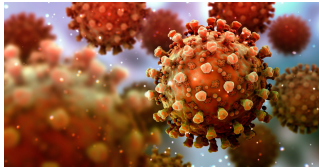


This is the latest in a special series of UUPconnect issues dedicated to sharing important coronavirus-related information with UUP members. If you have questions or comments about items in this newsletter, please email them to UUPConnect@uupmail.org.



COVID-19: The Numbers

These are cumulative numbers collected since the start of the pandemic. The numbers in parentheses are increases since Nov. 20:

New York

674,093 confirmed cases in New York state (up 94,711 cases)

34,775 total deaths (increase of 560 deaths)

U.S.

14,149,770 cases in the U.S. (up 2,405,990 cases)

276,406 deaths (increase of 23,545 deaths)

Globally, more than 65.3 million cases; nearly 1.6 million deaths

From *Johns Hopkins University* as of Dec. 4



UUP issues pandemic guidelines for spring semester

UUP's recommended guidelines for the spring semester on SUNY campuses expand upon the measures the union recommended for the fall semester—recommendations that SUNY largely adopted once the new SUNY chancellor, Jim Malatras, took charge of the university's response in late August.

UUP, have learned about the coronavirus, including its transmission and the mental health effects of dealing with it. For example, the spring guidelines advise that furniture be placed in rooms in a way that minimizes potential exposure, and they encourage the dissemination of information about counseling and other mental health services to students, faculty and staff.

Click [HERE](#) to read more about the guidelines in UUP's news release.

Click [HERE](#) to read the guidelines and other information about the pandemic on UUP's COVID-19 resources page.

The spring guidelines generated news coverage. Read the Spectrum News story about the guidelines [HERE](#).



Hoey reelected, delegates elect new EB members

Delegates reelected statewide Membership Development Officer Tom Hoey to a second three-year term in a mail ballot 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 Vice President for Academics Samuel Marquez. They were elected to terms ending in 2023.

Click [HERE](#) to see the election results.

Delegates authorized the election at a special virtual delegate assembly in September. The election was originally set to take place in person at the 2020 Spring Delegate Assembly; the DA was postponed due to the coronavirus pandemic.

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

Hoey turned back a challenge from New Paltz chapter president and former statewide executive board member Beth E. Wilson to win reelection. He became statewide MDO after winning a special 2016 election for the post and was elected to a full term as MDO in 2017.

Five Executive Board members were reelected to three-year terms. They are:

president

- Rebecca Bryan, Cortland Chapter MDO
- Patrick Romain, Albany Chapter assistant VPP
- Richard Veenstra, Upstate Medical University Chapter president
- Darleyne Mayers, Farmingdale Chapter delegate

UUP President Fred Kowal and statewide Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O'Bryan-Losee, who ran unopposed, were [reelected](#) at the Executive Board meeting Oct. 23.



You can spend 2020 HCAA, DCAA dollars in 2021

Health Care Spending Account enrollees will be able to spend money set aside for 2020 in 2021.

So will those who set aside funds for the 2020 Dependent Care Advantage Account.

According to the Governor's Office of Employee Relations, UUP-represented members can use up to \$500 in 2020 HCSA funds, in part because of the many closures and health care cancellations caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The IRS allows for an employer to carry over remaining balances for use in the next year.

Click [HERE](#) to check your 2020 HCSA balances or call 1-800-358-7207 for more information. Email fsa@goer.ny.gov or call WageWorks/Health Equity at 1-800-358-7202 with questions about the extension.

DCAA enrollees have an additional two-and-a-half months to use unspent 2020 funds for eligible expenses in 2021. Claims can be submitted for care provided between Jan. 1 and March 15, 2021; claims must be filed by March 31, 2021.

Click [HERE](#) to check your 2020 DCAA balance or call 1-800-358-7207 for more information. Email fsa@goer.ny.gov or call WageWorks/Health Equity at 1-800-358-7202 with questions about the grace period or your DCAA.



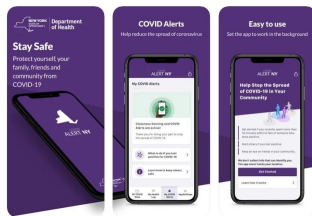
Coronavirus vaccine coming to New York

New York will likely receive its first shipment of the coronavirus vaccine within days, and the state expects to inoculate 170,000 people before the end of the year.

...more will go to the most vulnerable New Yorkers: health care workers, essential workers, nursing home residents, and residents of neighborhoods with high caseloads of COVID-19.

As for college and university campuses? It's not yet known what priority will be assigned to college students for the vaccine, but one thing is clear, as [this story from Inside Higher Ed notes](#): Healthy college students are likely to be pretty far back in the line to get the vaccine.

To see your estimated place in line for a vaccine, click [HERE](#) to try this interactive feature from the New York Times.



App seeking humans: The story of New York's lonely COVID phone-based tracing system

If New York's COVID-19 phone app is such a good idea, why are so few New Yorkers using it?

That's the question that state officials are pondering, as they try to encourage people to use the app. Downloading it is only the first step; users must enter a code given to them by a contact tracer if they get a positive coronavirus test result; that code, in turn, will alert people in the user's immediate proximity.

Of course, this requires that both parties have the app downloaded, and that may be part of the problem.

The app has been downloaded 1.1 million times, but it's unknown how many people are actually using the app. Only 854 people have put the code into their app, according to a Crain's New York story about the app's problems that has received national attention.

Gov. Cuomo is encouraging New Yorkers to download the app and enter the code if they get a positive test result. At least one UUP chapter-- Buffalo HSC--has also encouraged its members to use the app, after ascertaining that the information in the app would be safeguarded and that the app could be an effective tool in keeping people safe and informed.

To download the app, go [HERE](#).

Read about one user's experience with the app [HERE](#).

UUP secures new vacation accrual cap extension



of Employee Relations to extend the January 1, 2020, vacation accrual cap.

The extension, signed Dec. 1, gives employees with more than 40 vacation days who haven't been able to use them due to COVID-19 another year to take the time. Employees will have until Dec. 31, 2021, to use the leave time.

Please work with your Labor Relations Specialists to address any questions that may arise on your campus regarding implementation of this agreement.

Click [HERE](#) to read the Memorandum of Agreement.



Help for student loan borrowers as pandemic relief ends

Pandemic relief for student loan borrowers (a category which includes UUP members) is set to end Dec. 31—if, in fact, it ever started for many of these borrowers.

The pandemic relief program was riddled with problems, and many borrowers continued to see their wages garnished even though they qualified for relief.

Although Congress is considering a pandemic relief package that both houses hope to pass before the end of the year, there is little information on whether student debt relief would be part of that deal. Because this is a pared-down relief bill, it's safer to assume that Congress will take up student debt relief later.

UUP is committed to helping members with student loan debt, and UUP and AFT have programs to help people manage their loans.

Last year, UUP started holding clinics on repayment options, with UUP members trained by AFT leading the clinics. The clinics provide members valuable information on how to navigate the many repayment and consolidation choices and how to know if they qualify for federal loan forgiveness, as well as tips on costly mistakes to avoid.

UUP has continued holding virtual student debt clinics during the pandemic. Members interested in having a clinic scheduled at their chapter should contact their chapter leader or the professional organizer assigned to their chapter.

Clinics can be closed to just a chapter or open to members from other chapters, depending what the chapter wants to do. They can also be tailored to

residents. The clinics are usually only open to members and are designed for up to 50 participants.

UUP plans to continue the student debt clinics in 2021 and also plans to develop a new group of members willing to become trainers for the clinics. Watch for announcements from your chapter.

AFT offers a free program called "Summer," to help people work through their student loan refinancing. Summer offers an online student loan management platform and can help borrowers navigate the complex territory of income-driven repayment plans and the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program. So far, several dozen UUP members have signed up for Summer.

Read more about Summer [HERE](#).

Read more about the end of pandemic relief [HERE](#).

Read more about UUP's student debt clinics [HERE](#).



At last, coronavirus relief talks underway

With several pandemic relief programs about to end, Congress has faced mounting pressure to act.

And finally, centrist members in both parties got the talks started. Now the promise of a relief bill is real. Details are few, but this is farthest that Congress has gotten on a new relief bill since May.

UUP members by the thousands helped in this effort, by keeping up a months-long campaign of letters and phone calls to their Congressional delegation to tell lawmakers to pass a coronavirus relief bill. It's important to keep sending that message.

Go [HERE](#) for ways to take action.

Read about the stimulus talks [HERE](#).



Please sign New York Youth Climate Leaders petition

The New York Youth Climate Leaders are circulating a petition calling for the passage of [state Assembly Bill A257C](#), which, if approved, would require the governor to publicly disclose all fossil fuel tax expenditures.

passage of the bill for the tax subsidies except for those deemed essential by the Legislature.

You can read and sign the Youth Climate Leaders petition [HERE](#).

UUP recently endorsed House Resolution 763, the Energy Innovation & Carbon Dividend Act of 2019, which would impose a fee on the carbon content of fuels, including crude oil, natural gas, coal, or any other product derived from those fuels, that would be used in a way that allows greenhouse gases to be emitted into the atmosphere. You can read more about HR 763 [HERE](#).

Please sign the petition and share it with others.



UUP, SUNY extend testing agreement

UUP and SUNY have agreed to extend mandatory coronavirus testing for all UUP-represented employees through the end of the spring semester.

UUP President Fred Kowal signed the agreement Nov. 19. It continues a September pact between SUNY and UUP to conduct routine surveillance testing of all UUP-represented employees.

Read SUNY's press release [HERE](#).

Read the Memorandum of Agreement Between SUNY and UUP Regarding Mandatory COVID-19 Testing of Employees In the Professional Services Negotiating Unit [HERE](#).

"As was the case with our first agreement, this agreement provides that academic and professional staff with any on-campus obligation will receive surveillance testing at the same frequency as surveillance testing of students on campus," Kowal said. "The agreement continues to provide that mandatory employee testing must be short-swab testing that is conducted free of charge to the employee on work time.

"We are continuing to advocate with SUNY for health and safety protocols that will best protect our members and our campus communities as we move forward," Kowal said. "Our priority remains the same: protecting the health and safety of everyone in all campus communities. Surveillance testing is a critical part of this effort, and we will continue to press SUNY for all measures to ensure our collective well-being."



Now you can wear a stylish face mask and help fund UUP's annual college scholarships or VOTE/COPE at the same time.

The union is selling UUP face masks and filters; proceeds will go to UUP's College Scholarship Fund or VOTE/COPE. Members purchasing masks can decide which effort they wish to support.

The masks, made in the USA, are made of 100 percent cotton and are machine washable. The filters are also washable.

Dozens of UUP members have purchased masks and their donations have given a boost to the union's Scholarship Fund and VOTE/COPE. So far, more than \$1,000 in mask sales proceeds have gone to the Scholarship Fund; VOTE/COPE has received about \$700.

Members have their choice between buying a mask and five filters or just the filters. Masks and filters are selling for \$20; the filters are \$10.

Click [HERE](#) to order online.

Click [HERE](#) to order by mail and pay by check.



Sielaff hired as new UUP LRS

A UUP professional organizer has been hired by NYSUT as a labor relations specialist for UUP.

Chris Sielaff will replace Darryl Wood as the LRS for four campuses— Binghamton, Cortland, Delhi and Oneonta. Previously, Sielaff worked as a UUP organizer at the Brockport, ESF, Geneseo and Upstate Medical University chapters. Wood is set to retire in late December.

Sielaff, who starts with NYSUT Dec. 7, joined UUP as an organizer in January. He is a graduate of SUNY Brockport and has a master's degree from Binghamton University.



Get your flu shot!

UUP is urging members to get an influenza vaccination, which is especially important this fall because of the coronavirus pandemic.

It's important to do everything possible to lessen the strain on hospitals and other health-care providers,

pandemic. And if you are reporting for work on a college campus, you can help protect your colleagues by getting the flu vaccine.

You can get your flu shot at your local pharmacy, health clinic or even a grocery store in your community. You can find where to get a flu shot in your community by using [VaccineFinder.org](https://www.vaccinefinder.org/), a search site offered by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

As the CDC notes, "Many people at higher risk from flu also seem to be at higher risk from COVID-19. If you are at high risk, it is especially important for you to get a flu vaccine this year."



Blood, organ donors needed

There is always a need for blood and organ donations, even during a pandemic.

Please click the links below to see how you can help. Please consider becoming a donor.

- Blood donation: American Red Cross – click [HERE](#)
- Bone marrow: Be The Match.org – click [HERE](#)
- Organ donation: Organdonor.gov – click [HERE](#)



eLearning is easy with Empire KnowledgeBank

EKB eLearning offers thousands of courses and videos to assist employees develop current skills and learn new skills for professional development and advancement.

Empire KnowledgeBank, a UUP-negotiated benefit, also offers courses to help members deal with stress, change, and staying balanced in an ever-changing world.

UUP-represented employees can access thousands of eLearning courses, eBooks and short course videos for opportunities to enhance their professional and career development, for certification preparation and continuing education.

Course offerings include, "Bouncing Back with Perseverance and Resilience;" "Take a Deep Breath and Manage Your Stress;" "Optimizing Your Work-Life Balance," and "Staying Balanced in a Shifting World."

Click [HERE](#) to apply for a FREE EKB license and to access guidelines.



Pre-retirement workshops set

UUP will hold a series of virtual pre-retirement workshops.

The two-part webinars will cover health care and Medicare followed by union benefits, such as dental and vision coverage.

Dec. 14: Health care and Medicare, noon;

Dec. 16: Union benefits, noon

Click [HERE](#) to sign up.

Jan. 26, 2021: Health care and Medicare, noon

Jan. 28, 2021: Union benefits, noon.

Click [HERE](#) to sign up.

GET ON THE LIST!

GET ON THE LIST!

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Not on the list? We can fix that

If you're reading this newsletter and it's not being emailed to you, please let us know.

We will fix that problem, toot sweet.

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, please share it with us so we can share it statewide. Please email your news items to Lisi at mlisi@uupmail.org.

You can email questions and concerns about this newsletter to UUPConnect@uupmail.org.

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