

THE VOICE

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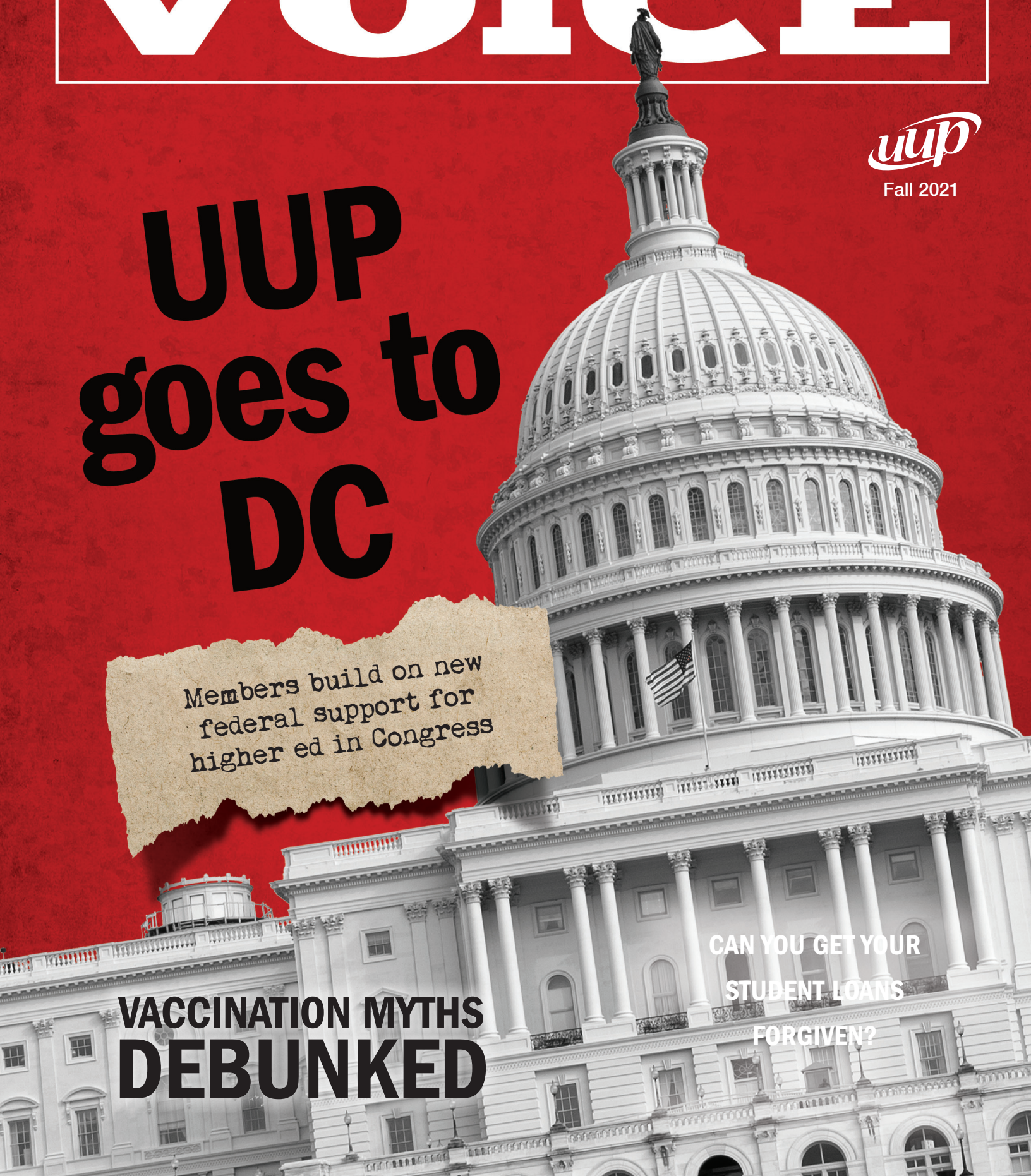
Fall 2021

UUP goes to DC

Members build on new
federal support for
higher ed in Congress

VACCINATION MYTHS
DEBUNKED

CAN YOU GET YOUR
STUDENT LOANS
FORGIVEN?



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United University Professions' elected Chapter Presidents are there to work for their members. If you've got an issue or comment, feel free to reach out to them.



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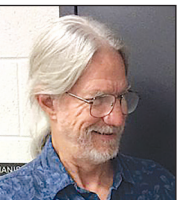
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WORKING FOR A BETTER WORLD

Brod Award honors retirees, one posthumously, for service above self

JEANNE GALBRAITH AND THE LATE SANDY SPIER, UUP retiree members beloved for their quiet dedication to their union and their communities, are this year's winners of the Pearl H. Brod Award.

Spier, a former retiree officer at UUP's Downstate Medical Center Chapter, died last spring just weeks after her Downstate colleagues, Chapter President Rowena Blackman-Stroud and Chapter Secretary Ellen McTigue, nominated her.

Spier: An advocate for Downstate

Sandy Spier was known as a highly effective political activist, and especially so earlier in the administration of former Gov. Andrew Cuomo, when UUP realistically worried that the state would try to close Downstate Medical Center. Under Blackman-Stroud's leadership, the chapter rallied a coalition of community activists and faith leaders, and Spier was deeply involved in that effort.



Blackman-Stroud described her as "...a dedicated, passionate advocate for organized labor who has selflessly given of her time to create positive change as a UUP member, and a member of the Downstate Chapter ... she was always advocating for our members."

A longtime member of the First Unitarian Congregational Society in Brooklyn, Spier threw her considerable energies into social justice efforts in the borough, and she worked especially hard to build bridges among diverse religious and cultural groups.

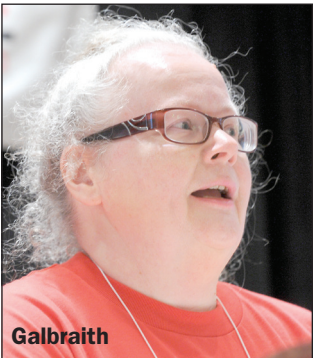
Rita Pearl, Spier's fellow congregant at First Unitarian, remembered "Sandy's heartfelt commitment to a better and more equitable world for everyone," in her nominating letter. Among Spier's many projects at First Unitarian: organizing the yearly friendship dinner between the congregation and the local Muslim community.

Gailbraith: Elections expert, mentor

Jeanne Galbraith's service to UUP has been at both the statewide and chapter levels. At Geneseo, she was an academic delegate and chapter secretary; at Stony Brook HSC, she was an academic delegate, chapter secretary, vice president for academics and an interim chapter president. She served on the statewide UUP Executive Board, and as state-

wide secretary for three terms, from 1989 to 1995.

But it was through her continued work after her retirement for the UUP Elections and Credentials Committee—newly renamed the Constitution and Governance Committee—that many newer UUP members got to know Galbraith. As a member and then co-chair of Elections and Credentials, a role she shared with David Kreh of Cortland, she directed elections at many delegate assemblies and was renowned for her knowledge of election procedures and protocol. Although she and Kreh are no longer committee chairs, they remain members of Constitution and Governance.



A gifted quilter, Galbraith belongs to a quilting club and once put her creative skills to good use for UUP by donating a quilt to an auction that supported the UUP College Scholarship fund. The quilt quickly sold.

Galbraith's colleagues Henry Flax, a Downstate retiree; and former UUP statewide Secretary Eileen Landy nominated her, with supporting statements by Kreh and statewide Vice President for Professionals Carolyn Kube. Landy warmly described Galbraith in a nomination letter as a mentor with a sense of humor and vast institutional knowledge of the union.

"She was generous with her expertise and always willing to answer questions and explain policies and procedures," Landy wrote. "Her generosity continued after her retirement; I relied upon her wisdom until I left office in 2017." ■



The Pearl H. Brod Award

recognizes UUP retirees who have provided outstanding service to their communities, to SUNY and to UUP after retirement.

The award is named for the late Pearl H. Brod of Farmingdale, a longtime academic delegate who served as elected chair of what was then known as the statewide Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM) from 1999-2003; that committee is now known as the Retired Member Governing Board Committee. Brod was COARM's Long Island Region representative 1993 - 2009. The award was renamed in her honor in 2011. The award was presented at the virtual UUP Fall Delegate Assembly on Oct. 15.

Mike Lyon and Wes Kennison receive
Mitchell Award for decades of service to UUP

More than 60 years of combined activism by two deeply committed labor advocates, and dual nominations for UUP’s highest honor, mean that Mike Lyon and Wes Kennison are both recipients of this year’s Nina Mitchell Award for Distinguished Service to UUP.

Many parts; one strong union

Lyon, of Upstate Medical University, and Kennison, of SUNY Geneseo, are both known for their quiet leadership as chapter officers, statewide activists and stalwart supporters of topics especially close to their hearts—in Lyon’s case, the negotiated Joint Labor-Management Individual Development Awards and the wellbeing of the SUNY academic medical centers; for Kennison, a career of powerful advocacy for SUNY’s part-time employees.

“A union needs role models to remain vibrant and to encourage the next generation of activists,” UUP President Fred Kowal said of the award winners. “Both Mike Lyon and Wes Kennison have consistently demonstrated the all-too-rare art of consensus-building, by devoting their time to connecting different groups within the union. We are a union of full-time and part-time employees, of professionals and academics, and nationally known experts in health care as well as the humanities. Mike and Wes achieved something that’s all too rare: They bridged all of these different groups and helped UUP achieve contracts that represented all.”

Mike Lyon: An advocate for SUNY HSCs



Faculty member,
Upstate Medical Center
Department of Otolaryn-
gology and Commu-
nication Services
Chair, Upstate’s Institu-
tional and Animal Care
Use Committee

Mike Lyon’s distinguished record of service includes stints as vice president for academics and as chapter president at Upstate; two terms on the UUP Negotiations Team, in 2011 and 2016; and more than a decade of service, which continues still, as chair of his chapter’s Joint Labor-Man-agement Individual Development Awards Committee. His statewide service includes the UUP Execu-tive Board, co-chairing the former Ad Hoc Committee on Health Sciences Center Concerns, ongoing service on the statewide Grievance Committee and as interim Membership Development Officer from 2015-2016. He was a delegate as an active member and continues as a retiree delegate.

A faculty member at the Upstate Medical Center Department of Otolaryn-gology and Communication Services for nearly 40 years, Lyon continues to chair

Upstate’s Institutional and Animal Care Use Committee, an important compliance committee for federally funded animal research projects.

Outside of his career and work for UUP, Lyon serves as an at-large trustee of the Greater Syracuse Labor Council, which has a proud history in Onondaga and Madison Counties that dates to 1899 and is part of the Central New York Area Labor Foundation of the AFL-CIO. He has used his avid love of cycling to raise money for regional charities.

“From when I first became an academic delegate in the 1990s, Mike has always been there,” Richard Veenstra, the current Upstate Chapter president, wrote in his nomination letter. “The many positions that Michael J. Lyon has held during his decades of service to the Upstate Medical Chapter and UUP statewide leadership are testimony to his dedication to United University Professions.”

Wes Kennison: Landmark achievements for contingent members

Wes Kennison’s advocacy for part-time members dates back more than 25 years, before UUP’s constitution permitted the election of chapter representatives for contingent members.

He was first delegated as a represen-tative on behalf of Geneseo contingents, and he was later elected to that position when the UUP constitution changed to recognize elected representatives for contingents at the chapter level. His advocacy for contingents expanded to the statewide level, and he eventually co-chaired the statewide Part-time Con-cerns Committee.

He was a member of UUP’s 2000 Negotiations Committee as a representa-tive for part-time concerns. The contract that UUP secured in those negotiations granted health insurance to contin-gent members of the bargaining unit, a landmark achievement that was years ahead of its time in the academic labor movement.

As a member of the UUP Execu-tive Board, Kennison also supported subsequent contract agreements that extended health insurance for qualified part-time members through the summer months, and which also gave a \$500 lump-sum bonus to part-time members who had completed eight consecutive semesters of service.

In his nomination letter, Joseph Dolce, the vice president for professionals at the Geneseo Chapter, noted that the lump-sum bonus “...ended management’s longtime refusal to include money for part-timers in the statewide contract, thus helping to remove a major obstacle to later successes in establishing statewide mini-mum salaries for part-timers.”

Kennison’s community service includes two terms as Geneseo town supervisor, as chair of the board of directors for the SUNY Gen-eseo InterFaith Center, and as chair of the board of directors of Catholic Chari-ties of Livingston County.

The Nina Mitchell Award would normally be presented in person at the UUP Fall Delegate Assembly. This year’s Fall DA was a one-day virtual event held Friday, Oct. 15, and the award was presented to Lyon and Kennison during the virtual plenary.

“All of us owe a great deal of gratitude to these two outstanding members for their incredible dedication,” Kowal said. “I hope that all UUP members will join me in extending thanks to Mike Lyon and Wes Kennison for their effort in helping to make UUP the richly diverse, wide-reaching and inclusive union that it is today.”



An impassioned
advocate for
part-time members
at chapter and
statewide levels.

Three-time member of the
statewide UUP Executive
Board.
UUP Negotiations
Committee, 2000; UUP
Negotiations Teams in
2004 and 2008.
Geneseo’s elected town
supervisor, 2004 - 2008;
board chair of local Inter-
Faith Center and Catholic
Charities.



The award is named for the late **Nina Mitchell**, a beloved substance abuse counselor at the UUP Downstate Medical Center Chapter who died in 1988 and who was known for her belief in the power of mentorship, team building, compassion and community leadership.

The award is typically given to a member who has devoted many years—often decades—of service to UUP at the chapter and statewide levels, as well as service to their community.



UUP goes federal

A new focus on a federal agenda and closer ties with New York state's congressional delegation are part of a new strategy to yield results.

By Darryl McGrath

FOR DECADES, AND FOR BETTER or worse, UUP built its entire legislative agenda around the state budget. At the beginning of each legislative session, the union eagerly watched for the Executive Budget Proposal, worked hard for the next two months as it awaited the inevitably insufficient funding for SUNY four-year campuses and academic medical centers, and held private meetings with legislative leaders who always pledged to do their best by SUNY. And then, year after year, when it became clear that those efforts had made little difference, UUP picked its words carefully in public statements on the final enacted budget—or said nothing at all. Something had to change, and as with so many other norms that played out the same way year after year, it was the coronavirus pandemic that finally pushed the “change” button for UUP’s legislative agenda. Earlier this year, and for the first time in its 50-year history, UUP developed a federal legislative agenda, and spent as much time working toward its goals with the New York congressional delegation as it did with state lawmakers.

So far, so good. The federal legislative agenda is very likely here to stay, UUP President Fred Kowal has said. And given that several bills from the Biden administration address UUP's needs, it makes sense for UUP to stick with this plan.

Pandemic changed the playing field

“The extraordinarily difficult time that SUNY has faced during the pandemic has made it clear that UUP needs to do things differently,” Kowal said. “Our effort to convince state lawmakers that the federal pandemic aid for higher education is a one-time special situation, not a permanent solution to SUNY’s chronic underfunding, did not have the results we expected. Our congressional delegation, however, understands that public higher education is the key to rebuilding New York for the long haul, not just in the aftermath of this crisis.”

That new focus on federal connections started with direct contact between UUP President Fred Kowal and Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer as Schumer worked late last winter to steer The American Rescue Plan through Congress. That bill was President Biden’s first major legislation, and it set the tone for the country’s gradual economic recovery from the pandemic. The bill included a massive infusion of cash for higher education, including \$915 million for SUNY.

Shortly after the Schumer meeting, the state released its final enacted budget.

Although SUNY got some gains, including a plan to close the TAP gap in campus budgets and more money for SUNY’s opportunity programs, the hospitals did not get a cent in state funding.

And despite UUP’s repeated reminders to state lawmakers that the federal pandemic funds represented a one-time boost that could not be substituted for adequate state funding for SUNY, it appeared that those reminders made no difference. The 2021-22 state budget allowed campuses to avoid crushing budget shortfalls, but that was largely because of the federal aid. Around the federal aid, the final enacted budget looked pretty much the way it has for years — no dramatic cuts, but also no realistic funding.

Same old state budget; new tactics by UUP

UUP followed up the Schumer meeting with outreach to New York members of the House of Representatives who have strong ties to SUNY or who have SUNY campuses in their districts. Since then, UUP has held virtual Town Halls with four Upstate House members: Antonio Delgado, Joe Morelle, Tom Suozzie and Brian Higgins, a former UUP member.

The meetings came at a good time, as UUP is now pressing for funding for SUNY to be included in The American Families Plan, which is the service part of the infrastructure package. The roads-and-bridges portion of the infrastructure package passed the Senate and is still in negotiations in the House. UUP expects the second part of that deal—which is packed with services and money to help families and working people—to come next.

Higgins told UUP members during his Aug. 24 virtual Town Hall that their help is essential in making sure that funding for SUNY and four-year public higher education in general is included in The American Families Plan.

“I would encourage UUP members to communicate with their members of Congress to go to those writing the bill and tell them to add these provisions,” said Higgins, a Democrat who represents more than 4,500 Western New York UUP members in New York’s 26th Congressional District. “The last thing we want to do here is create a situation that pits community colleges against four-year colleges.”

More than 720 UUP members have sent e-letters to their congressional representatives calling on them to extend the American Family Plan’s free tuition proposal for community colleges to public colleges and universities. Visit <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/tell-dc-support-higher-ed-in-afp> to send the e-letter.

UUP is part of a multistate coalition of higher education unions advocating for the initiative. Public four-year colleges and universities could see a drop

“The last thing we want to do here is create a situation that pits community colleges against four-year colleges.”

— U.S. Rep. Brian Higgins



“Our congressional delegation ... understands that public higher education is the key to rebuilding New York for the long haul, not just in the aftermath of this crisis.”

— UUP President Fred Kowal

in enrollment due to increased competition with tuition-free community colleges—an unintended but realistic possibility.

“I think that’s where this provision falls short,” Higgins said. “The last thing anyone wants to do here is hurt four-year colleges and universities.”

Hospital programs in line for federal help

But even if the American Families Plan aid comes through, it would still leave the SUNY hospitals in need of help that they clearly will not get from the state.

Kowal sees another path to helping the hospitals, given that the Biden administration has clearly demonstrated that it wants to expand health care services to Americans. The federal government is unlikely to replace the direct state operating funding for the SUNY hospitals that stopped three years ago, so Kowal plans to advocate for federal funding for programs that the Biden administration has already indicated it will support, and which could directly benefit the hospitals. If the hospitals can get additional federal funding for new or existing programs, that would allow them to steer their limited resources into areas that used to benefit from the state funding.

Kowal plans for UUP advocacy at the federal level to focus on three areas that could help the hospitals: maternal and infant mortality of Black women and babies; the creation and expansion of ambulatory health centers affiliated with SUNY hospitals that can bring health care into underserved communities; and medical education, including graduate medical education.

Maternal mortality “is an issue that just stuns me in terms of its seriousness and our lack of response to it,” Kowal said in a recent interview as he explained the union’s three health care priorities in its federal agenda. “The pandemic has shown massive holes in

the health care infrastructure in New York state, and New York’s number-one industry is health care. It’s amazing that in New York City and Upstate New York there are health care deserts.”

Money to train new doctors

Regarding advocacy for medical education, UUP has picked a good time to address the approximately \$250 million a year that SUNY spends subsidizing its four medical schools, Kowal noted. In late 2020, Congress passed its first increase to the Medicare graduate medical education program in almost 25 years. Medicare pays for part of the medical school training at teaching hospitals, and this expansion will create 1,000 new Medicare-supported graduate medical education slots for doctors continuing specialized training as residents.

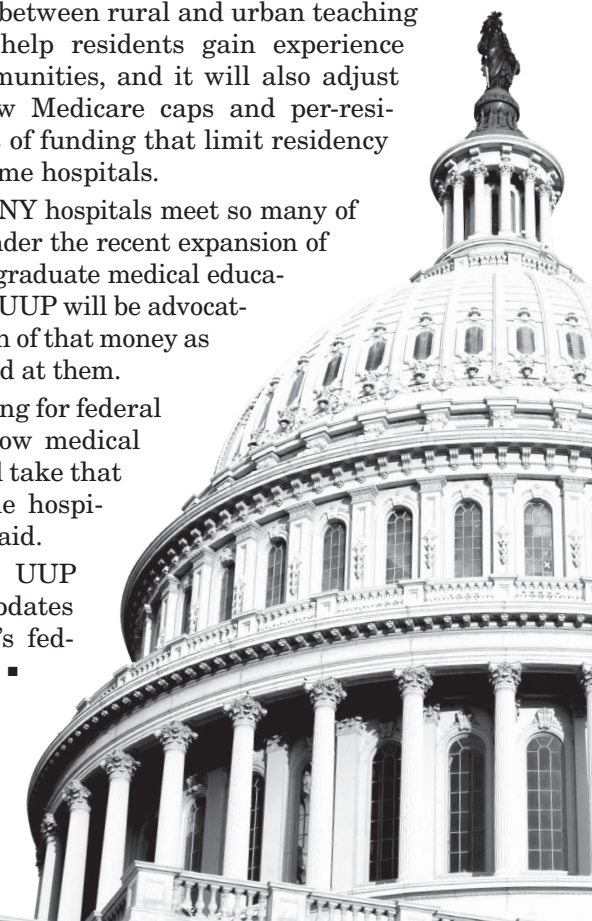
Priority for these new positions will be given to teaching hospitals in rural areas, hospitals training excessive numbers of residents, hospitals in states with new medical schools, and hospitals that care for underserved communities. The expansion will increase collaboration between rural and urban teaching hospitals to help residents gain experience in rural communities, and it will also adjust artificially low Medicare caps and per-resident amounts of funding that limit residency training in some hospitals.

Because SUNY hospitals meet so many of the criteria under the recent expansion of the Medicare graduate medical education program, UUP will be advocating for as much of that money as possible to land at them.

“We’re looking for federal support to grow medical education and take that burden off the hospitals,” Kowal said.

Watch the UUP website for updates on the union’s federal advocacy. ■

**— UUP Director of Media and Publications
Mike Lisi contributed to this story.**



Finally forgiven

UUP's student debt clinics help two members get nearly \$200,000 in federal student loans forgiven.

Story by Mike Lisi

Heather Shalhoub didn't believe what she saw, so she logged out and back into her student loan account, just to be sure.

But there it was: a big, round, black zero where her \$84,000 federal student loan balance was supposed to be. Her balance was zero. Her loan had been forgiven.

"It was well after 11 p.m. and I received a (federal loan) notification that I had a new message in my inbox," Shalhoub said. "I figured it would be another letter to resubmit my application again. But when I opened the letter, I just stared at it. I didn't trust it, I thought it was a scam. And when I saw the zero balance, I freaked out."

After waking up her roommate and a friend on the West Coast to share the good news, Shalhoub celebrated.

"I put on headphones and had a dance party by myself," she said. "I kinda danced it out."

After years of trying, Shalhoub, an Empire State College Chapter member and ESC librarian, finally qualified for the federal Temporary Expanded Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, available to qualifying public service employees with 10 years of full-time employment who meet a list of other stringent requirements—not to mention correctly filing the TEPSLF application, which is no easy task.

Help from UUP

She couldn't have done it without UUP's student

debt clinics, which tipped her off to TEPSLF and helped her understand how debt relief works and how to cut through the red tape to get her loans forgiven.

"Most people I've talked to don't think they qualify for (loan forgiveness) and they don't believe it's possible because there's so much misleading information out there," Shalhoub said. "I feel like going to one of the UUP debt clinics, and talking to someone who understands the process really helps."

"I don't know if I ever would have known I qualified without the session I attended."

Since 2019, UUP has held dozens of student debt clinics at UUP chapters across the state, helping more than 2,200 members with information about federal debt programs that are out there but that few people are aware of—and even fewer people know how to navigate.

The clinics, offered virtually every payday, provide members with information, tips and tools they can use to reduce their monthly loan payments or completely forgive their debt. People who come to the seminars carry an average of \$73,000 to \$94,000 in student debt. Members report shaving nearly \$250 a month off of their student loan payments after taking the course and using the tips and tricks they learned there.

Bringing it home

Statewide Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O'Bryan-Losee started the UUP student debt clinics in 2019 after hearing about debt clinics run by the AFT—and an AFT offer for affiliate leaders to become trainers and lead sessions for their own members.

She was among the first UUP members to become a certified clinic trainer and has trained more than a dozen trainers since then—including Pamela Malone, an Executive Board member and Empire State College Chapter president.

"What we're really finding is there is lots of emotion attached to their debt," said O'Bryan-Losee. "They've been made to feel guilty for holding debt for trying to better themselves through higher education. It's a very emotional piece of this and I try to alleviate that."

To do that, O'Bryan-Losee tells her own story; a first-generation college graduate, O'Bryan-Losee carries significant student debt. Using what she's learned and what she's taught, she's planning to file for federal debt forgiveness once she reaches her 10-year public service anniversary.

"There's no shame in student debt," said O'Bryan-Losee. "We talk about that during (the sessions) and we're here to help you through the process. You are not alone."

Financial freedom

That's how Kate Spaulding, an ESC Chapter member and adjunct instructor at Empire State College's Harry Van Arsdale Jr. School for Labor Studies, felt before going to one of UUP's debt clinics. Spaulding, who's worked full-time for the New York City Criminal Justice Agency for more than a decade, owed about \$120,000 in loans that were forgiven after attending a UUP debt clinic.

"It was another thing I didn't feel comfortable talking about with other people," she said. "I felt ashamed."

After earning her undergraduate and master's degree, Spaulding found herself saddled with \$163,000 in loans—\$110,000 in loans and an extra \$50,000 or so in interest. Not one dime of the \$46,000 she paid on her loan went to paying off principal.

"It was like an albatross that hung around my neck and impacted every single decision I'd make," Spaulding said. "I'd never even look for a private sector job because I wanted to get rid of the debt. When I got a raise, my loan would go up, so the raise would be negated."

"It really took the wind out of my sails because other things, like my rent, would go up and I never felt like I could get ahead," she said.

After attending a UUP student debt workshop, Spaulding put her new knowledge to use; she kept a meticulous spread sheet, found a Google student loan group that provided support and paid her exact loan payment on time each month. After submitting her loan forgiveness paperwork, she was relentless, calling federal loan representatives to find out where things were at with her loan application.



"Most people I've talked to don't think they qualify for (loan forgiveness) and they don't believe it's possible because there's so much misleading information out there."

Heather Shalhoub, Empire State College Chapter member and ESC librarian

"It was so discouraging to look at that and realize that after years of paying off my loan, I hadn't even started paying back my principal."

Kate Spaulding, Empire State College Chapter member, adjunct instructor at ESC



It takes effort

"It was just like having another job, you've got to pay attention to this stuff," she said. "Nothing should be this hard for people who are choosing to be underpaid in public service to do good in the world."

"I just kept track of my loan application process," Shalhoub said. "It's not fun and it's not easy, but neither is being \$84,000 in debt. It was so discouraging to look at that and realize that after years of paying off my loan, I hadn't even started paying back my principal."

And it was even harder to get loans forgiven for public service during the Trump Administration; O'Bryan-Losee said loan administrators would routinely reject loan forgiveness applications but would not disclose the reasons why the applications were rejected.

Fortunately, under the Biden Administration, the federal government has been more forthcoming and easier to work with when it comes to loan forgiveness.

"To stem all of this, we just need free college," said

» Students owed more than \$1.57 trillion in loans at the end of the second quarter of 2021, according to the Federal Reserve Bank of New York.

Spaulding, who said her parents co-signed for her student loans. "The system now is literally not sustainable. You have to be privileged to take out this kind of debt."

If you're a UUP member saddled with student loan debt and are looking for advice, it's worth investing an hour or two in attending a UUP student loan debt clinic, Shalhoub and Spaulding said.

"What's one or two hours out of your life?" Shalhoub asked. "The worst thing is that you confirm that you don't qualify for (loan forgiveness) and the best thing is that you learn that you do." ■

Q&A

VACCINE MYTHS AND MISCONCEPTIONS

SUNY has many renowned experts on infectious diseases, pediatric illnesses and the effectiveness of vaccines. UUP recently asked four of these experts to address common misperceptions about the coronavirus vaccine. Here are their answers.

Q The vaccines were developed so fast — how could they possibly be safe, if they were developed and approved and into people's arms in less than a year?

A DR. PHILIP GLICK: The vaccine technology had been in development for over a decade. The apparent fast tracking of the mRNA vaccines was also in part due to various phases of the clinical development (human trials and manufacturing) being done in parallel rather than as a series. This unique approach was taken because of the urgency of the pandemic and the capital advance the federal government made to the manufacturers. Emergency authorization for the mRNA vaccines was only granted after tens of thousands of doses were given to human volunteers, and safety and efficacy data were analyzed. Still, the long-term data for safety and efficacy are still being studied from millions of doses given to get final FDA approval; this is expected by Labor Day or sooner for the Pfizer vaccine. [Editor's Note: The FDA approved the Pfizer vaccine Aug. 23, after Dr. Glick submitted his answers.]

DR. STEPHEN THOMAS and DR. KATIE ANDERSON: These vaccines were not developed fast; in fact, mRNA vaccine technology has been in development for more than 30 years, with clinical trials for multiple infectious diseases occurring over the past 10 years (for influenza, HIV, Zika, and Ebola viruses). These vaccines were adapted for SARS-CoV-2, given their proven track record of being safe and effective in humans.

The reader is not wrong that the vaccine was able to get approved, manufactured, and into people's arms more quickly than is typical. This is because of multiple factors. Due to the

nature of the pandemic (i.e., a global emergency), there were ongoing and high levels of engagement with the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Manufacturers took great financial risk and many steps and studies were often overlapping rather than step-by-step. It is important to emphasize that while the timeline was faster, the levels of scrutiny and evaluation have been the same as for other vaccines; no corners were cut. Finally, and unfortunately, because there was so much COVID-19 in the U.S. and other countries where the vaccines were tested, it was very easy to collect the number of cases required to show a difference between the vaccine and placebo.



Dr. Philip Glick

Pediatric surgeon, Jacobs School of Medicine and Biomedical Sciences, University at Buffalo; and chair of the UUP ad hoc statewide Health and Safety Committee, which is helping advise UUP in its response to the pandemic.

DR. SHARON NACHMAN: During a typical vaccine development process, it's not the time in the lab that takes the most time. It's the time to enroll the participants, and then the time it takes for enough of them to be exposed to the virus or bacteria and then get sick, and then the time it takes to have the data analyzed.

With COVID, everyone stopped what they were doing and devoted 24/7 to making sure the vaccine moved out of the lab and into vials. Then, enrollment of 40,000 people took only four weeks (for each vaccine studied). With other vaccines it typically takes up to a year to get that number of people volunteering to join a study. And with so much COVID around, many people who were on the study were exposed, allowing us to be able to count all of the cases and show that the vaccine protected many people from the virus and that the placebo (the-no vaccine arm) did not.

Then, again, everyone worked 24/7 to make sure that all the data at each of the hundreds of sites involved uploaded their data and it was analyzed and written up and sent to the FDA. Why is that? Because it was a public health emergency,

with people by the thousands in the U.S. alone dying each day due to this infection. The FDA took weeks, not months (the usual time) to read all of the information, and talked about it in public and shared all of the data and slides with everyone to watch, and granted it emergency use authorization.

Q My 16-year-old daughter wants to get the vaccine. I've heard that particles from the vaccine can lodge in her ovaries and may affect her fertility. Will she be able to have children if she gets the vaccine?

A DR. PHILIP GLICK: Analysis of safety and efficacy data in pregnant women or women who may want to become pregnant in the future suggests there are no reasons not to get vaccinated. The American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology (ACOG) states: ACOG recommends that all eligible persons, including pregnant and lactating individuals, receive a COVID-19 vaccine or vaccine series... Claims linking COVID-19 vaccines to infertility are unfounded and have no scientific evidence supporting them. ACOG recommends vaccination for all eligible people who may consider future pregnancy.

DR. STEPHEN THOMAS and DR. KATIE ANDERSON: A big problem throughout the COVID pandemic has been the rapid spread of misinformation on social media. There is a false myth widely circulating that the COVID vaccine is associated with infertility. Individuals with long-standing ties to anti-vaccination groups wished to delay approval of the Pfizer vaccine and suggested that the vaccine could cause the body to make antibodies that could attack the placenta and cause issues with pregnancy loss. This 'theory' was picked up by anti-vaccination blogs and spread quickly on social media.

To be clear, there is no evidence that the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines cause any issues with infertility or pregnancy. There are several reasons that we can be reassured about this:

- The spike protein and any proteins in the placenta are so different that there is no reason to think that the same antibodies may lock onto both the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the placenta.
- Further, millions of people in the United States have been infected with COVID to date and we have not observed an increase in pregnancy loss or issues with fertility following natural infection. The immune responses generated after 'getting COVID' and getting vaccinated are, by design, similar, so this is reassuring.
- Next, the FDA requires vaccine manufacturers to perform studies of reproductive toxicity and pregnancy outcomes and they have reported no adverse effects in animal studies.
- Finally, while pregnant women were excluded from the vaccine trials (as is typical), some women did become pregnant fol-



Dr. Stephen Thomas

Director, Institute for Global Health and Translational Sciences and interim chair, department of microbiology and immunology, Upstate Medical University



Dr. Katie Anderson

Assistant professor, departments of medicine, microbiology and immunology, Upstate Medical University, Syracuse

lowing vaccination and they have not reported adverse outcomes.

DR. SHARON NACHMAN: There is no truth to any of these myths concerning the vaccine and fertility. Let's talk about these one at a time.

A: The vaccine lasts about six hours in your body, it is known as messenger RNA, also called mRNA. Your body makes mRNA all the time and has many processes to read the message and then destroy it. When the mRNA enters your cells, it starts on its own path of destruction, and it's gone in a flash. Your cell then reads the message and, like when you read letters, to understand a sentence, it makes a protein inside your cell. Then, because your cells are very used to doing this, and do it all the time, it kicks that protein out to go and do its job someplace outside of the cell. So, no mRNA enters the nucleus of the cell (it's the wrong alphabet) and is gone after being read. So, long story short, it can't sit in ovary cells or any other cells.

B: We have (unfortunately) too much data now that shows that the COVID infection itself interferes with fertility in both men and women. Decreased sperm counts and lack of ovulation are common side effects of COVID infection, similar to other serious viral illnesses. On the good news side, we have excellent data from the CDC database of thousands of women who did take the vaccine and either got pregnant or took it while pregnant and showed no difference in fertility, and no difference in the outcome of the baby or mom related to the vaccine.

Q I've just learned that I'm pregnant. My best friend tells me that 75% of pregnant women who get the vaccine during their first trimester miscarry. How could this possibly be safe for my baby and me?

A DR. PHILIP GLICK: False! See the above answer and reference.

DR. STEPHEN THOMAS and DR. KATIE ANDERSON: As above, there are multiple sources of strong evidence that should be reassuring that the vaccines do not cause issues with pregnancy loss or infertility. The American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG), our national medical authority on matters related to pregnancy and fertility, recommends that pregnant women receive the COVID-19 vaccine. This is based upon the vaccines' safety for use in pregnant women, as well clear evidence that pregnant women are at increased risk of severe COVID-19 disease. We would strongly recommend that you get vaccinated as soon as possible; in addition to protecting you, the antibodies generated by the vaccines will pass to your baby and protect it in the months after it is born. Remember that you will not be fully protected until 5-6 weeks after your first dose, and you should continue to take precautions to protect yourself from infection in the meanwhile.

DR. SHARON NACHMAN: This is a complete untruth

and has no basis in reality. The most recent recommendations from the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology recommend that all pregnant women get the vaccine: <https://www.acog.org/news/news-releases/2021/07/acog-smfm-recommend-covid-19-vaccination-for-pregnant-individuals>.

If the risk of miscarriage was that high, or anything even close to that high, the ACOG would have never recommended it. The numbers that the ACOG reference in the above news release are a snap shot of information, but do not tell you the whole story of the actual number of women followed in that database.

Q I don't trust the U.S. Food and Drug Administration or the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to tell the American public the truth about potential concerns or dangerous complications from the vaccine. I've heard that both are deliberately withholding information that would reflect badly on the vaccines. Who's safeguarding these agencies and making sure they give us factual and full information?

A DR. PHILIP GLICK: The FDA is led by the Commissioner of Food and Drugs, appointed by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate. The commissioner reports to the Secretary of Health and Human Services. The Food and Drug Administration is responsible for protecting the public health by ensuring the safety, efficacy, and security of human and veterinary drugs, biological products, and medical devices; and by ensuring the safety of our nation's food supply, cosmetics, and products that emit radiation. When a scientific, technical, or policy question arises on whether a product is safe and effective, FDA often relies on advisory committees to provide independent advice. Committee members include scientific experts—such as physician-researchers and statisticians—and members of the public, including an FDA Patient Representative.

DR. STEPHEN THOMAS and DR. KATIE ANDERSON: The FDA and the CDC utilize external committees of experts and members of the community to review the information which manufacturers present to the FDA for consideration and guide them in their decision-making. There is also open access to numerous data sets of vaccine safety, which are populated directly by the general public. Finally, the

data which goes to the FDA committees is publicly available and searchable.

DR. SHARON NACHMAN: I'm sorry that you feel that you cannot trust the CDC and FDA. However, there are many sources of open-access information as well as other countries that are performing their own clinical trials of COVID vaccines. All the data for each paper is submitted and peer-reviewed by people who have to claim up front if they have a conflict of interest. So, the data from COVID vaccines in the United Kingdom, Israel and other countries have been reported. And interestingly, the adverse-event profiles and illness reports pretty closely match what has been reported to the CDC and FDA. And both of those groups share open meeting forums where anyone can and does ask questions. So, while it is important to ask questions, it's also important to listen to the answers, especially across the different countries and see how they match up.

Q A colleague got the vaccine and was horribly ill for several days—he had a swollen arm, he ran a fever, and he said he felt like he had a bad case of the flu. I'm afraid this could happen to me.

A DR. PHILIP GLICK: Mild, transient and self-limited side effects can occur from any vaccine, including COVID vaccines. They include: pain, redness or swelling of the injection site or arm, and can also include system symptoms such as: tiredness, headache, muscle pain, chills, fever and/or nausea. Allergic reactions, anaphylaxis, have been reported, but usually occur immediately after injection. If you have had a previous allergic reaction to a drug or vaccine, tell your doctor or other vaccine provider, so any required care will be available.

DR. STEPHEN THOMAS and DR. KATIE ANDERSON: There are known potential adverse reactions to the vaccines, which include mild to moderate headache and fatigue in 4-6 out of 10 people after their second dose. Some people will have mild to moderate fever. These symptoms start soon after vaccination and end soon after they start. It is good to know that there may be these brief reactions, and to plan accordingly (for example and as possible, you may wish to schedule your second dose prior to a day off from work, but this is not necessary). It is clear that the risk of a severe outcome with COVID-19, with 4.3 millions deaths currently reported worldwide, far outweighs any potential adverse reactions of the vaccines. These vaccines are safe and highly effective, and they are a powerful tool to protect ourselves and our loved ones against COVID-19.

DR. SHARON NACHMAN: It is possible, and important to understand what it means. This response tells you that his immune system revved up and he made protective antibodies to the virus. It's great news because it means that he is now protected. And among all the people who did have this type of response, few have reported getting COVID for many months. These immune responses are short-lived and Tylenol helps to curb them. They typically last 24-48 hours. ■



Dr. Sharon Nachman,
Professor of Pediatrics and
Associate Dean for Research,
Renaissance School of
Medicine at Stony
Brook University.



During the coronavirus pandemic, UUP experts have overseen patient care at SUNY academic medical centers, worked on clinical trials of the coronavirus vaccine and advised UUP during the nation's worst public health crisis of the last century.

NEW STATEWIDE OFFICERS

» Karl, Kube elected to three-year terms

Two retirements, two unopposed candidates and two single ballots cast by UUP statewide Secretary Jeri O'Bryan-Losee.

That series of events, which occurred over the summer, resulted in two new statewide officers for UUP—Vice President for Academics Alissa Karl and Vice President for Professionals Carolyn Kube.

Karl and Kube were each elected to three-year terms, beginning Aug. 1. Because they ran unopposed, UUP's statewide Executive Board voted to allow O'Bryan-Losee to cast a single ballot July 30 to elect Karl and Kube.

Karl takes over for longtime Vice President for Academics Jamie Dangler, who retired after more than three decades as a union activist—serving nearly a decade as statewide VPA.

Kube replaces Vice President for Professionals Tom Tucker, who chose not to run for another three-year term after serving nearly 5 years as VPP.

“We will certainly miss the hard work and determination that Jamie and Tom brought to their jobs, day in and day out,” said UUP President Fred Kowal. “They served our union with distinction and honor, and they deserve our gratitude.

“At the same time, we welcome Alissa and Carolyn, two dedicated, energetic individuals who believe in unions and the positive things unions can accomplish,” Kowal said. “They care about our members and they won't be shy when it comes to standing up for them.”

No stranger to union service

For Karl, becoming statewide VPA is the next step in her union activism—and it's an opportunity she's excited about.

“I think that if you want a great, strong, effective union, you get involved,” she said. “This is really the time to be hands-on, to look ahead and see what might be coming, and do everything we can as a union to be strong in that change.”

An associate professor of English at SUNY Brockport, Karl was Brockport Chapter president from 2019 to 2021 and an Executive Board member from 2020 to 2021; she left the Executive Board mid-term to

become statewide VPA. She was a Brockport Chapter delegate as well.

A first-generation college student from a working-class family, Karl grew up in a public employee union household. In 1999, she joined the organizing committee for teaching and research assistants at the University of Washington—a union drive that successfully established United Auto Workers Local 4121. She also worked on organizing campaigns around the country with the UAW.

Karl holds a BA in English from George Washington University, an MA in English from the University of Manchester, and a Ph.D. in English Language and Literature from the University of Washington at Seattle.

A voice for professionals

Kube said she hopes to bring recognition to UUP members who are professionals for the great work they do—sometimes in the most challenging of circumstances.

“Especially with the pandemic, a lot of our professionals felt very much in the background and unrecognized for their contributions to keep the university functioning,” she said. “One of the things I want to do is to bring awareness to what our professionals do and how they are a vital part of our hospitals and our university.”

Kube has been active in UUP for more than 20 years; she served nearly three terms as Stony Brook HSC Chapter president and was elected to the statewide Executive Board in 2011.

Kube is a former UUP's Negotiations Team member, and she was instrumental in helping to negotiate new contracts between the state of New York and UUP. She also co-chaired the statewide Outreach and Contingent Employment committees.

At the chapter level, Kube served as a Stony Brook HSC Chapter department representative, as well as part-time concerns officer and vice president of professionals.

A University of Buffalo graduate, Kube worked as a medical technologist at Stony Brook University Hospital for 32 years. In 2017, she earned her master's degree in Human Resources Management with a concentration in labor relations and organizational change at Stony Brook University.



Karl



Kube

» NEGOTIATIONS TEAM READY TO 'FIGHT LIKE HELL' FOR MEMBERS

UUP'S NEGOTIATIONS TEAM BRINGS experienced negotiators and dedicated unionists to the table as the union prepares to hammer out a new contract with the state of New York.

The 12-member team, which includes 7 new members, will fight for the best interests of UUP members and won't give up until they bring back a fair and equitable contract that members will support.

"This team is going to be exceptional," said Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin. "Collectively, the bargaining team reflects the diversity of UUP's bargaining unit. Individually, team members are smart, dedicated, principled unionists, who have demonstrated track records of UUP activism."

Members of the Negotiations Team are: Redetha Abrahams-Nichols, Downstate Medical Center Chapter; Jennifer Drake, Cortland Chapter; Mindy Heath, Upstate Medical University Chapter; Shoshana Hershkowitz, Stony Brook Chapter; Jude Jayatilleke, Buffalo State Chapter; Aaron Major, Albany Chapter; Pamela Malone, Empire State College Chapter; Jack-

the most experience to the table. She served on the past two Negotiations teams and was assistant chief negotiator for the 2016-22 contract Negotiations Team.

Along with Malone and Benjamin, three other Team members—Drake, Torres and Tusang—were on the 2016-22 Team.

Still, more than half of the UUPers on the Team have never been Team members before, a fact that Benjamin sees as a positive. In late August, Team members met in person at a working session in Geneva to learn about and discuss UUP's negotiations process.

"We have a great mix of negotiations veterans, who can bring continuity and experience, and first-time team members, who bring new perspectives and ideas," said Benjamin. "I couldn't be more excited about working with this amazing group of colleagues to help bargain the best contract we possibly can for UUP members."

Members' input matters

Even though UUP's contract expires next summer, the Negotiations Team is already gearing up to get as much input from members as possible before drafting its first set of proposals with the state.

Only UUP members can offer suggestions for and vote on a new contract; go to www.uupinfo.org/join to join UUP.

The Team, along with Kowal and Elizabeth Hough, UUP's counsel to the president, are taking part in a series of fall regional meetings and Town Hall events about upcoming contract negotiations. Virtual meetings were held for Capital Region and North Country chapter members in September.

Hybrid meetings—which will be held in-person and virtually—are set for Oct. 13 in Syracuse for Central New York members; Oct. 15 and 16 at the 2021 Fall Delegate Assembly in Rochester; Oct. 20 for the Southern Tier/Hudson Valley; Oct. 27 for Western New York; and Oct. 28 for the Finger Lakes.

Hybrid events are also slated for Long Island Nov. 3 and the New York City metro area Nov. 4. And Negotiations Team members will visit campuses through the end of the year, talking with members about what their contract negotiations priorities are.

An online contract survey for members to offer their input will be sent out shortly, and a dedicated site for negotiations news will be set up on UUP's website, at www.uupinfo.org.

The information gathered from the regional meetings, Town Hall events and chapter visits will help the Team and the Negotiations Committee draft the union's contract proposals.

The Committee—made up of one member from each chapter and an additional academic part-timer and professional part-timer—is constitutionally charged

with preparing proposals for negotiations and submitting the tentative agreement to the membership for ratification.

"This is one of the most demanding and important volunteer positions in our union, and I am grateful to each and every one of them for their willingness to serve," Kowal said. ■

MEET THE NEGOTIATIONS TEAM

Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin is an associate professor of English at **UAlbany**. A past chapter president, he is a member of the UUP Future of Public Higher Education and Grievance committees. He served as a member of the 2016-2022 contract Negotiations Team.



Aaron Major is an associate professor of Sociology at **UAlbany**. He is Albany Chapter president.



Redetha Abrahams-Nichols is the assistant director of nursing at the **SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University** in Brooklyn. She is on UUP's Academic Medical Programs committee.



Pamela Malone is the strategic advisor to the chief financial officer at **Empire State College** in Saratoga Springs. She is a UUP Executive Board member, ESC Chapter president, and is the Executive Board liaison to UUP's Solidarity Committee. She was a Negotiations Team member for the 2011-2016 contract and served as assistant chief negotiator for the 2016-2022 Negotiations Team.



Jennifer Drake is the associate director for online academic support at **SUNY Cortland** and co-founder and interim director of the college's Sharing Technology and Academic Resources-New York (STAR-NY) Consortium. She is chapter vice president for professionals and serves as co-chair of UUP's Grievance Committee. Drake was a member of the 2016-2022 contract Negotiations Team.



Jackie Pittsley is an English lecturer at **SUNY Cortland**. She is Cortland Chapter president and a member of UUP's Women's Rights & Concerns and Contingent Employment committees.



Mindy Heath is a physical therapist at **Upstate Medical University** in Syracuse. She is the chapter's vice president for professionals.



Benita Roth is a professor of Sociology and History at **Binghamton University**, and director of the university's Women, Gender and Sexuality Studies program. A past chapter president, Roth now serves as the chapter's vice president for academics. She is on UUP's Future of Public Higher Education and Technology Campuses committees.



Shoshana Hershkowitz is an Artist-In-Residence at **Stony Brook University** and conducts the Stony Brook Chorale and Camerata Singers. She is the chapter's officer for contingents and serves on UUP's Contingent Employment Committee.



Idalia Torres is a senior security analyst at **SUNY Fredonia**. She is a UUP Executive Board member and serves on the Black & Latinx Faculty/Staff Concerns committee. She served on the 2016-2022 contract Negotiations Team.



Jude Jayatilleke, a senior academic advisor at **Buffalo State College**, is chapter vice president for professionals and a member of UUP's Opportunity Programs Committee.



Bill Tusang is an associate professor of mathematics at **SUNY Cobleskill**. He is chapter president and serves on UUP's Grievance and Technology Campuses committees. He was a 2016-2022 Negotiations Team member.



UUP's current five-year contract expires July 1, 2022.

Members overwhelmingly ratified the contract in September 2018; nearly 98 percent of members who voted cast ballots for the contract, which provides 2 percent raises each year of the pact, retroactive to July 2016.

ie Pittsley, Cortland Chapter; Benita Roth, Binghamton Chapter; Idalia Torres, Fredonia Chapter; Bill Tusang, Cobleskill Chapter

Bret's the man

Benjamin, a past president of the Albany Chapter, was tapped by UUP President Fred Kowal to serve as chief negotiator. Benjamin was a member of the 2016-22 Negotiations Team.

"Bret is a good man and the right man to lead us as we begin the process to negotiate a new contract with the state," said UUP President Fred Kowal. "We have a strong team, one of our strongest teams ever. These are dedicated activists and unionists who will fight like hell at the bargaining table for our members."

Pamela Malone, Empire State College Chapter President and a member of UUP's Executive Board, brings

UUP supports Fossil Free Future rally in Albany

UUP members joined hundreds of other environmental advocates from around the state on Friday, Aug. 6, in Albany’s West Capitol Park to call for the New York State Teachers Retirement System to divest from fossil fuel stocks.

With UUP as a co-sponsor, the youth-led “Fossil Free Education, Fossil Free Future” rally was organized by New York Youth Climate Leaders, and featured remarks from area legislators and environmental activists.

UUP has publicly called on the TRS to divest of all fossil fuel-related investments.

Though the legislature passed the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act in 2019, any comprehensive environmental action has stalled awaiting the 22-member Climate Action Council’s recommendations. No further ambitious climate bills have been passed since then.

“We cannot allow the legislature to hide behind the CLCPA, claiming that they cannot pass additional climate legislation until the Climate Action Council releases its recommendations,” said UUP President Fred Kowal. “These excuses are merely delay tactics, and they threaten the livelihoods of our generation and future generations. Additionally, with an

estimated \$4.5 billion invested in the fossil fuel industry, NYSTRS is doing their pensioners and the planet a disservice by continuing to invest in fossil fuels.”

UUP has also made specific calls for the SUNY Retirement System to begin divesting from fossil fuel stocks. Last January, more than 300 delegates to UUP’s 2021 Winter Delegate Assembly passed a resolution demanding that SUNY pressure Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America to divest from such stocks. In June, SUNY Chancellor Jim Malatras announced plans for a working group to examine more socially and environmentally responsible investments for SUNY employees.

During the rally, demonstrators concluded the event with a march around the capitol, and others left pro-environmental messages on the sidewalk in colored chalk.

“The inaction of the New York State Legislature on climate this session was an absolute disgrace,” said Caitlyn Carpenter, a student at Mamaroneck High School in Westchester County and New York Youth Climate Leaders’ Westchester Regional Field Organizer. “Our state representatives must treat the climate like the crisis it is by passing legislation to move us off of fossil fuels as soon as possible.”

“Seeing the determination of the young advocates gives me hope for the future,” said fellow demonstrator and UUP statewide Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O’Bryan-Losee.

UUP statewide Vice President for Professionals Carolyn Kube was also present.

“These impassioned, well-educated youth are so right. If not now when?” Kube said. “If the leaders of this planet don’t start to make a change from fossil fuel use to clean energy, we will suffer much more financial loss then divesting from these companies in our state pension plans now.”

— Mark Hempstead



UUP members march for the environment

Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O’Bryan-Losee (left) and Vice President for Professionals Carolyn Kube (far right) participated in a youth-led rally on Aug. 6 to demand action on climate change.

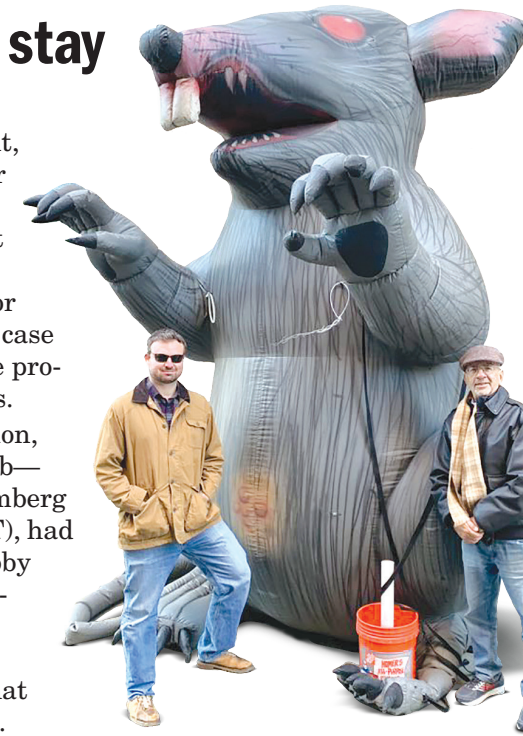
Scabby’s here to stay

Long live Scabby The Rat. The giant inflatable rodent, which has loomed over labor protests across the country for nearly three decades, will be part of labor protests for decades to come now that the National Labor Relations Board has dismissed a case to bar unions from displaying the protest icon in certain circumstances.

Under the Trump Administration, NLRB general counsel Peter Robb—who, according to a July 21 Bloomberg Law story (<https://bit.ly/2XnzTdT>), had a personal vendetta against Scabby and what the giant rat represented—wanted to stop unions from using Scabby and similar inflatables in protests at businesses that don’t employ the union’s workers.

In a 3-1 ruling, the NLRB said the use of Scabby—a fanged rat with red eyes and a scarred belly—was protected under the First Amendment. Courts have long held that the use of inflatable rats by unions at labor protests were constitutional, as long as they aren’t used to block job site entrances and exits.

Scabby takes his name from “scab,” the term labor unions use for strikebreakers. The rubber rodents were first used in 1990 by members of the Union of Bricklayers and Allied Craftworkers, who wanted to



UUP Administrative and Field Services Assistant Kenya Coleman—a member of Communications Workers of America, Local 1141—shows her support on the Momentive Performance Materials picket line in 2016. Inflatables such as the “Greedy Pig” behind her have been found protected as free speech.

make an unmistakable statement at their protests.

Since then, Scabby and his pals, an inflatable “corporate fat cat”—a large cat in a suit and tie holding a bag of money in one hand and a small laborer in the other—and the “greedy pig,” usually depicted in a vest with money stuffed in his pockets, have been common sights on union picket lines and protests across the U.S. They can be between 6 feet and 25 feet in height.

Read the NLRB’s ruling at <https://aboutblaw.com/YJx>.

— Mike Lisi

Help rebuild the historic Mullany house

A Jeep plowed into the back of the Troy home of 19th century union organizer Kate Mullany last November, causing heavy damage to the National Historic Site and ruining much of the restoration work that has taken nearly three decades to accomplish. The three-story red brick row house is being rebuilt—and your donations will help.

Mullany, an Irish laundress, organized and led the 300-member Collar Laundry Union in 1864. The women fought for better wages and health and safety measures in this extremely dangerous job, which involved the use of boiling water, bleach and sulfuric acid.

The Nov. 11 crash nearly collapsed the second floor. The site is temporarily closed. The restoration was nearly complete before the accident.



Renovations to the house have cost about \$500,000—covered mostly by grants. Much of the renovation work was done by members of the Capital Region Buildings and Construction Trades Council, who donated their time and expertise to the cause.

The Mullany House, located on the New York State Women’s Heritage Trail, is owned and operated by the non-profit American Labor Studies Center. The house is a National Historic Landmark. To donate to the restoration effort, make out your tax-deductible check to the American Labor Studies Center and mail it to: Slocum and DeAngelus, Accountants, 974 Albany Shaker Road, Latham, NY 12110

Go to www.katemullanyrhs.org to find out more about the Kate Mullany National Historic Site.

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 in this issue.



Tracking down one cause of a killer

» Stony Brook HSC Chapter member **Ira Cohen** was part of a national team of researchers that identified a compound involved in a dangerous and sometimes deadly form of heart arrhythmia called Torsades de Pointes. Many drugs that are effective against cancer, infections and other diseases may lead to heart arrhythmia as a side effect, so this discovery may lead to a way to prevent this dangerous side effect of several commonly used drugs.

The team's findings were published in May in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America. Visit <https://www.pnas.org/content/118/20/e2024215118> to see the paper. (PNAS. Stony Brook HSC Chapter members Richard Lin and Zhongju Lu collaborated with Cohen on his research.)

Heart arrhythmias contribute to about 200,000 to 300,000 sudden deaths a year, more than annual deaths from stroke, lung cancer or breast cancer, according to the American Heart Association.

A world-renowned electrophysiologist, Dr. Cohen began his career at Stony Brook University 42 years ago. Recently, he began designing 'biological pacemakers,' which are cell-based vectors that normalize cardiac arrhythmias.



Touch-screen test helps children reach for school

» A \$385,000 grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation will help a research team led by Buffalo Center Chapter member **Claire Cameron** develop an updated version of an assessment used to measure skills that small children need for success in school.

Cameron developed the original form of the assessment, known as the Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders assessment. It's a five-minute game that helps gauge the ability of children ages four to eight to pay attention, remember rules and control impulses. In the original form of the assessment, children are asked to follow commands such as, "Touch your head." Cameron has also conducted research that indicates the assessment also measures aptitude for math and literacy skills.

The grant will help the researchers develop updated versions of Head-Toes-Knees-Shoulders that rely on augmented reality and mobile games and which can be used in regular classrooms by teachers. Using the grant, researchers will test two forms of the new version: one which will be an augmented reality game, and the other a tablet-based game that requires children to answer recorded audio prompts by tapping the image of a bear on the screen instead of their own body. The hope is that these updated versions will help teachers determine if young children are ready to progress in school; the original form of the assessment had to be given by a trained researcher.

Claire E. Cameron is Associate Professor and director of the Early Childhood & Childhood EdM and PhD programs in the Department of Learning and Instruction at the University at Buffalo. Claire studies how children develop "learning to learn" and school readiness skills like managing their attention and behavior and successfully navigating learning environments.



Helping humans learn to trust artificial intelligence

» Albany Chapter member **Jason D'Cruz**, an associate professor of philosophy, has received a one-year, \$100,000 grant with the possibility of renewal from the SUNY-IBM AI Collaborative Research Alliance for a project titled, "Trustworthy AI from a User Perspective."

D'Cruz is working on the project with Ph.D. candidate Saleh Afroogh. The goal of the project is two fold: to provide guidance in developing artificial intelligence systems that users can deem trustworthy, even if they do not fully understand how they work; and to develop artificial intelligence systems that can reliably tell users if the systems can handle a particular task, and which can also explain why they can handle it.

The goal of D'Cruz and Afroogh is to develop artificial intelligence systems that are "richly trustworthy," which is a concept that originated with Australian philosopher Karen Jones. A "richly trustworthy" artificial intelligence system must be able to monitor and assess its own functioning and generate signals about its abilities that other humans and other such systems can understand.

» Giving back, one bunch of asparagus at a time

Olivia Hoffman and Samantha Legere wanted to donate their time to a community cause, so when the System Administration Chapter members saw that Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany was seeking volunteers to help with a pop-up food pantry in Schenectady, they didn't hesitate.

They were in.

Dressed in blue jeans, sneakers, bright red UUP t-shirts and black UUP face masks, the women joined nearly 70 other volunteers who walked from table to table to fill boxes of food—everything from frozen pasta and raisins to fresh green bell peppers and bunches of asparagus—in the parking lot of Schenectady's Crosstown Plaza on a cloudy mid-September morning

"Food insecurity is a huge problem and this is one way we can help," said Hoffman.

"I had been looking for a way to give back," Legere said. "We saw this opportunity and here we are."

As Hoffman, Legere and the other volunteers packed the food boxes, drivers in a long line of cars that trailed out of the plaza and wound down nearby Watt Street waited patiently to pick up their food.

Some 700 boxes of food would be given out that day, which would feed more than 2,000 people, said Sister Betsy Van Deusen, director of community partnerships for Catholic Charities. From January to June, Catholic Charities has given away 122,000 boxes of food to 38,000 households, she said.

"Food is one of the pots that needs to be filled," said Van Deusen. "Some people may not need the food, but by having it, it will allow them to spend their money on other things, like a mortgage or rent."

No one is turned away and no qualifications need be met to accept donations through the organization's "CC Move" food distribution program.

"We don't know their stories," she said. "Our job is to give away the food."

That's why Hoffman and Legere were there.

"Looking at all the cars here for food, you can see how important this is to do," Legere said. "This is real."



Above, Olivia Hoffman, right, gets ready to catch two bunches of asparagus in a box filled with food items for people waiting in line for food donations at an event in Schenectady sponsored by Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Albany.

Below, Samantha Legere, left, is set to receive asparagus from a Catholic Charities volunteer. Legere and Hoffman, both System Administration Chapter members, volunteered for the Sept. 16 event.

FINDING TOMORROW'S TEACHERS

NEA/NYSUT grants to help teacher education programs recruit students

AS CHILDREN IN PREK-12 school classes start another uncertain school year, two things are clear: Many of them will have to catch up socially, emotionally, and educationally in coming years, and they will need dedicated teachers to help them do that.

That's why UUP members who work in teacher education at four SUNY campuses around the state are heralding the receipt of six grants through NYSUT and the National Education Association that will help them introduce the teaching profession to potential teachers.

The "Great Public Schools" grants range from \$2,025 to \$1,200, and although the grant proposals vary in scope and design, they all have one aim: to help potential teachers turn an interest into a career path, with a special focus on recruiting future teachers from underrepresented communities; and to help prepare a new generation of educators for several specialties that have a desperate shortage of teachers.

"I do think that people are seeing a greater need among K-12 students—their academic needs, their psycho-social needs," said UUP member Ajay Das, an associate professor at Empire State College who chairs the education division and coordinates the special education programs for the New York City/Long Island region of ESC. The program has recently expanded its offerings in special education, for which there is an extreme shortage of teachers.

"Certainly, everyone has been affected, but no one has been affected more than our young children," Day said. "For people who considered teaching, this has made their conviction even stronger."

Punitive tests, evaluations and teacher-bashing

All of the grants aim to attract a new generation of teachers. Undergraduate and graduate teacher edu-

cation programs in New York have seen a 53% decline in enrollment since the 2009-10 school year, a change that reflects similar decreases in many other parts of the country. The reasons are many, and in New York, NYSUT, UUP and the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY joined forces in a long, fraught but ultimately successful effort to reduce or eliminate state policies that the unions say contributed to the decline in the number of teachers and the decline in the number of students enrolling in teacher education programs.

In New York, school districts reduced their teaching staffs during the Great Recession of 2008-2013, which sent the message that teaching was no longer the sound profession it historically had been. Former Gov. Cuomo also pushed through drastic changes in state education policy that heavily weighed student test scores in teachers' job performances. NYSUT eventually succeeded in getting the state to dramatically reduce the use of students' standardized test scores in teacher evaluations, and the state has suspended the annual performance review of teachers during the coronavirus pandemic.

Then, in 2013, the state announced that the controversial teaching assessment known as the Educative Teacher Performance Assessment, or edTPA, would soon be required in New York for teacher certification. (See related story on page 25.) The test was so poorly designed, and the scoring so arbitrary, that several teacher education faculty members who held doctorates and were known experts in their field, including some UUP members, said they had been unable to pass a practice version of the edTPA. At the same time, the New York State Board of Regents under the leadership of former Regents Chancellor Merryl Tisch publicly questioned the value of SUNY's teacher education programs and threatened to push for closing some of them.

UUP and NYSUT in turn pushed back. Both unions said the decline in teacher education enrollment was a creation of New York state designed to achieve one goal: the reduction or elimination of teacher education programs that maintained rigorous and field-tested

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NEW LEADERSHIP, NEW CHALLENGES

Teacher ed committee at turning point in second COVID school year

Two UUP members with long experience in teacher education are newly named as leaders of UUP's statewide Teacher Education Committee, just as the state again confronts the certification test that started the committee's original effort: the edTPA.

Brockport Chapter member **Cathy Houston-Wilson** is committee chair and New Paltz Chapter member **Amanda Merritt** is assistant chair. They follow newly retired statewide Vice President for Academics Jamie Dangler, who had led the committee since its original inception as a statewide UUP task force that formed in response to New York's 2014 mandate of the edTPA for teacher certification.

Both new leaders said that Dangler's expertise—she co-chaired a statewide task force appointed by the New York State Board of Regents in 2016—put UUP into the national spotlight of a debate about the best way to prepare new teachers to enter the classroom. The committee's position always has been, and remains, that experts working in the field should have a strong voice in that debate.

"No one wants a better teacher ed program than the people working in teacher ed," Houston-Wilson said.

» Strong backgrounds; strong advocates

Houston-Wilson and Merritt are well prepared to meet the challenges of their new positions. Merritt is a UUP member and activist in the New Paltz chapter who serves as the chapter grievance officer. She's been involved in UUP's advocacy for teacher education since the beginning of that effort. At New Paltz, she's assistant to the dean of education and director of the Curriculum Materials Center, a resource center that holds lesson plans, textbooks, and other guides to help teacher candidates prepare for student teaching and field work.

The edTPA—the acronym stands for "Educative Teacher Performance Assessment"—is one of many aspects of public education in New York that has been upended by the pandemic. The state suspended the edTPA as a certification requirement in the spring of 2020, and extended that



Cathy Houston-Wilson

Cathy Houston-Wilson has emerged as a visible advocate for public higher education on behalf of UUP. She chairs the Brockport Department of Kinesiology, Sport Studies and Physical Education, and was a panelist at UUP's May 20 virtual roundtable on how the pandemic has highlighted certain educational needs at SUNY. She's been active in teacher education for much of her career, and describes herself as a strong advocate for students and for access to the teaching profession that balances academic qualifications and

test scores with a regard for what the candidate can offer based on personal background and a passion for teaching.

pause through the summer of 2022, because the assessment hinges on teacher candidates submitting videos of their classroom interactions with students—an impossible task to accomplish with so many schools operating either fully or partially through distance learning as the coronavirus continues to disrupt in-person schooling. Teacher candidates during this period can instead take an older test that is mostly multiple-choice, with one essay question.

» UUP a leader in edTPA reform

Dangler attained a statewide and even national reputation as an expert on the problems with the edTPA, which, opponents said, had serious design flaws from the time that teacher education programs began using it in New York in 2014. The committee devoted much of its time to changing how the edTPA was weighed in the overall certification process. Dangler forged a strong relationship with several members of the New York State Board of Regents, some of whom eventually became advocates for changing the edTPA, and she was also a resource for teacher education faculty in other states who followed UUP's efforts to challenge the widely used edTPA.

The state eventually made several concessions to its originally rigid adherence to the edTPA, including an alternate path to certification for certain teacher candidates who fail the edTPA but whose score is within two points of passing. But New York never entirely dropped the edTPA, and most candidates for teacher certification still must pass it.

Now, the Teacher Education Committee will be closely watching the state's next step with the edTPA. The passage of time during the pause—which could, like so many other pauses and delays during the pandemic, be extended—could also mean that memories of the problems with the assessment could shift, Merritt said. After all, it's been nearly a decade since New York adopted the edTPA.

"I'm not sure people will realize the edTPA was a burden," she said.

» GPA cutoff still a concern

Another area for the Teacher Education Committee to watch: legislative efforts to overturn a state law that requires a minimum 3.0 grade point average for applicants to graduate-level teacher education programs in New York. UUP members in teacher education programs have said for years that the law can block an otherwise gifted teacher from attaining the master's degree that is required to remain in the profession.

Former Gov. Andrew Cuomo opposed efforts to overturn the mandate, noting that the law permits teacher education

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Amanda Merritt

Amanda Merritt joined the SUNY New Paltz School of Education in 1991 as assistant to the dean. She's worked with student teacher and fieldwork placement programs and manages the school's Curriculum Materials Center. She's a writer and editor for materials about the School of Education, and she coordinates with community colleges to help their students transfer to the New Paltz School of Education. She's a member of the statewide Teacher Education Committee and Women's Rights and

Concerns Committee, and serves as her chapter's grievance officer.

TEACHERS

Continued from page 24
standards in an era of fast-track teacher certification through other, less stringent pathways endorsed by the state.

At one point, New York permitted charter schools to develop their own certification policies without any requirement that the teachers they approved meet the state certification standards—the same standards that graduates of all other public and private teacher education programs had to meet. A state court eventually threw out that double standard following a lawsuit by NYSUT.

» Changing the demographics

The grants that the SUNY teacher education programs just received reflect an awareness of the past fraught decade, as well as the realization that public perceptions of teachers have improved during the pandemic, given the number of parents who had children at home for virtual learning while juggling their own jobs. All the grant proposals focus on attracting

“ WE JUST FELT THERE WAS MUCH WORK TO DO TO RECRUIT TEACHERS OF COLOR, TEACHERS WHO ARE BILINGUAL. ”

new teachers to the profession, most of them include outreach to underrepresented demographics—with a goal of demonstrating that economic hardship or limited opportunities need not be obstacles to a degree—and some also focus on encouraging teaching assistants and classroom aides to take the next step and become certified teachers.

So far, that plan is working, UUP members say. At Binghamton, for example, faculty hosted a virtual workshop in July, part of the grant’s plan to highlight the teaching profession in the Southern Tier.

“We had over 113 students attend just to hear what we offer at Binghamton University,” said Dina

Hartung, a UUP member and Binghamton’s director of the New York State Master Teacher Program and director of recruitment, who submitted the successful proposal for a \$1,200 grant with her colleague Andrea Decker, director of clinical experience and partnerships. “We were very excited about that. To see that? It gave us hope.”

“A lot can be done and seeded with this money,” said Decker.

They later invited the 113 students to a welcome-back presentation for teacher education faculty and students, for which grant money was used to provide notebooks, pens and lanyards for the student attendees.

Buffalo State teacher education faculty obtained two grants totaling \$3,257, which will be used to interest area youth in teaching, with a special focus on attracting potential teachers from underrepresented communities. UUP members Kathy Doody, an associate professor of exceptional education, and art education faculty Candace Masters—who chairs the Buffalo State Art & Design Department—Mary Wolf and Alice Pennisi developed the two grant proposals.

“We’re excited,” Doody said. “We feel it’s really important to expand our recruitment efforts. Our PreK-12 students are very diverse, and our teachers don’t represent our students. We just felt there was much work to do to recruit teachers of colors, teachers who are bilingual.”

The need is real, she said. The city of Lackawanna, for example, just south of Buffalo, has a large population of Arabic-speaking residents. She gets weekly calls from districts asking if she can refer any certified special education teachers to them.

Given the need, Doody said, the grant will help get the word out that “teaching is a noble profession, and a rewarding profession.

“The teacher’s role has never been more important,” she said. ■

occasions when admission committees at Brockport exercised their discretion to admit students who had slightly lower GPAs, and those students ended up flourishing both academically and in their field work in the classroom.

Once admitted, all students must meet the same performance standards and evaluations by faculty and supervising teachers in the field. It’s not easy to become a teacher in New York, which has some of the strictest certification standards in the country, and that holds also for graduate students who just barely missed the 3.0 GPA requirement.

Said Houston-Wilson, “I just think, give them the opportunity, and they’ll shine.” ■

NEW LEADERSHIP

Continued from page 25
graduate programs to make an exception on the minimum GPA requirement for up to 15% of their applicants. Now, with a new governor who may put her own stamp on educational issues in New York, the fate of any future efforts to change the GPA requirement is uncertain. The committee’s concern about the GPA requirement does not mean that teacher education programs at SUNY are settling for lower standards, Houston-Wilson said; it simply means the committee recognizes that a GPA which just misses the 3.0 mark is not the entire story of a candidate’s potential in the profession. She recalls

UUP scholarships to SUNY students recognize excellence, honor members

EACH YEAR, UUP AWARDS SCHOLARSHIPS to several outstanding undergraduate and graduate students at SUNY four-year colleges and universities who demonstrate a strong commitment to social issues and the labor movement.

They are typically young adults who believe in shining a light on injustice, in reaching out to the overlooked members of society and in making a difference in the world. And they are outstanding examples of why UUP members are drawn to the mission of a great public university.

The UUP College Scholarship Fund Undergraduate Scholarship is a one-time scholarship of \$3,000 for undergraduate students who have a cumulative grade-point average of at least 3.75. UUP created this award in 1987 to honor its members’ commitments to academic excellence, the life of the mind and the promotion of social justice.

The scholarships especially honor the legacy of three late UUP members who exemplified the ideals of the labor movement and social justice or who worked tirelessly to sustain the scholarship fund. They are:

Eugene Link, a SUNY Plattsburgh history professor emeritus remembered for a pioneering approach to his discipline, in which he initiated courses on African American history, women’s history and the history of the labor movement years before many campuses offered these topics.

Robert Carter, a SUNY Oswego associate professor of history and dedicated, longtime member of UUP whose late wife, Katherine, made several generous donations to the scholarship fund in his memory.

Gertrude Butera, an associate professor emeritus of business administration at SUNY Alfred whose tireless fundraising helped the scholarship reach a sustainable level, and who was named an honorary trustee of the scholarship fund in 1993.

2021 UUP COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP FUND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



Anna Brozycki is a University at Albany honors student with a double major in economics and political science with a 3.99 GPA. She has served as communications director and vice president of the UAlbany College Democrats and was a member of the Model United Nations, in which students engage in exercises in diplomacy to try to solve

real world problems. In the fall of 2020, she worked with Michigan United through Vote Save America’s Adopt a State program, as part of a grassroots organizing effort to advocate for unions, union values and voters’ rights. In her scholarship application, she wrote, “The values of labor unions are the values of America: If you’re willing to work, you deserve dignity and fair treatment.”

Anne Green, a student at Stony Brook University, is majoring in environmental design, policy and planning, with minors in globalization studies and international relations. An honors



student with a 3.87 GPA, she works with the Stony Brook Advocacy Corps, which provides special training for students in virtual advocacy so that they can press for Stony Brook University’s priorities in virtual meetings with members of Congress and congressional staff. She also works with the campus food pantry; the Legal Hand Information Center, which trains non-lawyer volunteers to provide assistance, legal information and information on resources; and the Stony Brook Center for Civic Justice. Prior to the 2020 primary and general election, she registered more than 10,000 Stony Brook students to vote. She participated in a study-abroad trip to Madagascar, which led her to launch a fundraising campaign to support food and education costs for two Malagasy students and their families for two years.

2021 WILLIAM E. SCHEUERMAN POST BACCALAUREATE SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS

Laura Seib, a student at the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry, is pursuing a master’s of landscape architecture, and holds a 4.0 GPA. She is a project leader



for the Syracuse Tactical Urbanism Project, which is part of a national movement to create innovative, inclusive and diverse urban planning. She’s also a participant in the Green New Deal Superstudio, which is a national urban planning movement with an environmental focus; a member of the Cortland County Democratic Committee, and a founder of Indivisible Cortland County. She is a member of the Graduate Student Employees Union. An artist and farmer, she volunteers in an elementary school teaching healthy eating and cooking skills to children.

Jessica Selleck, a student at the University at Buffalo, is pursuing a Ph.D. in foreign and second language education and holds a 4.0 GPA. She is a teacher in the Buffalo Public Schools and is a NYSUT member. At the Buffalo campus she has served as vice president of the Graduate Student Employees Union. She has also served as an English teacher in Tajikistan.

» MEMBER BENEFITS

Say hello to a fun fall with TicketsatWork

UUP is proud to offer enhancements to an existing service for active and retired members, with major discounts and fun deals through TicketsatWork.

TicketsatWork is a terrific way to extend summer activities into the fall, with special offers on purchases, sporting events and other entertainment.

TicketsatWork is the leading corporate entertainment benefits provider, which offers exclusive discounts, promotions and access to preferred seating and tickets for top attractions, including theme parks, shows, sporting events, movies, hotels and much more. TicketsatWork is a unique benefit offered exclusively to employees of select companies and organizations, including UUP.

Members of TicketsatWork can get instant access to deals. To get started, you'll need either your work email or a special code assigned for UUP members. You can get that code by calling the UUP Benefit Trust Fund at 1-800-887-3863. Then go to TicketsatWork.com. Click "Become a Member," and enter the code for UUP or your work email.

You do not need to be a member of TicketsatWork to read about the company and get an overview of the preferred partners that offer special deals, including Walt Disney World, Cirque du Soleil and other well-

known names in entertainment and hospitality.

If you need help, call TicketsatWork customer service at 1-800-331-6483, or send an email to customerservice@ticketsatwork.com.

Now through October 15, TicketsatWork is celebrating Hispanic Heritage Month with a special collection of brands, offers and services that support the Latinx American community.

Other discounts can be found for theme parks and attractions, hotels and rental cars, and shopping from home. TicketsatWork constantly adds new products and new offers.

TicketsatWork is just one of the many discounted premium services that UUP offers to members, a list that includes well-known brands such as Verizon, AT&T, Enterprise Rent-A-Car, Liberty Mutual and MetLife Legal Plans, to name a few.

Programs offered through UUP's discounts include products and services, but also cost savings in areas such as home energy, through the NYPIRG (New York Public Interest Research Group) Fuel Buyers Group.



For a full list of the discounts, please go to the "Special Offers" link on the "Members Only" page of the UUP website, at UUPinfo.org. You can also call a UUP Benefit Trust Fund Representative at 800-887-3863 if you have any questions.