This is the latest in a special series of UUPconnect issues dedicated to sharing important coronavirus-related information with UUP members.

COVID-19: The Numbers

428,512 confirmed cases in New York state
32,861 deaths; 74,406 people have recovered

151,910 confirmed cases in North Carolina; 2,494 deaths

5,595,361 cases in the U.S.; 174,647 deaths; more than 1,947,035 people have recovered

Globally, more than 22.7 million cases; more than 795,000 deaths

From Johns Hopkins University (as of Aug. 21)

Not on the list? We can fix that

If you’re reading this newsletter and it’s not being emailed to you, that’s a problem.

Fortunately, it’s a problem we can fix.

To receive the UUPconnect: Coronavirus newsletter, email UUP Media & Publications Director Mike Lisi at mlisi@uupmail.org. We will add your email to our distribution list.

If your chapter has a coronavirus-related news item or an event—anything from virtual seminars for members to in-person rallies—please share it with us so we can share it statewide. Please email your news items to Lisi at mlisi@uupmail.org.
UUP set to work with new chancellor despite no-search decision

Jim Malatras, left, president of SUNY Empire State College and close ally of Gov. Andrew Cuomo, is SUNY’s new chancellor.

The SUNY Board of Trustees voted Aug. 21 to approve Malatras as SUNY’s 14th chancellor; his appointment is effective Aug. 31.

Malatras, who will remain as a tenured professor at Empire State College, opted for a 25 percent pay cut as chancellor; he will be paid $450,000 plus a $60,000 housing allowance. Malatras requested that the money cut from his salary—$170,000—go to SUNY’s opportunity and PRODiG programs, according to SUNY’s release on Malatras’ appointment.

UUP President Fred Kowal welcomed Malatras as chancellor and said UUP stands ready to work with him to respond to the coronavirus pandemic and end the state’s chronic underfunding of SUNY.

““To best advance these goals, we believe SUNY must be run as a system, not as a collection of individual campuses,” Kowal said in an Aug. 21 media release. “We are optimistic that Dr. Malatras can provide the leadership necessary to accomplish this. By working together, we can overcome the health and economic crises plaguing SUNY in this tumultuous year and in the years to come.”

Kowal said UUP disapproved of SUNY’s decision to forego a nationwide search for a new chancellor—one focused on attracting candidates of color or those from underrepresented communities. UUP called for a nationwide search for a new chancellor just days after former Chancellor Kristina Johnson’s June resignation.

“Though we are disappointed that the SUNY Board of Trustees chose not to undertake a nationwide search for a new chancellor, we trust that Dr. Malatras appreciates the need for a collaborative relationship with UUP—to lead SUNY through the current challenge of a safe reopening and assure that SUNY can continue to provide high quality, accessible public education,” Kowal said.

“At this time in American history, it is crucially important to take steps to make SUNY’s faculty and staff more diverse. We are also hopeful that Dr. Malatras will embrace the aggressive steps UUP has proposed to hire
Malatras’ appointment was not unanimous. Trustee Cary Staller voted against the measure because the Trustees failed to undertake a nationwide search for SUNY’s new chancellor.

In an Aug. 21 press release, the executive committees of the Faculty Senate, Faculty Council of Community Colleges and the SUNY Student Assembly announced that they passed a vote of no confidence in the “political members of the SUNY board.” The Trustees should have held an “open and fair” search for a new chancellor, the release said.

SUNY Faculty Senate President Gwen Kay and Faculty Council of Community Colleges President Christy Fogal, both non-voting Trustees, voiced their objections at the Trustees’ Aug. 21 meeting in Albany.

“We are upholding the standards of shared governance by asking for a full search,” Fogal said.

Several Trustees explained that the urgency of responding to campuses reopening amid the coronavirus pandemic convinced the Trustees to shelve a nationwide search and choose Malatras, who headed the state’s Reimagine Education Advisory Council to help schools and colleges safely reopen.

“I believe in process and it should often go first and its very important,” said Trustee Richard Socarides. “But we can’t put process ahead of the health and safety of students, faculty and staff. These are unusual circumstances.”

Read UUP’s press release HERE.

Read SUNY’s press release HERE.

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**UUP joins coalition rally for climate justice**

UUP President Fred Kowal joined dozens of labor leaders and climate activists Aug. 19 for a virtual rally hosted by NY Renews, as the coalition of more than 200 environmental and labor groups launched its Climate, Jobs, and Justice Recovery campaign.

Kowal called on coalition members to unite against the “two scourges”: the pandemic and the accompanying economic meltdown. Both, he said, are “endemic to the capitalist system.”
He also drew on the Iroquois philosophy known as the “Seven Generations” concept, which states that decisions made now should take into consideration their effect on the welfare of descendants and the sustainability of the Earth seven generations into the future.

“All that we’re seeing today, and all that we’re fighting for, is with that future in our minds and our spirits,” Kowal said. “The members of UUP, including the 13,000 members who work in our SUNY hospitals, are working for this future.”

The rally drew more than 600 people and featured video messages of solidarity from several well-known activists, including the environmental journalist and author Bill McKibben and actress Jane Fonda. A large number of UUP members also signed into the rally and greeted fellow attendees with messages of support.

Read more HERE.

NY sustains low COVID-19 positivity rate

The rate of positive COVID-19 tests in New York state has remained under 1 percent for two weeks straight, charting one of the lowest rates of coronavirus in the nation.

Also, the number of patients in hospital intensive care units—119—is the lowest number since March 15. The positivity rate of tests for coronavirus across the state Aug. 20 was at 0.72 percent.

“This is not over,” Gov. Andrew Cuomo said in an Aug. 21 statement. “We have to be smart, wear a mask, socially distance and be New York Tough!”

Western New York had the highest positive testing rate, with 1.6 percent. The North Country was the lowest with 0.2 percent.

Two more states, Alaska and Delaware, were added to the state’s out-of-state quarantine order list. The order, issued in July, requires travelers from certain states and U.S. territories be quarantined for 14 days when they enter New York.

The updated list is: Alabama, Alaska, Arkansas, Arizona, California, Delaware, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Iowa, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Missouri, Mississippi, Minnesota, Montana, North Carolina, North Dakota, Nebraska, Nevada, Oklahoma, Puerto Rico, South Carolina, South Dakota, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia, and Wisconsin.
Meanwhile, The New York Times reported that lower income areas in New York City were hit much harder by coronavirus than more affluent areas. According to 1.46 million coronavirus tests released by the city Tuesday, no zip code south of 96th street had a positivity rate of over 20 percent.

In comparison, Corona and East Elmhurst in Queens charted positivity rates of 51.6 percent and 45.7 percent, respectively. Citywide, more than 27 percent of those tested positive. The Bronx had the highest rate with 33 percent; Manhattan was lowest at 19 percent.

Read more HERE.

UUP Sunshine State retirees: please vote

Retired UUP members in Florida can plan an important role in electing pro-union candidates in the November election.

The New York State Alliance of Retired Workers, an organization of retired union workers that advocates for economic and social justice for seniors, is working with sister organizations in Florida to motivate retirees to register to vote and to vote for union-friendly candidates.

With Florida expected to be a battleground state in November, it is important for retirees in Florida to register to vote and vote for pro-union candidates.

Click HERE for a list of Florida candidates endorsed by the Florida AFL-CIO.

Click HERE for information on voting in Florida.

Tell the governor, state legislators: Make SUNY campuses safe for fall

Please take a moment to send e-letters to Gov. Cuomo and state lawmakers urging them to mandate measures supported by UUP for a safe reopening of SUNY campuses in the fall.

UUP believes resources must be located to provide for baseline and surveillance testing; contact tracing; mask-wearing and social distancing in classrooms and common areas; and allowing faculty and staff to telecommute the safe reopening of SUNY campuses. Those mandates would go far in ensuring that campuses are virus-free when classes resume.
CLICK HERE to send an e-letter to your state elected officials.

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**Urgent update: Congress needs to act**

UUP is asking its members to continue to press their congressional lawmakers for passage of the HEROES Act, a coronavirus relief bill, and their state lawmakers for an ultra-millionaires’ tax and a billionaires’ tax, so that New York state can address a budget deficit approaching $20 billion, and SUNY can get the funding it so desperately needs.

To take action, go to UUP's website and click on the links in the Take Action box on the right side of the page. Click HERE to go to the UUP website.

This is not only a matter of aid to public higher education; it's a matter of racial justice. It's already established that the coronavirus has hit low-income communities of color especially hard in the United States. So, it's unfortunately no surprise that the economic crash caused by the pandemic is marked by a racial divide, as well.

That’s because there are sharp disparities in the unemployment benefits among states, and many of those disparities most deeply affect Black workers, who disproportionately live in states with the lowest unemployment benefits and the highest barriers to qualify for them, as reported in this New York Times story.

In April, the federal government started providing most workers with an additional $600 a week in unemployment benefits, in addition to their state benefits. That additional payment was a lifeline for millions of Americans, and especially so for Black workers who lost their job because of the pandemic.

The House passed the HEROES Act May 15, but the bill has languished in the Senate. The two sides tried again this week to work out a deal, to no avail.

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**August virtual student loan clinics end Aug. 26**

A series of August virtual Student Debt Clinics will wrap up this week.

Two clinics, led by UUP and AFT, will be held from noon to 1:30 p.m. and from 5 to 6:30 p.m. on Aug. 26.
At the clinics, members can learn about free federal programs that can help reduce their monthly loan payments and eventually lead to student loan forgiveness.

It’s not too late to register for the clinics; registrations will be accepted the day of the events.

Click HERE to sign up for the clinics.

**Virtual NEOs series**

UUP is hosting “UUP Benefits 101,” a series of new employee orientation webinars focusing on benefits and ways new members can maximize them.

The webinars, which run through Aug. 26, will also cover the importance of becoming a UUP member. Director of Member Benefits and Services Doreen Bango will lead the webinars.

New SUNY employees who started March 13 or later can attend the webinars. CLICK HERE to RSVP for the webinars; login information will be sent out the week of the event.

The webinar schedule is below:

- Aug. 24: 3:30 p.m. and 6 p.m.
- Aug. 26: Noon and 6 p.m.

**Register now for Sept. 9 online accessibility, learning webinar**

The Northeast ADA Center will hold a Sept. 9 seminar on virtual learning.

The hour-long forum, titled “Back to School and Virtual Accessibility,” is set for noon. It is free; registration is required.

Led by Joe Zesski, Northeast ADA program manager, the webinar will provide a basic overview of the legal need for online accessibility in the education setting, review key elements in accessible online learning, and discuss how schools and educators can address planning for an accessible online classroom.

Click HERE to register.
Register now for Binghamton University healthcare symposium

The coronavirus, disaster management and hospitals and public health are topics set to be discussed at the Binghamton Symposium on Healthcare Management and Policy.

The 16th annual session, set for Sept. 18, will be a virtual forum featuring seven panel discussions and a keynote speech by James R. Tallon, Jr., a former state Assembly member, chairman of the Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured and president of the United Hospital Fund of New York.

Panel sessions at the symposium are:

- Hospital & Health Care Insurance
- Health Insurance Policy, Politics, and Reform
- Topic B: Covid-19: Disaster Management & Public Policy
- New Frontiers of Disaster Management: Covid-19
- Covid-19: Hospitals & Public Health
- Covid-19 and Community Leaders
- Covid-19 and Local Community

The symposium will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. It is free to attend and open to all; registration is required by Aug. 31.

Click HERE to register.

Webinar: Economic security during the pandemic

The AFL-CIO’s webinar series on the union economy continues with an online forum on real estate markets and investments.

Representatives from the AFL-CIO Investment Trust Corporation, AFL-CIO Housing Investment Trust and Ullico will share expertise to keep us, our families and our unions economically stable during this time of uncertainty for the real estate market.

Two webinars are slated, at 10 a.m. Tuesday, Aug. 25; and at 5 p.m. Thursday Aug. 27.

Click HERE to register for the Aug. 25 webinar.

Click HERE to register for the Aug. 27 webinar.
President Trump’s attacks on mail-in voting and cutbacks at the U.S. Postal Service have caused concerns across America as the Nov. 3 election nears.

This week, “Union Strong,” the New York State AFL-CIO’s podcast, talks with Bill Cook, president of the Northeastern New York Branch 358 of the National Association of Letter Carriers, about the issues.

Click HERE to listen to the podcast.

Campus reopening plans

College life will be different for SUNY students when campuses open for fall classes.

SUNY has created a web page with a comprehensive list of reopening plans for SUNY state-operated campuses. You can view it HERE.

UUP issued its reopening guidelines for campuses June 2. UUP’s guidelines are far more stringent; they call for mandatory and recurring COVID-19 testing for all and contract tracing and isolation. Read them HERE.

UUP In Memoriam webpage

UUP remembers the active and retired members of our union family that we’ve lost to the COVID-19 pandemic.

If you know of a UUP member who has died due to COVID-19, please click the link below to enter their information on UUP’s In Memoriam webpage.

CLICK HERE to fill out the In Memoriam form.

Enter the decedent’s name (first name, middle initial and last name), select their campus from a pull-down list, and include your email. You may also leave a short personal note about the deceased.

We will never forget our colleagues who were lost to COVID-19.