula that the federal government used to calculate that first distribution of the funds, which was based on how many COVID-19 patients the hospital treated in a particular window. The formula demanded that a hospital prove it treated 100 patients in that window; incredibly, Upstate had treated 99. The federal government eventually revised the funding



formula, and Upstate fared better in subsequent distributions of federal aid that took into consideration the hospital’s financial losses.

But Upstate has continued to provide top-level care, regardless of the early financial hit it absorbed, regardless of how stressed the staff is, and regard-

less of the fact that everyone knows the situation will get worse before a vaccine begins to make inroads in the surge that is devastating upstate New York. As Kohman notes, all of these responsibilities are part of what makes Upstate a major teaching hospital.

“We are the hub of the central New York hospitals,” Kohman said. “The hospitals are looking to us for guidance.”

# Binghamton engineers respond to coronavirus pandemic

BY DARRYL McGRATH

**W**hat do you get when you bring together a group of engineers and their students to brainstorm ideas to help hospitals through the worst public health emergency in a century?

In the case of faculty and students at Binghamton University's Thomas J. Watson College of Engineering and Applied Science, you get a slew of innovative new designs that have these factors in common: They are inexpensive and easy to produce, and they often use readily available materials, or components that can either be fabricated on three-dimensional printers or purchased in hardware and big-box stores.

Great minds, as it turns out, really do think alike. And the results of those virtual spring-time brainstorming sessions are still going strong, in use at hospitals and other health care sites in the Southern Tier, throughout central upstate New York and very possibly in a few other countries, as well. The engineers thought fast, improvised even faster (one turned his garage into a temporary design lab when the real lab was closed during the SUNY-wide shutdown) and worked with SUNY to put several ideas into the public realm for free as quickly as possible.

## KEEPING MEDICAL WORKERS SAFE

Many of these designs centered around the goal of protecting frontline workers in hospitals.

"This really originated with an opportunity when Kaiming Ye, as chair of the department, realized there were many different ways we could help the community," said Guy German,

an assistant professor in Watson's department of biomedical engineering, as he explained a design for ultraviolet sterilization of N95 masks. "There was a need because in the first wave, people were using up a lot of PPE [personal protective equipment]."

In addition to chairing the department of biomedical engineering, UUP member Ye is director of the Watson College's Center of Biomufacturing for Regenerative Medicine, and an internationally known expert in medical and biomedical engineering.

"Very early on, the hospitals in the region asked us for new technology to help fight COVID," Ye said. "We were asked about whether we had any way to disinfect and reuse the N95 masks."

They did, by using special lamps that emit ultraviolet radiation and can be set up in a room at a hospital, with equipment—including UV lamps that resemble tanning beds—that most hospitals can procure. With the help of SUNY administration, the engineers put the instructions and sketches for the finished design into the public realm, for free. They eventually received inquiries from as far away as the United Kingdom and Mexico, as



PHOTO COURTESY OF BINGHAMTON UNIVERSITY

BINGHAMTON CHAPTER MEMBERS, FROM LEFT, VINCENT BRADY, DAVE RICHNER, BOB PULZ AND KAIMING YE DEVELOPED A STERILIZATION SYSTEM FOR N95 MASKS USING ULTRAVIOLET LIGHT.

well as from around the country.

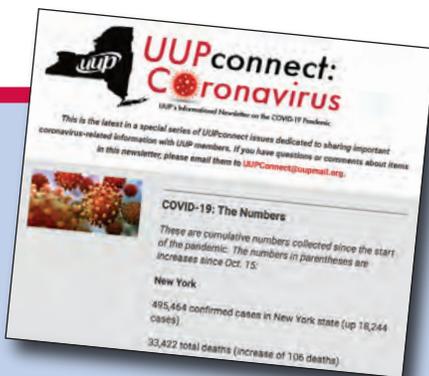
"Basically, we provided it to everybody," Ye said. "We didn't withhold any information, because of society's hunger for the information, and we did that without reservation."

## A CHALLENGE FOR URGENT TIMES

That can-do attitude is a hallmark of other designs that have come out of Watson, in a burst of creativity by people who took the terrible circumstances of the pandemic as a challenge and a call to action.

"I was never planning to get into respiratory filtration as a research area, which is a sentiment shared by my friends at

see INNOVATION, page 23



## Sign up for UUP's coronavirus newsletter

To receive the union's weekly *UUPconnect: Coronavirus* newsletter, email UUP Media & Publications Director Mike Lisi at [mlisi@uupmail.org](mailto:mlisi@uupmail.org).

If your chapter has a coronavirus-related news item or an event, email it to Lisi so it can be shared statewide.

Questions and concerns about this newsletter can be directed to Lisi or to [UUPconnect@uupmail.org](mailto:UUPconnect@uupmail.org).

# Lady with the COVID tattoo

BY DARRYL MCGRATH

“It’s hard to wrap your head around this when you’re in the midst of it, that this is a historic event.”

That’s how UUP member Becky Hogle, a professional in nursing administration at Upstate Medical University, views her decision to volunteer for the clinical trials of the Pfizer vaccine for the coronavirus.

She got her initial shot and the booster two weeks apart, and while she was not told if she got the vaccine or a placebo, she suspects that she got the vaccine because she had mild soreness in her arm.

As the public vaccine campaign got underway Dec. 14 in the United States, Pfizer was expected to soon inform trial participants if they needed to be inoculated because they were the ones who got the placebo.

Hogle’s friends considered her courageous. As a mother who has been very concerned about the disruption the pandemic has caused students, and as an Upstate employee who has also seen how deeply it has affected her colleagues, Hogle said she was not at all frightened to participate in the vaccine trial. Nor did she consider herself brave. Instead, she simply felt determined.

She commemorated her participation in the trials by getting a colorful tattoo on her left arm, the same arm on which she received the vaccination. The tattoo features an illustration of the coronavirus “wincing” as its foe, a syringe filled with vaccine, plunges into its exterior. Hogle saw the design as a symbol of science triumphing over the virus. She is now part of history, but she’s more excited about the thought of life returning to normal, and children returning to school.

Of her decision to volunteer for the trial, she says, “It really just seemed the right thing to do.”



UPSTATE CHAPTER MEMBER BECKY HOGLE, RIGHT, VOLUNTEERED FOR THE PFIZER CLINICAL TRIAL FOR A NEW COVID-19 VACCINE. SHE GOT A TATTOO, ABOVE, TO COMMEMORATE HER PARTICIPATION IN THE TRIAL.



HOGLE



## AFT steps up to offer free, voluntary trauma counseling

### Free Trauma Counseling [www.aft.org/members-only](http://www.aft.org/members-only)

The trauma counseling program is available to AFT members free of charge, in the one-year aftermath of a covered traumatic incident. You are covered 24 hours a day, 365 days a year if your incident involves any of the following: domestic violence, aggravated assault, sexual assault, mass shooting, terrorism, or if you are infected, injured or traumatized by a disease during a major disaster. Coverage also includes incidents in your place of work if you are traumatized by contracting an infectious disease, witnessing a violent incident, bullying, harassment, threats or secondary traumas.

### Voluntary Trauma Counseling [www.aft.org/members-only](http://www.aft.org/members-only)

A new member-paid benefit allows for expanded coverage and is available for members to purchase for themselves or their entire family at a reduced cost that is specifically for AFT members. This extends the coverage for members beyond the AFT’s free trauma counseling. It includes recovery care, income replacement, a death benefit and optional family coverage.

# Chapters survey, respond to professionals' virus

BY KAREN L. MATTISON

**F**redonia Chapter Vice President for Professionals Missy Hooper had a feeling that the professional members at her chapter were reluctant to share their thoughts about the struggles of working at SUNY during a pandemic.

Hooper, a clinical supervisor in the department of communications disorders and sciences, also sensed that no one would ever know what her colleagues were thinking unless someone reached out and asked what was on their minds.

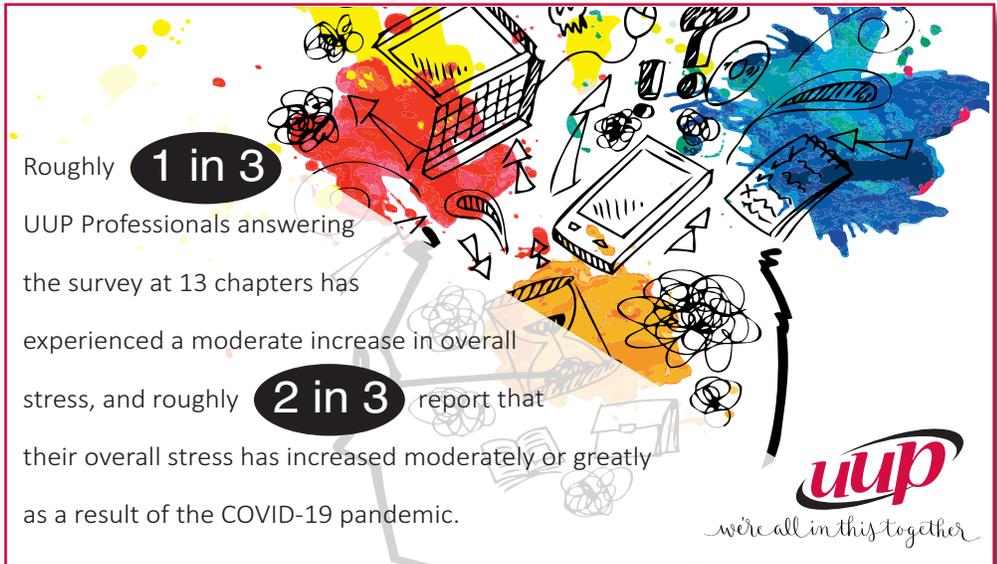
That initial thought ballooned into a full-fledged survey of professionals on her campus—and has since been used as a guide for the “UUP Professionals’ COVID-19 Campus Survey” distributed by chapters around the state. As *The Voice* went to press, UUP chapters at Albany, Alfred, Binghamton, Brockport, Buffalo HSC, Canton, Cortland, Fredonia, Morrisville, New Paltz, Old Westbury, Optometry and Plattsburgh had rolled out the survey.

“I had been (sitting in on) all of the UUP meetings, and (statewide Vice President for Professionals) Tom Tucker kept saying how important it is to get individual stories,” Hooper said. “There’s a difference between academics and professionals: Aca-

demics are used to being vocal. It struck me that academics have come forward with their issues, but professionals have been silent.”

“The survey opened the door for professionals to reach out and have their concerns heard,” she continued. “They wouldn’t have completed the survey if they didn’t think there was value to it and that they would have a voice.”

The Fredonia Chapter had one of the best response rates, at roughly 50 percent.



## PROFESSIONALS RESPOND

Roughly one-third of professionals across participating chapters responded to the survey. They answered questions about safety and workload, as well as stress, remote work and other relevant issues. In addition to answering scaled response questions, respondents were able to include written comments and details in each topical survey area. Respondents could remain anonymous or provide contact information for chapter leaders to reach out to them.

UUP Research tracked results by chapter every two to three days after the initial rollout, and immediately sent chapter leaders the names of respondents who asked to be contacted. Overall, more than 140 of the roughly 1,350 professionals who took the survey statewide asked to be contacted.

Chapters also received preliminary quantitative summaries within the first week of a rollout, and again shortly after chapter response rates improved, usually following a second push to encourage members to take the survey. UUP Research continues to send periodic updates, and to generate easy-to-read overviews, with graphs and highlights, that chapter leaders can cite in professionals’ meetings or labor/management discussions.

## CHAPTERS TAKE ACTION

“There are any number of things that our members can resolve at the chapter

level, if we know what they are,” said VPP Tucker. “UUP can’t always file a grievance, but that doesn’t mean we shouldn’t work with Human Resources or raise our concerns at labor/management meetings. Our goal is to resolve issues to everyone’s satisfaction, whenever possible, in whatever way possible.”

Survey summaries, as well as subsequent small-group meetings with professionals, shed a harsh light on the issues at SUNY Cortland. That campus is among the SUNY schools that experienced large numbers of positive COVID-19 cases. In a six-week period ending Nov. 6, campus-administered testing uncovered 499 positive cases among students and employees. Any campus that exceeds 100 active cases in a 14-day period must switch to exclusively remote learning for two weeks under New York State Department of Health policy. SUNY Cortland “paused” in-person classes for one month.

While professionals across the board who responded to the survey reported high stress levels and significant workload increases, Cortland Chapter VPP Jen Drake said Residence Life staffers “felt the frontline



HOOPER



DRAKE

# concerns

pressures” based on density levels of upward of 75 percent at the start of the semester.

“And then the kids got sick,” she said.

Drake said Chapter President Jaclyn Pittsley used the anonymous survey comments to reach out to her longtime colleagues in administration, asking what can be done to “provide them with some relief.”

“We feared they would burn out,” she added.

Drake said many professionals felt that the campus administration wasn’t listening to their concerns. The union intervened and now management is “more visible, more aware of what these folks are dealing with daily,” she said. “We’re still in conversations (with the administration) to allow our Residence Life people to get some real down time. But we’ve heard back from our members that it was helpful to be heard.”

The Cortland Chapter also put together care packages for the Residence Hall directors that included an N95 mask, some UUP swag and a letter acknowledging their hard work.

“I can’t emphasize enough how valuable these comments were, to understand the ins and outs of a person’s job and how it is complicated by the pandemic,” Drake said.

## A VALUABLE TOOL

At Brockport, VPP Duncan Chase was pleasantly surprised by the survey  
see SURVEY, page 12

## And the survey says ...

**A** preliminary review of comments to survey questions found that professionals overall have some concerns in the administrations’ handling of the pandemic in five areas: workload, masks, cleaning, testing and remote work.

- **Workload:** Many report increasing workloads without any reduction or elimination of duties previously assigned. The workload is “extremely high” in some cases. Many report no change to their performance programs.

According to statewide responses through early December, more than 2 in 5, or 42 percent, of professionals taking the survey report that their workload has increased most or all of the time as a result of the pandemic, while 1 in 4, or 25 percent, reports that their workload has increased all of the time.

- **Masks:** Across campuses, members report that mask wearing is inconsistently adhered to and many are reluctant to ask others (students or colleagues) to wear their masks, citing this responsibility should belong to others (supervisors, security, etc.).



- **Cleaning:** There are many inconsistencies in cleaning across campuses. Overall, it appears that individuals are expected to clean their personal workspace. In many cases, individuals are also supplying

their own cleaning supplies, and cleaning crews are not being asked to indicate where and when areas have been sanitized.

- **Testing:** There is a great deal of uneasiness about the way testing is being conducted. More transparency is needed about testing methodology and about the results. People believe they will feel safer if they have more information, such as how tests are done; who is being tested and how they are selected; how many are being tested; what are the results; and how is the data being used.



- **Remote work:** There is strong support for working remotely as it helps with work/life balance, especially now that many professionals are caring for children or other family members at home. Some have expressed interest in seeing more flexible work policies beyond the pandemic.

Professionals also reported high stress levels while working at SUNY during a pandemic. Roughly 90 percent of professionals who took the survey cited an increase in overall stress; roughly 2 in 3 report that their overall stress increased moderately or greatly.

A full report is expected in early 2021.

## Want to take the survey?

All you have to do is ask.

Chapter professionals who would like to share their thoughts on working at SUNY in a pandemic should ask their chapter president and vice president for professionals to arrange for a chapter-based survey. Chapter leaders will work with UUP staff to develop a survey that addresses issues and concerns at the chapter level. It’s a great way to get—and stay—involved in *your* union!



**SURVEY ...**

*continued from page 11*  
data he received from UUP Research. He initially thought that the survey was just “busy work,” but soon discovered how important it is for professionals to have a vehicle to raise issues and concerns.



**CHASE**

“One positive impact is that the survey had a box to check if the participant had further questions that could be managed on the phone on a more personal basis,” he said. “With that information, I was able to call individuals and sort through their comments, and bring their concerns to our chapter president and labor relations specialist. That was the best part of the survey.”

Those one-on-one discussions prompted Chase to schedule webinars on workload and performance programs.

At Buffalo HSC—which had the highest response rate, at roughly 56 percent—chapter VPP Toby Cronk said the survey was “a great way to test the waters to see how things were going for our members during this tough time.”

“Our members definitely had something to say,” he added. “We listened and moved to remedy the situations.”

Chapter leaders held Zoom meetings to discuss issues with members who wanted

to be contacted, and they continue to follow up with individual respondents to help them find solutions, Cronk said.

At Fredonia, Hooper said she is gratified that one chapter member had a specific concern addressed and resolved within weeks of the survey being distributed. While the chapter member asked to remain anonymous and that the details of the situation not be widely shared, Hooper noted that this particular safety concern may not have hit anyone’s radar without the survey.

Hooper said she is “working on comments and data points” with the hope of sharing results during a campus-wide professionals’ meeting. A follow-up survey is planned for the spring.

**‘HEALTHY RESPONSE RATE’**

“Our chapters had a healthy response rate because they worked hard to distribute the survey and to encourage their coworkers to take it,” Tucker said.

Old Westbury Chapter VPP Eliliana Martinez tapped the contacts she made throughout her career to convince professionals to participate. That old-fashioned reach-out included enlisting department reps to talk with their colleagues; the result



**MARTINEZ**

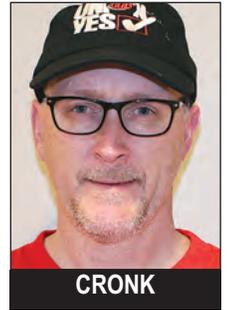
was a response rate of roughly 40 percent, above the statewide average of about one-third.

“I took it upon myself to send personal messages to most of my friends that I have worked with for over 25 years to ask them to please support the survey and encourage (their colleagues) to complete it.”

“I gave them my personal email and cell number to get in touch if they wanted more information or consultation.”

Speaking up isn’t always easy, but the VPPs said the survey’s promise of anonymity was a key factor in achieving above-average participation.

“What really catapulted the survey into a success was the fact that we made it anonymous,” Cronk said. “We found out, for the most part, that professionals don’t like to complain or to be bothersome.



**CRONK**

So with it being anonymous, our members were not shy in letting us know where the University was falling short.”

**LESSONS LEARNED**

The VPPs agreed that the survey opened up communications among members, boosted morale, increased UUP’s visibility at the chapters, and proved that it’s OK for professionals to speak up.

“This has been a truly rewarding experience,” Cronk said. “We don’t get to interact with members very often outside our general membership meetings, so this was a great way to connect.”

“The survey was a good venue for members to recognize that someone is there to help me think through what I’m dealing with,” Drake said. “It’s another way for members to know we care.”

Added Hooper: “I think the survey opened people’s eyes that we are the union, and we can support each other to affect change.”

— UUP Director of Research Mary Taber and Leah Lembo, NYSUT Research and Educational Services, contributed to this report.

As a result of COVID-19, more than **2 in 5** UUP Professionals answering the survey at 13 chapters statewide reported their workload has increased most or all of the time, and **1 in 4** reported their workload has increased all of the time.

# Union releases coronavirus spring safety guidelines

BY MICHAEL LISI

**U**UP has been working long and hard to keep faculty, staff, students and patients as safe as possible on SUNY campuses and in its state-run hospitals during the COVID-19 pandemic—which shows no sign of letting up as the University braces for another unprecedented semester of hybrid in-class and online instruction.

In December, UUP released its safety guidelines to stem the spread of the coronavirus on campus and in area communities once classes restart in February. The report was issued as Johns Hopkins University was reporting more than 270,000 U.S. coronavirus deaths and more than 13 million cases in all 50 states.

In its report, “UUP—Guidelines for Spring 2021: Keeping Our Campuses Safe During the COVID-19 Pandemic,” the union calls on SUNY to impose stringent testing mandates as students arrive on campus; dramatically increase surveillance testing; ensure that campuses have sufficient on-campus contact tracing capabilities; and to improve air quality, filtration and ventilation in campus buildings.

“Our report offers the strongest possible set of guidelines for SUNY to keep students, faculty and staff, and surrounding communities safe during the upcoming semester,” said UUP President Fred Kowal. “The recommendations are built on lessons learned from the fall semester and the excellent work that SUNY has done since the arrival of Chancellor Jim Malatras.”

## SAFETY REMAINS A PRIORITY

The 10-page report recommends that returning students get two mandatory baseline polymerase chain reaction (PCR) tests four to seven days apart at the start of the semester. Students should be quarantined until they twice test negative. Students with documentation of a nega-



tive PCR test within 72 hours of returning to campus would only have to be tested once, four days after their return.

Once classes begin, the campus population—students living on campus or in the local community, and any employees working on campus—should be tested every two weeks through the end of the semester. Students who test positive for COVID-19 should be quarantined in housing separate from residence halls.

The union also wants minimum 90-day stockpiles of personal protective equipment—including N95 masks, isolation gowns, face shields, booties, gloves and head coverings—available for frontline workers at SUNY’s academic medical centers in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse; Buffalo-area hospitals; and the Long Island Veterans Home.

SUNY’s state-run hospitals were beset with severe shortages of PPE at the start of the pandemic in March 2020. SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University in Brooklyn was designated as a COVID-19-only facility by the governor. Stony Brook University Hospital was also inundated with COVID-19 patients in the spring.

UUP also wants SUNY to provide housing to hospital employees who have contact with the public, such as emergency room reception workers, who request it to protect family members from

possible exposure to the coronavirus. UUP paid for hotel rooms in the spring for dozens of frontline workers who were afraid of infecting their families due to possible exposure at work.

In the report, the union lays out possible actions to improve air filtration in campus buildings, including upgrading heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) filtration to the highest possible level (Minimum Efficiency Reporting Value 13); adding portable HEPA/MERV filters in student health clinics, dorms and other areas where high-level filtration isn’t possible; increasing airflow to occupied spaces; and opening windows and doors to bring in fresh outdoor air.

The union also recommends that campus administrations:

- Stage on-campus flu vaccination clinics so students and faculty can easily get flu shots;
- Work with Employee Assistance Program (EAP) committees and EAP coordinators to promote mental health resources available to employees;
- Require everyone on campus to wear face masks indoors, unless they are in private residences or offices; and
- Limit visitor access to campuses.

Since March, UUP has been outspoken about the need for wide-ranging safety precautions to stem the spread of the coronavirus. In June, the union released safety guidelines for the fall semester; SUNY ignored the recommendations until Malatras became SUNY chancellor Aug. 21. Those guidelines included mandatory and recurring COVID-19 testing for on-campus students and staff, contact tracing and isolation plans, and social distancing mandates.

SUNY has enacted a number of UUP’s guidelines, including requiring baseline and surveillance testing for students. In November, UUP and SUNY agreed to extend free, mandatory coronavirus testing for UUP-represented employees through the end of the spring semester.

# Sharing the love, one card at a time

BY MICHAEL LISI

**J**aclyn Schildkraut is an Oswego State criminal justice professor and an internationally recognized expert on mass shootings who has been featured in stories in *The Atlantic*, *The Washington Post*, CBS News and even Russia's *Sputnik News*.

But that's not why she sends out thousands of handwritten holiday cards and postcards—written by people all over the U.S.—each year to the survivors of mass shootings in Las Vegas; Sutherland Springs, Texas; Newtown, Conn.; Orlando; Pittsburgh; and nearly a dozen other locations.

She does it because she has seen the grief and pain in the eyes of people whose lives have been forever changed by the senseless violence and horror of a mass shooting. Schildkraut is from Parkland, the small south Florida city that in 2018 witnessed the deadliest high school shooting in the U.S.

On Valentine's Day, a 19-year-old shooter walked into Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and opened fire, killing 17 people and injuring 17 others. Schildkraut, an Oswego Chapter member, was in Syracuse when the shooting occurred, but she still shares the pain felt by her community.

"I went home on the two-month anniversary and I can stand in front of this building and the school looks the same," she said. "But it doesn't feel the same. Home doesn't feel the same anymore."

"After (a mass shooting), mostly everyone gets to go back to normal and move on," she said. But the reality is that the people who are impacted by a mass shooting don't get to move on. "For me, to give (mass shooting victims) that reminder that, 'Hey, we didn't forget you, your family members are important,' that's the point."

## HELPING THE HEALING

Schildkraut began her "Cards for Kids" outreach four years ago, after the mass shooting in Las Vegas in June 2016. Nearly 60 people were killed when a shooter sprayed bullets into an outdoor



PHOTOS COURTESY OF JACLYN SCHILDKRAUT

OSWEGO CHAPTER MEMBER JACLYN SCHILDKRAUT, RIGHT, AND SARAH GAMARRA, A SUNY OSWEGO GRADUATE, SHOW SOME OF THE THOUSANDS OF CARDS THEY RECEIVE EACH YEAR FOR THEIR CARDS FOR KIDS CAMPAIGN. SCHILDKRAUT SENDS THE CARDS TO FAMILIES OF MASS SHOOTING VICTIMS. ON PAGE 15 ARE SOME THE CARDS THAT WERE HAND-WRITTEN BY CHILDREN.

concert crowd at the Mandalay Bay hotel.

Schildkraut, who went to college in Orlando where the Pulse nightclub shooting occurred in 2016, quickly connected with Tanya Pokes, a Las Vegas shooting survivor who started a Christmas drive for victims' families that year. She provided Schildkraut with the names of 25 victims. To help write the letters, Schildkraut recruited students looking for extra credit; one card was worth one credit point.

One of the survivors who got cards that year wasn't at the Las Vegas shooting. Ryland Ward was shot five times at the First Baptist Church of Southerland Springs, Texas. His mother and sister were killed in the November 2017 massacre there. Ryland was just 5 years old.

"I saw a news story about Ryland where he said that all he wanted were cards," Schildkraut said. "I said, 'Oh, sweet kid, you're gonna get cards.'"

## IN THE MAIL

Cards for Kids mailed 2,300 handwritten cards in 2016. The group's output has increased each year; Cards for Kids sent nearly 11,000 cards in 2019 and Schildkraut expects to break that record this year.

Postage—which can cost thousands of dollars—are covered mostly by donations and pledges made on the Cards for Kids GoFundMe page.

In all, cards go to 75 children who lost siblings or family members in several mass shootings, including in Las Vegas and Parkland. Five of those cards go to the children of a Jersey City Police Department officer, who died in the line of duty in December 2019.

Cards are also sent to 16 communities where mass shootings have occurred. They include Newtown, Conn., where the tragic Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting occurred in 2012; Santa Fe and El Paso, Texas; Aurora, Colo.; and Pittsburgh, where 11 people were killed in a 2018 shooting at the Tree of Life synagogue.

The cards are mailed to community resiliency centers, which help community members cope with the aftermath of the shootings. There, they are shared with community members, helping them to heal.

Schildkraut said that she rarely hears back from the people and communities she sends cards to. That's not unexpected; just being able to help soothe their grief is more than enough to reward her efforts.

## SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON UUPERS

Each year, hundreds of UUP members publish books and articles, and are recognized for accomplishments on campus and in their communities. *The Voice* is pleased to recognize three members in this issue.

**Carlo Cafaro**, an assistant professor in applied mathematics at SUNY Polytechnic Institute in Albany, is the lead author of a theoretical physics work recently published in *The European Physical Journal Plus*, a journal of the Italian Physical Society. This work is the outcome of a collaboration among Cafaro; Domenico Felice, a visiting scientist at SUNY Poly; and Paul Alsing, Air Force Research Laboratory (AFRL) Information Directorate's Quantum Information Processing Group Lead.

The research paper, "Quantum Groverian Geodesic Paths with Gravitational and Thermal Analogies," discusses the universality of the emergence of geodesic motion of simple harmonic oscillator type in the presence of conserved quantities by analyzing three specific phenomena of quantum, gravitational and thermodynamical origin, respectively.

Cafaro earned his M.S. in theoretical physics from the University of Pisa, Italy, and his Ph.D. in physics from the University at Albany. He has been an AFRL Research Fellow each summer since 2016, and has received four consecutive SUNY Poly Excellence in Teaching awards since 2016.



CAFARO

**Seon Levis**, an assistant professor of technology in the SUNY Potsdam department of business administration, has been awarded the college's Thomas L. and Jane D. Russell Distance Education Faculty Excellence Award for his pedagogy using inquiry-based learning.

His methods challenge students to identify problems and inefficiencies in real-world business processes, then create workarounds and solutions that push the envelope through their use of information systems and technology solutions.

Levis holds a doctor of business administration degree from Walden University and a Master of Science degree in information systems management from the University of Liverpool. He also completed Harvard Business School Executive Education programs in business analytics and big data, and attended the University of Guyana, where he studied public management.

Before joining SUNY Potsdam, Levis led the information and communication technology portfolios for Caribbean intergovernmental and multilateral agencies in Barbados.



LEVIUS

**Veronica Tichenor**, a professor of sociology at SUNY Polytechnic Institute in Utica, and former UUPer Joanne Joseph, interim dean of the College of Health Sciences, received a \$750,000 award as part of a Herkimer County

System of Care Expansion and Sustainability Project grant through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, which is a branch of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

The effort stems from a grant awarded to Herkimer County that aims to enhance school-based mental health services, proactively identify areas of concern, and provide trauma-informed care for children who are involved in the child welfare and juvenile justice systems. This grant will enable the evaluation of the overall project by providing quantitative and qualitative data analysis and will support the use and study of Family School Navigators, liaisons between families and schools.

Tichenor, coordinator of the college's community and behavioral health program, earned her bachelor's degree from Kalamazoo College, and her master's and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.



TICHENOR

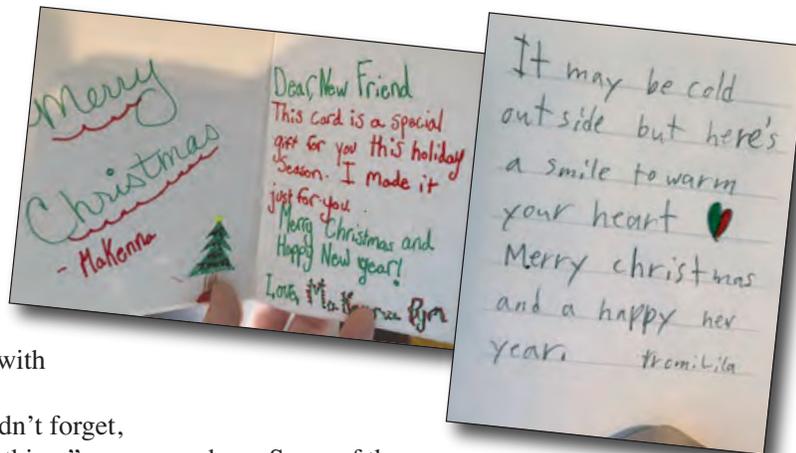
## REACHING OUT

But sometimes she does hear back, and the interactions are memorable. Michael Morrisette, whose daughter was killed in the 2018 shooting in Thousand Oaks, Calif., scanned a box of cards sent to Thousand Oaks and shared each one online with the community.

"For (Michael), that we didn't forget, that was the most important thing," Schildkraut said.

People from all over the country write the cards and send them to Schildkraut, who mails them to kids and communities on her list. A lot of teachers get their students to write cards as a classroom activity.

She said she leaves it up to the writers to come up with the messages they want to



share. Some of the cards contain thinking-of-you messages. Others are upbeat, with silly Christmas jokes to provide a little laughter during a tough time.

"The little kids write things like 'Hi, special friend,' and 'I love you,'" Schildkraut said. "They usually write cards that are more general in nature. The adults usually

choose a special someone to write to."

The coronavirus pandemic has made it trickier to get cards out this year, but Schildkraut said she's taken proper precautions to make sure the cards are safe to stamp and send. She said she leaves the boxes of cards she receives in her garage for a week or so to make sure they are safe to handle.

But not even a pandemic can stop Schildkraut from making her self-appointed rounds.

"I spend my life surrounded by death on a daily basis," Schildkraut said. "Pulse put a chink in my armor and Parkland blew it wide open. In a world that has taken so much from these individuals, at a time so uncertain, we can give them something certain. That is so important."



## OVERVIEW

New York's Department of Tax and Finance recorded surging revenue from the obscure tax on Wall Street from April to June of this year, collecting \$2.9 billion, according to its data. Yet the money never made it to the state's general fund because, since 1981, the tax has been rebated to investors and traders.

**UUP supports legislation introduced by Assemblymember Phil Steck and Sen. James Sanders Jr. to require New York state to keep the proceeds from this tax (A.7791-B/S.6203-A).**



# STOCK TRANSFER TAX: END THE REBATE AND SAVE BILLIONS

## Reasons to Reinstate the Stock Transfer Tax (STT)

- 1** The tax collected on a \$1,000 trade is a mere \$2.50. It is estimated that the STT would raise up to \$16 billion annually if fully collected, based on the volume and frequency of trades.
- 2** Similar taxes exist on stock markets around the world. The United Kingdom, Switzerland and Taiwan have financial transaction taxes on the books. Hong Kong has a 0.1% tax on transactions with no significant impact on its economy.
- 3** The STT is a sales tax paid by the purchaser. Given that transactions on the NYSE originate from all over the country, considerable revenue would be generated by non-New York state residents.

## Myth vs. Reality

- 1** **MYTH:** If the Stock Transfer Tax is collected, Wall Street will leave the state.  
**REALITY:** The NYSE never relocated while the STT was collected in New York from 1905-1981, and already has lower transaction fees than other markets.
- 2** **MYTH:** Collecting the STT will financially harm the state's pension funds.  
**REALITY:** The vast majority of trades are high frequency trades, and are not the typical trading activities that occur in pension investments.
- 3** **MYTH:** The NYSE can switch to "The Cloud" to electronically evade the tax.  
**REALITY:** In 2018, a U.S. Supreme Court decision allowed for state sales tax to be collected on internet sales in other states. This has been successful on tangible products and intangible products, such as streaming services.

Send a letter today? Go to <https://bit.ly/36Wafy2>

# Kowal gives SUNY trustees grim picture of fall semester

BY DARRYL McGRATH

**W**ith the incoming Biden administration giving hope of desperately needed change for the country as the coronavirus rages harder than ever before, UUP members find themselves at a difficult crossroads.

That's the picture UUP President Fred Kowal drew for the SUNY Board of Trustees during a Nov. 17 public hearing that provided University policy-makers with a snapshot of the difficult situations students, faculty and staff have confronted during a fall semester riddled with economic and academic uncertainty.

Kowal used his brief remarks at the hearing to lay out an unvarnished description of the sacrifices that UUP members have made, as well as the desperate need for a new federal relief package and new sources of state revenue for SUNY.

"The going has been extremely challenging, but dedicated, hard-working UUP members have delivered the top-notch educational experience our students expect and deserve from SUNY—in person and remotely," Kowal told trustees. "Let us remember as well that UUP members stood on the front lines this spring.

"Downstate was declared to be a COVID-only hospital," he continued. "Stony Brook University Hospital was not a COVID-only hospital but may have had even more cases than Downstate. UUPers protected the rest of us in New York state from this deadly disease, but in doing so we lost union members."

## SEEKING FEDERAL, STATE RELIEF

UUP has spent months advocating for passage of the CARES Act, the federal relief package passed by the House of Representatives in May, but stalled in the Senate. The union has also been the leading voice in New York for new sources of revenue for the cash-strapped state budget, with a repeal of the Stock Transfer Tax rebate topping UUP's list.

Not only would adequate state funding prevent retrenchments and other severe cutbacks at SUNY—which the governor has so far managed to stave off—it would also help provide hazard pay for the



UUP PRESIDENT FRED KOWAL, BOTTOM LEFT, TOLD SUNY TRUSTEES THAT ESSENTIAL SUNY WORKERS NEED HAZARD PAY. AMONG THOSE LISTENING AT THE NOV. 17 HEARING WERE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT, TRUSTEES CHRISTY FOGAL AND JAMES HADDON; AND JOHN GRAHAM, THE SUNY STUDENT ADVOCATE.

Read UUP's testimony at <https://bit.ly/2Jz4b6D>

frontline UUP members at SUNY's three public teaching hospitals. A number of private and public hospitals in the state have provided hazard pay to their employees, in recognition of the extreme risks these medical workers faced in treating COVID-19 patients.

## HAZARD PAY STILL AN ISSUE

Hospital staff have indeed paid a tragic toll. An unknown number of UUP members working at the academic medical centers have contracted the coronavirus; at least one physician died of COVID-19 last spring, at University Hospital at SUNY Downstate; and despite precautions, some medical staff at Stony Brook University Hospital carried the virus home to their families last spring, with some family members sickening and dying of COVID-19.

And, as Kowal pointed out to trustees, it is not just medical staff that face terrible risks. Residence hall staff at several campuses supervised students who cannot immediately go home with the semester's end at Thanksgiving, either because those students are in isolation following a positive test for COVID-19, or because they do not have a home setting they can return to for the break.

"It is unconscionable that at these times of sacrifice by so many, the state does not

provide hazard pay," Kowal told the trustees. "Why can't this state find the resources to pay these heroes what they deserve? We have been advocating at the federal level for months. UUP is now advocating even harder at the state level. Our demands are simple: Pandemic profiteers must pay their fair share. It's long overdue and now is the time."

## A CHALLENGE TO LAWMAKERS

Trustees did not ask any questions of Kowal, but his strongly worded testimony appeared to have an effect on them.

Earlier in the trustees' meeting, Merryl Tisch, the chair of the SUNY Board of Trustees, had commented on the burden that the SUNY hospitals had already faced during the pandemic, and are likely to face again. And Kowal has publicly praised the excellent working relationship he has forged with SUNY Chancellor James Malatras, who has instituted a number of policies to address testing, virus outbreaks and many other issues.

Kowal closed by issuing a challenge to the state government.

"I call on the Legislature to return to Albany and pass progressive legislation now," he said. "I call on the governor to sign it. Let us not abandon that duty, our University, our community or our students. History is watching."

# UUP kicks off annual VOTE-COPE fund drive

BY KAREN L. MATTISON

**A**s UUP braces for yet another semester amid an escalating coronavirus pandemic and the looming threat of deep budget cuts to SUNY, one thing has become abundantly clear: The union must expand its efforts to get state and federal assistance to keep the University strong and vibrant, now and into the future.

That can only be accomplished through hard work—and money.

The union in December kicked off its 2021 VOTE-COPE campaign to raise voluntary contributions to NYSUT's political action fund, which supports candidates of all parties based on voting records on education, labor, health care and working-family issues. NYSUT returns up to 40 percent to each local, based on the VOTE-COPE donations by its members; the rest is used by NYSUT for larger, statewide advertising campaigns, political action efforts, campaign committees and candidate endorsements.



No union dues are used to fund VOTE-COPE activities and initiatives.

“These funds are a necessary tool in the fight to protect public education—our University, our students, our patients, our jobs and our retirement benefits,” said statewide Vice President for Professionals Tom Tucker. “If you haven’t donated before, now is the time. If you are already giving to VOTE-COPE, now is the time to give more.”

## REBUILDING FOR THE FUTURE

This year’s VOTE-COPE drive, “Building Back Better,” is spearheaded by Sandra Lewis, UUP’s statewide VOTE-COPE coordinator and a Fredonia Chapter member. The goal: to increase, up to 10 percent, the number of people contributing at each chapter, en route to what she hopes will be a record-setting year in overall donations. The drive runs through May 2021.

Lewis said UUP is behind the October 2019 total of nearly \$200,000. She is tapping VOTE-COPE regional organizers to assist in raising members’ awareness of the importance and benefits of VOTE-COPE.

As *The Voice* went to press, Lewis was developing a flier for chapter-based VOTE-COPE coordinators to distribute, and was working on a social media toolkit to help in their efforts.

And she was putting the final touches on the first quarterly VOTE-COPE newsletter that includes a chapter-by-chapter breakdown of contributions.

“I am asking our members to be stronger advocates by giving to UUP’s ‘Building Back Better’ VOTE-COPE



## Buy a UUP face mask; make a donation!

Now members can wear a stylish face mask and help out UUP’s nonpartisan political action fund or the union’s College Scholarship Fund at the same time.

Those who purchase a face mask with filters, or five filters only, can choose to use their payment as a donation to VOTE-COPE or to UUP’s undergraduate and post baccalaureate scholarship programs.

The masks are made in the USA of 100 percent cotton and are machine washable. The filters are hand washable. Masks with filters are selling for \$20; the five filters are \$10.

Go to <https://bit.ly/3oEipSJ> to order online.

Go to <https://uupinfo.org/masks/OrderForm.pdf> to order by mail and pay by check.

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First \_\_\_\_\_ MI \_\_\_\_\_

Address (Include Street, City, State, Zip) \_\_\_\_\_

Campus \_\_\_\_\_ Department \_\_\_\_\_ Non-SUNY  
Email \_\_\_\_\_

### AUTHORIZATION FOR VOLUNTARY DEDUCTION

Effective no earlier than \_\_\_\_\_ (enter date), I hereby authorize regular payroll deductions from my earnings in the amount specified below as a voluntary contribution to be paid to VOTE-COPE, to be used in accordance with applicable law for the purpose of making political contributions in connection with federal, state and local elections. My contribution is voluntary, and I understand that it is not required as a condition of employment, and that I may revoke this authorization at any time by giving written notice to the Secretary/Treasurer of United University Professions.

Contribution Per Pay Period (Circle One)      \$5      \$10      Other \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

12/20

**Go to <https://bit.ly/3g9Mzdm> to donate online.**

campaign,” Lewis said. “We need to get everyone on board. It doesn’t matter if a person can only give a dollar a paycheck. We still have work to be done.”



LEWIS

“I am asking our members to be stronger advocates by giving to UUP’s ‘Building Back Better’ VOTE-COPE campaign.”

— Sandra Lewis  
UUP VOTE-COPE Coordinator

- Fought to expand SUNY’s Opportunity Programs and to increase SUNY capital funding.
- Defeated a plan to de-register undergraduate teacher education programs based on faulty certification exam scores.

### HOW TO DONATE

There are several ways to donate to VOTE-COPE:

online; through payroll deduction; through Teachers’ Retirement System or Employees’ Retirement System pension withdrawals; checking the appropriate box on a UUP reimbursement voucher, when applicable; by check or money order; or selecting VOTE-COPE when buying UUP face masks or filters (see related story, page 18).

Those wishing to donate through payroll deduction can go online at <https://bit.ly/3g9Mzdm> or they can fill out and sign the enrollment card above and mail it to UUP at P.O. Box 15143, Albany, N.Y. 12212-9954.

Retirees receiving ERS and TRS pension payments can authorize monthly withdrawals. Forms can be requested

through the NYSUT website at <https://bit.ly/3g9Mzdm>. Retirees can go to <https://bit.ly/2KiXEh4> and fill out a UUP form to donate by check or money order.

### VOTE-COPE SUCCESSES

UUP is the leading advocate for expanded access to affordable and quality public higher education. Thanks to its cadre of volunteer advocates and voluntary VOTE-COPE donations, UUP has:

- Saved hundreds of jobs at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University and staved off repeated attempts to downsize the Brooklyn hospital.

fully advocated for the New York State Senate and Assembly to pass legislation that would:

- bar the state from moving tuition, fees and hospital charges into the general fund;
- require the governor to submit five-year CUNY and SUNY capital plans in his Executive Budget to provide annual appropriations of capital funds to cover all crucial Maintenance of Effort needs; and
- allow public employees who served in the military to receive pension credit for military service regardless of when they served.

# Cortland takes home ‘Best of the Best’ award

BY KAREN L. MATTISON

Well-written articles, impressive layout, strong editing, eye-catching photos, and an informative website were among the reasons the Cortland Chapter earned the union’s prestigious Phillip H. Smith “Best of the Best” Communications Award for Overall Excellence.

According to the Capital District-area journalists who judged the annual UUP Journalism Contest, the Cortland Chapter’s newsletter and website were “superior” and deserved the union’s top award, which recognizes the most outstanding accomplishment in member communications. The award is named after former UUP president Phil Smith, who served from 2008-2013 and was instrumental in strengthening UUP’s online and print communications.

“The (work) is superior,” according to the judges. “There is so much great content in here and it’s all well written and presented. Amy Russell and Rebecca Bryan’s columns are stand-outs—they don’t skirt around the issues.”

The Cortland Chapter also received the following honors: First Award: General Excellence, *The Cortland Cause*, April 2019 and November 2019, editor Amy Russell; First Award, Best Editorial or Column, “McSweeney exposes truth about CTEs,” April 2019, written by Jaelyn Pittsley; First Award: Best Original Photo, Labor Day parade/state fair, September 2019, photographer David Ritchie; First Award: Best Website (tie), <https://www.uuphast.org/cortland>, webmaster Russell; Award of Merit, Best Publication Design, September 2019, designer Russell; and Honorable Mention, Best Original Article, “Class (temperature) struggle: The essential role of activism,” September 2019, writer Gigi Peterson.



## CHAPTERS, RETIREES EARN COMMUNICATIONS AWARDS

Also awarded for outstanding writing, photography, design and web-site were:

### Cobleskill

First Award: Best Website (tie), <https://www.uuphast.org/cobleskill>, webmaster Patricia Lepore Moody.

### Farmingdale

First Award: Best Publication Design (tie), *Unifier*, November 2019, designer Yolanda Segarra; and Honorable Mention: Best Editorial or Column, “Professionals’ Corner: Promotion or Salary Increase,” April 2019, writer Henry Espailat.

### Fredonia

Award of Merit: Best Website, <https://www.uuphast.org/fredonia>, webmaster Cynthia Dietzen; and Honorable Mention: Best Publication Design, *FredUUP*, November/December 2019, designer Dietzen.

### Oneonta

First Award: Best Original Article, “Tip of the hat to Sen. Jim Seward,” *Sentinel*, February 2020, writer William Simons; and Award of Merit: Best Editorial or

Column, “Ron’s Mailbag,” February 2020, writer Ron Bishop.

### Stony Brook

First Award: Best Publication Design (tie), *Insight*, September/October 2019, designers Jacqueline Donnelly and Jason Torre; and Award of Merit: General Excellence (tie), September/October 2019 and January/February 2020, editor Donnelly.

### UUP Retirees

Award of Merit: General Excellence (tie), *The Active Retiree*, Summer 2019 and Fall 2019, editor Jo Schaffer; and Award of Merit: Best Original Article, “How about a peace race instead of an arms race?” Summer 2019, writer Lawrence Wittner.

## GREAT JOB!

“One of the most impressive things about this contest is how high the contestants raise the bar for themselves every year—and how the next year, they clear it and raise it a little bit more,” according to one of the judges. “The level of pride in the work being produced is evident. The only thing missing here is more contest

# Delegates elect officers, Executive Board members

BY MICHAEL LISI

**D**elegates re-elected statewide Membership Development Officer Tom Hoey to a second three-year term in the union's first mail-in-only election that ended Nov. 25.

Three new members of the statewide Executive Board were also elected: Buffalo HSC Chapter President Phil Glick; Brockport Chapter President Alissa Karl; and Downstate Chapter member Samuel Marquez. They were elected to three-year terms ending in 2023.

Go to <https://bit.ly/3qlzr9L> to see the election results.

Delegates approved the mail-in election at a special virtual Delegate Assembly in September. The election was set to take place in person at the 2020 Spring Delegate Assembly; that event was cancelled due to the coronavirus pandemic.

Ballots were mailed to eligible delegates Oct. 28 and had to be returned to UUP by Nov. 25. The ballots were counted Nov. 30 and Dec. 1.



HOEY

Hoey turned back a challenge from New Paltz Chapter President and former statewide Executive Board member Beth E. Wilson to win re-election, 255-109. He became statewide MDO after winning a special 2016 election for the post and was elected to a full term as MDO in 2017.



BRYAN



GLICK



KARL



MALONE



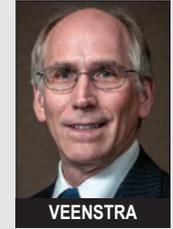
MARQUEZ



MAYERS



ROMAIN



VEENSTRA

Five Executive Board members were re-elected to three-year terms. They are: Pamela Malone, Empire State College Chapter president; Rebecca Bryan, Cortland Chapter MDO; Patrick Romain, Albany Chapter assistant vice president for professionals; Richard Veenstra, Upstate Medical University Chapter president; and Darleyne Mayers, Farmingdale Chapter delegate.

UUP President Fred Kowal and Secretary/Treasurer Jeri O'Bryan-Losee, who ran unopposed, were re-elected at the Executive Board meeting Oct. 23.



entries from more chapters.”  
The judges also recognized the **Old Westbury** Chapter newsletter, *Wavelengths*, as the “up-and-coming” entrant that one judge urged to “keep up the good work.”

“Love seeing new faces in the contest,” that judge said. “Old Westbury is this year’s example. Good things are happening here. Looking forward to seeing more of it in 2021.”

The chapter began publishing the newsletter after more than a decade hiatus. Kudos to Chapter President Martha Livingston, and newsletter co-editors Lisa Cuccia, Kyle Anderson and Ryan Baker.

## Stony Brook HSC Chapter

STONY BROOK HSC CHAPTER MEMBERS HELD A SILENT PROTEST SEPT. 16, TO DEMAND HAZARD PAY FOR MEMBERS ON THE FRONT LINES OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC AT STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL. UUP WANTS THE ADMINISTRATION TO URGE THE SUNY BOARD OF TRUSTEES TO PROVIDE “COVID PAY”—\$2,500 BONUSES FOR ESSENTIAL HOSPITAL WORKERS—THE INCENTIVE GIVEN TO ESSENTIAL WORKERS AT OTHER NEW YORK CITY HOSPITALS.



JAMIE DANGLER

## Cortland Chapter

CORTLAND CHAPTER RETIRED MEMBERS HENRY STECK, ABOVE, AND JO SCHAFFER AGREED TO ACCEPT FOOD AND OTHER NEEDED ITEMS, DONATED BY CHAPTER MEMBERS, AT THEIR RESPECTIVE HOMES. THE CHAPTER WAS COLLECTING NON-PERISHABLE FOOD ITEMS, HYGIENE PRODUCTS AND UNWRAPPED GIFTS FOR THE LOCAL FOOD PANTRY.

## The Masked Seniors

UUP RETIREE MEMBERS ARE ROCKIN’ THEIR UNION FACE MASKS. BELOW, JUDY AND ARNOLD WISHNIA OF THE STONY BROOK CHAPTER SHOW OFF THEIR UUP FACE MASKS, WHILE PHYLLIS STURM OF THE NEW PALTZ CHAPTER, INSET, TRANSFORMS HER UUP BANDANA INTO A SAFE FACE COVERING.



# Delegates to debate two constitutional amendments

In accordance with Article XIII of the UUP Constitution, UUP bargaining unit members are hereby notified that the following proposed amendments are on the agenda of the virtual 2021 Winter Delegate Assembly, scheduled for Jan. 22-23.

Insertions are underlined.

## **Proposed Constitutional Amendment to give the Executive Board authority to investigate, hear and decide ethics complaints.**

Amend Article V. Executive Board, Section 3. Duties, Powers and Responsibilities of the Executive Board (Lines 192 and 193):

p. Investigate and hear complaints concerning alleged ethical misconduct by chapter officers and take appropriate disciplinary action in established cases.

q. Act on behalf of the Delegate Assembly in matter necessary to accomplish the purposes of the Union.

## **Proposed Constitutional Amendment Regarding Retirees Running for Statewide Office.**

Section 1. Classes of Membership.

There shall be the following classes of membership in United University Professions:

a. Regular Membership: Regular Membership shall be open to employees in the State University of New York and in such other higher education units in the State of New York as shall be determined by the Delegate Assembly; i. Contingent membership shall extend from September 1 through August 31. Membership in good standing shall be maintained through payment of dues as defined in Article III, Section 4.b.i.b. and shall be on a continuing basis throughout the membership year.

b. Retired Membership: Retired Membership shall be open to any regular member in good standing who has retired from active service with a minimum of five continuous years of membership in good standing immediately preceding the date of retirement or continuous membership 30 days after the adoption of this amendment by the delegate assembly, whichever is less. If a member has less than five years of continuous bargaining unit employment the member must have continuous membership in good standing for the length of their employment in the bargaining unit or beginning 30 days after the adoption of this amendment, whichever is less. Retired members may not hold UUP offices or Executive Board positions elected by the Delegate Assembly. If a member retires while holding an office elected by the Delegate Assembly, they may complete their term.

## INNOVATION ...

*continued from page 8*

Intuitive, but it really shows the flexibility of engineers to tackle new problems and find solutions,” wrote UUP member Scott Schiffres, an assistant professor in the Watson department of mechanical engineering, in an email describing his work on a mask design that protects the wearer from respiratory droplets in the air, and which can be reused. He was the faculty member who converted his garage to a temporary lab during the shutdown.

He worked on testing mask materials with two engineers at Intuitive Inc., based in California and Connecticut—Scott Manzo and Iman Khalaji. Intuitive researches global health problems and is the developer of the da Vinci robotic surgical system.

“We partnered up to share test methods and test potential materials,” Schiffres explained. “We worked with their engineers and doctors to help refine the test methodology and develop a mask that

is reusable and effective at blocking respiratory droplets. We just submitted the article [about the mask work] to a journal.”

Intuitive Foundation eventually produced more than 250,000 of the masks, which it donated to health care workers and provided to its own employees who were manufacturing surgical equipment.

Schiffres credits his students Morteza Bagheri, Natalia Basauldo, Arad Azizi and Rebecca Loibl for their work on the project, as well as Anju Sharma and In-tae Bae, senior scientists from Binghamton’s Analytical and Diagnostics Lab.

## GETTING RESULTS

Some of the other projects that have come out of Watson during the pandemic:

- Adaptors that allow more than one patient to be connected to a single ventilator, a project worked on by UUP members Fuda Ning and Jia Deng, both assistant professors in Watson’s department of systems science and industrial

engineering. Their colleague and UUP member Mo Sha in Binghamton’s computer science department helped them get information about the design online so medical workers anywhere could learn about fabricating the adaptors.

- A full-face shield designed by UUP member Vince Brady, Watson’s manager of engineering laboratories and learning environments. Several UUP members helped develop the prototype: Schiffres, Deng and Mark Poliks, director of Watson’s Center for Advanced Microelectronics Manufacturing.

While these efforts at Watson were not exactly routine for the faculty and students—after all, it’s not every day that new designs come about with such a sense of urgency—they were very much in keeping with this part of Watson’s mission statement, which says that the school will “ensure that its programs are accessible to the widest possible range of individuals and institutions.”

Ye summed it up this way: “We wanted to serve society.”

# UUP scholarships available to SUNY students

BY MICHAEL LISI

**S**tudents at SUNY's state-operated campuses have a few opportunities to vie for scholarships from UUP.

Through its **College Scholarship Fund Undergraduate Scholarship** program, UUP awards \$3,000 scholarships to a maximum of four SUNY undergraduates who excel academically and are dedicated to the goals and ideals of the labor movement. Applicants must be full-time students enrolled at SUNY state-operated schools and have a minimum grade point average of 3.75.

Full-time graduate and professional SUNY students can apply for UUP's **William Scheuerman Post Baccalaureate Scholarship**. The scholarship is

named in honor of former UUP President William Scheuerman.

Applicants must have at least nine credits and hold a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.95. Law and health science students must complete at least one full semester prior to applying for the scholarship.

The application deadline for both scholarships is March 1, 2021.

The **Steve Street Scholarship Award** is a \$500 award given to an undergraduate student or group of undergraduate students currently enrolled at a SUNY campus who have created any paper or documented any project related to social justice issues or topics. The scholarship is available to full-time and part-time students.

The award is named for a UUP contingent faculty member who taught at

SUNY Brockport and SUNY Buffalo State, and who died of cancer in 2012.

Street was a UUP delegate, a member of the statewide Contingent Employment Committee and a chapter officer for contingents.

The application deadline for the Street scholarship is May 1, 2021.

UUP's **Puerto Rico Scholarship Fund** provides scholarships through 2021 to students from Puerto Rico whose higher education was affected by Hurricane Maria, so they can continue their studies at a SUNY four-year campus.

The application deadline is July 1.

All applications are on UUP's website at <http://www.uupinfo.org/awards>.

For more information, go to UUP's website or contact UUP's administrative office at (800) 342-4206.



No matter which vehicle you choose from our wide selection of clean, well-maintained, driver-friendly towing and pickup trucks, cargo vans and box trucks, Enterprise is here to make the job easy.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION**

Visit [enterprisetrucks.com](http://enterprisetrucks.com) or call 1-800-rent-a-truck

# Benefits a sign of strength in tough year

By DARRYL McGRATH

**U**UP's membership has been its greatest strength during the coronavirus pandemic, and the union acknowledged that strength Nov. 18 with two webinars that celebrated the union's excellent benefits, and the members who have made them possible.

"UUP has negotiated one of the richest benefits packages in the country," Doreen Bango, director of member benefits and services, told the hundreds of members who signed up for the first webinar, held at noon. "It is you—each and every one of you who signed a membership card—that has given us the negotiating power to obtain these benefits."

Formatted as a game show, with prizes, spinning wheels and virtual doors to open for answering quiz questions, the webinars were open to anyone in the UUP bargaining unit who wished to learn more about the union's benefits and the best ways to maximize them, whether or not they had signed a membership card.

UUP scheduled two versions of the webinar, at noon and at 6 p.m., to accommodate the around-the-clock schedule of SUNY, when members are on duty as physicians, nurses, IT supervisors and other jobs outside of the regular workday.

## STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

UUP President Fred Kowal opened the noon webinar by thanking members for their support during the exceptionally difficult past eight months of the pandemic. He extended a special welcome to those participating in the webinar who may not have yet joined the union, but who were interested enough in the advantages of union membership to listen to the presentation.

"I think by the time we're done with this program, you'll be signing up," Kowal said. "We work tirelessly to make sure that you, as members of UUP, have the best benefits anywhere.

## BENEFITS QUESTIONS?

Visit <https://uupinfo.org/>  
for information

on new voluntary benefits as they become available!

For additional information contact a Benefits Representative at  
**1-800-887-3863**

It is because of you that UUP is this powerful and dynamic."

## A MEMBER'S STORY

Fredonia Chapter President Christopher Taverna offered personal comments about the meaning of union membership. He grew up in what he affectionately described as a "divided household," in which his mother was a union member but his father was not, but he didn't hesitate when he had the chance to join UUP. Encouragement from chapter leaders led to his greater involvement.

"I have been with SUNY Fredonia for 20 years and a UUP member from day 1," Taverna said. "Because I saw the benefit my mom had from her union, I knew that joining was important."

## EASY TO JOIN

And for those who did want to sign up as members, the webinars included instructions on how to join UUP through the union's website. Those interested can go directly to [www.uupinfo.org/join](http://www.uupinfo.org/join), or to the UUP website, where they will see the "Join" tab to the right of the story rotator.

Bango reviewed the negotiated benefits open to everyone in the bargaining unit, and some special savings on a range of programs and services available to members. She also touched on the difficulty of the pandemic, by recounting for the audience how UUP officers and staff went into high gear last spring to find and purchase personal protective equipment for its members at the SUNY academic medical centers.

"When we say that UUP is all about its members, it really is," she said. "It really goes above and beyond."

## CONTACT INFORMATION

UUP Benefit Trust Fund . . . . .800/887-3863

*\* Employees must be eligible for enrollment in NYS Health Insurance Prgm*

Delta Dental . . . . .800/471-7093

Davis Vision (Vision Care) . . . . .800/999-5431

Laser Vision Correction  
(Client Code 7512) . . . . .800/584-2866

UUP Member Services . . . . .800/342-4206

UUP Retiree Services . . . .800/342-4206 x638

Empire Plan (Select menu option) .877/769-7447  
Press 1.

United HealthCare (Medical/Surgical)  
HCAP (Home Care Advocacy Prgm./Equip./Supplies)  
MultiPlan (Basic Medical Provider Discount Program)  
MPN (Chiropractic/Physical Therapy Managed Prgm.)  
Benefits Mgmt. Prgm. (MRI Pre-certification)  
Infertility Treatment (Centers of Excellence)

Press 2. Empire BlueCross and BlueShield  
(Hosp./Inpatient/Nursing/Transplant Pre-certification)

Press 3. Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Press 4. Prescription Program

Press 5. NurseLine (Info/Educ./24-hour Support)

HMOs . . . . .Call your specific HMO

### Retirement Systems (Pensions)

NYS Employees' Retirement Sys. . .866/805-0990

NYS Teachers' Retirement Sys . . .800/348-7298

Optional Retirement Programs

Fidelity . . . . .800/343-0860

TIAA . . . . .800/842-2776

VALIC . . . . .800/448-2542

VOYA . . . . .800/584-6001

### Tax Deferred Retirement Savings

NYS Deferred Comp Plan 457(P) . .800/422-8463

NYSUT . . . . .800/342-9810

Member Benefits . . . . .800/626-8101

AFT PLUS . . . . .800/238-1133 x8643

### Workers' Compensation/SS Disability

Fine, Olin & Anderman . . . . .866/362-4887

### Flex Spending Accounts

Dependent Care Advantage Account  
Health Care Spending Account  
Adoption Advantage Account  
NYS-Ride . . . . .800/358-7202

NYS Dept. of Civil Service . . . . .800/833-4344

New York State/UUP Joint  
Labor/Management Office . . . . .518/486-4666

# Report of attendance at virtual 2020 AFT Convention

In accordance with UUP policy, a report of attendance of elected delegates to affiliate conventions is made available to all bargaining unit members. Below is the attendance report compiled by the AFT for the 2020 AFT Convention, held virtually July 28-30 due to the coronavirus pandemic.

**Meeting Codes:**

D1Biz = Day 1 Business  
 D2Biz = Day 2 Business  
 D3Biz = Day 3 Business  
 D3Pgm = Day 3 Program

D1Pgm = Day 1 Program  
 D2Pgm = Day 2 Program  
 Da3Nom = Day 3 Nominating

**Attendance Code:** X = Present at /Logged in to Session

Name	Chapter	D1Biz	D1Pgm	D2Biz	D2Pgm	D3Biz	D3Nom	D3Pgm
Bandyopadhyay, Amitabha	Farmingdale	X	X	X	X	X		X
Berger, Jacqueline	Empire State College	X	X		X			X
Blackman-Stroud, Rowena	Downstate Medical	X	X	X	X	X		
Bryan, Rebecca	Cortland	X	X	X		X		X
Chatfield, Christa	Cortland	X	X		X		X	X
Dangler, Jamie	Cortland	X	X	X	X		X	
Day, Doreen	Stony Brook HSC	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Drescher, Nuala	Buffalo State	X	X	X	X	X		X
Ecker, David	Stony Brook	X	X		X			X
Flax, Henry	Downstate Medical	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Floss, Frederick	Buffalo State	X	X	X	X	X		X
Franco, Candelario	Old Westbury	X	X	X	X	X		X
Guydosh, Raymond	Plattsburgh	X		X	X	X		X
Hartshorn, Kim W.	Plattsburgh	X	X	X	X	X		X
Hinkle, Steven	Morrisville	X		X	X	X		X
Inventasch, Harvey	Cortland	X	X	X	X	X		X
Kasprak, Robert	Optometry	X		X	X		X	
Kielar, Kathleen	Buffalo Center	X	X	X	X	X		X
Kowal, Frederick	Cobleskill	X		X	X	X	X	X
Kube, Carolyn	Stony Brook HSC	X	X	X	X	X		X
Landy, Eileen	Old Westbury	X	X	X	X	X		X
Lawhorne, Stephanie	Morrisville	X	X	X	X	X		X
Lewis, Milton	Downstate Medical	X	X	X	X	X		X
Malone, Pamela	Empire State College	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Marriott, Cheryl	Downstate Medical	X		X		X	X	X
McAteer, Charles	Stony Brook	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
McNitt, F. Glenn	New Paltz	X		X		X		X
O'Bryan-Losee, Jeri	Morrisville	X	X	X	X		X	
Quinn, Edward	Stony Brook	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Relan, Nand	Stony Brook HSC	X	X					
Richman, Shaun	Empire State College	X						
Russell, Eric	Downstate Medical	X	X					
Schultze, William	Alfred	X		X				
Schumacher, John	System Admin.	X	X	X	X	X		X
See, Robert	Albany	X						
Simons, William	Oneonta	X	X	X	X	X		X
Smith, Patricia	Old Westbury	X	X					
Stahl, Martin	Empire State College	X		X	X			
Torre, Jason	Stony Brook	X	X	X	X	X		X
Torres, Idalia	Fredonia	X	X	X	X	X		X
Tucker, Thomas	Buffalo Center	X		X		X		
Walker, Michael	System Admin.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Wiegard, Anne	Cortland	X		X		X		
Wishnia, Judith	Stony Brook	X	X	X		X		X
Wolfskill, Pamela	Stony Brook	X	X		X	X	X	X
Zubrow, Ezra	Buffalo Center	X	X	X	X	X		

**NOTE: NYSUT was unable to provide an attendance report of UUP elected delegates to the 2020 NYSUT RA, held virtually May 14-15.**

# Three steps to taking control of our financial destiny

BY BENJAMIN WILSON AND JAKOB FEINIG

To protect workers, essential public services and local businesses, UUP should urge the governor and the New York State Legislature to immediately take three measures.

- Use Federal Reserve emergency money (approximately \$20 billion at the state level);
- Reinstatement of the New York Stock Transfer Tax (\$14 billion to \$19 billion a year); and
- Create the COVID-19 Recovery Commission to ensure that Federal Reserve and tax money goes where it belongs: into the bank accounts of local workers, businesses and essential services.

The universities, hospitals, public school districts, and municipalities for which we work provide essential and critical services. These institutions buy from the businesses in our communities, and much of our income as workers also supports local businesses. But the state faces a budget shortfall of nearly \$20 billion, threatening local workers and their communities. It is now clear that we cannot expect help from Congress.

These three measures will end the state's budget shortfall and enable us to enhance public services.

## FEDERAL RESERVE EMERGENCY MONEY

The Federal Reserve currently provides emergency lending to states and municipalities. New York state and New York City are eligible for billions if the governor and the mayor choose to access them. This money is available immediately, doesn't have to be repaid before 2023 or 2024, and could cover the entire 2020 budget shortfalls for the state and New York City. Go to <https://bit.ly/38VxFWC> for more information.

Gov. Andrew Cuomo and Mayor Bill De Blasio need to act now because the emergency program (called the Municipal Liquidity Facility) ends Dec. 31. As union members, we should do everything we can to convince our elected officials that this



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cash infusion is necessary to protect workers, public services and local businesses. Banks regularly secure emergency funds provided by the Federal Reserve. As workers, we should do the same.

Using Federal Reserve cash is a first step in the right direction. Additionally, ending a tax rebate for financial institutions can yield additional revenue.

## REINSTATE THE STATE'S STOCK TRANSFER TAX

UUP, the New York State Nurses Association, and the Black Nurses Coalitions are urging the state Legislature to reinstate the stock transfer tax, a move that would yield \$14 billion to \$19 billion per year. A single year's tax revenue is nearly enough to pay back the state portion of the Federal Reserve emergency funds when they fall due. (You can send lawmakers an e-letter at <https://uupinfo.org/resources/raisingrevenue>).

Federal Reserve emergency funds and tax money will generate money beyond what we need to cover the budget shortfall. But we need to ensure that this money reaches the right people.

## COVID-19 RECOVERY COMMISSION

New York Senate Bill S.8459 creates the COVID-19 Recovery Commission, a democratic decision-making process to distribute public money. Check it out at <https://bit.ly/35KPMwH>.

UUP and our partners support this bill and should demand that union representatives have a seat on the commission to

protect workers' interests.

An accountable and transparent COVID-19 Recovery Commission will ensure that the money flows to critical public institutions, to workers' bank accounts and, from there, to local businesses and the communities in which we live.

What we need to do now: convince New York lawmakers that this three-part plan is doable. Get the money (1) from the Federal Reserve and (2) from taxes, and (3) distribute it to the people and institutions who need it and

spend it locally.

The solution is right there in front of us. This plan is doable, and we will not accept unnecessary pain.

New York is a model for how to battle COVID-19; we can now become a model for how to mobilize public money.

*(UUP member Benjamin Wilson is an associate professor of economics at SUNY Cortland. UUP member Jakob Feinig is an assistant professor of human development at Binghamton University and an historical sociologist.)*

## Submission policy

The Voice welcomes timely submissions for The Last Word. Commentaries of no longer than 600 words should focus on union and University issues, politics and other events relevant to UUP members.

All letters are subject to editing for length, accuracy and clarity.

Unsigned submissions will not be published.

Email commentaries to UUP Director of Media and Publications Mike Lisi at [mlisi@uupmail.org](mailto:mlisi@uupmail.org) or send them to his attention at: The Voice, UUP, PO Box 15143, Albany, NY 12212-9954.

# WHAT'S INSIDE

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## Surge protectors

**4**—Upstate Medical University faculty and staff—including Dr. Jay Brenner, on the cover—and frontline UUPers at Buffalo-area hospitals are meeting the COVID-19 challenge.

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- FDA ranks Upstate Medical No.1 for COVID-19 saliva test, p. 7
- Binghamton engineers get creative to fight coronavirus, p. 8
- Member in clinical trial gets COVID-19 tattoo, p. 9
- Chapter professionals take survey on coronavirus concerns, p. 10
- Union releases spring semester COVID-19 safety guidelines, p. 13

## 18 VOTE-COPE campaign kicks off

UUP's statewide coordinator hopes to increase the number of overall contributors to the union's political action fund, to at least 10 percent of the membership by May 2021.

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