

THE **voice**

uup

Spring 2021

***State lawmakers fail
hospitals, heroic workers***

— Page 4

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

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WHAT'S INSIDE this issue



COVER PHOTO BY
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State budget fails SUNY hospitals

4—Despite the heroic efforts of SUNY's front line workers, the state budget fails to include hazard pay or money to cover operating expenses.

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- Miss a video by UUP President Fred Kowal? You can find them here:
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Why take a stand? Because we must

As UUP president, it's not unusual for people to ask me why our union is involved with matters outside of salary, benefits and work conditions—the bread-and-butter issues that most people associate with unions.

The answer is an easy one. Our union, America's largest higher education union, represents members in a vast array of jobs with a vast array of interests. More often than not, our members demand that we take a stand on social issues important to them, such as social and economic justice, and the climate crisis.

That's why UUP has issued strong statements in support of the Black Lives Matter movement and its goals to end racism in America. We took part in the 2017 Women's March on Washington, D.C., the March for Science and the People's Climate Movement—and we will be back marching in the streets once the coronavirus is under control and it's safe to do so.

FOCUSED ON THE ENVIRONMENT

And we've been outspoken in the fight against climate change and the need to achieve climate justice for so many Americans affected by corporate greed and utter disregard for our environment.

I believe that as educators and as unionists, we are called—no, compelled—to protect our environment and help heal the Earth. As the old Native American proverb goes, We don't inherit the Earth from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children. It is our sacred duty to protect this planet. We must never forget this.

As a founding member of New York Renews, a statewide coalition of more than 300 environmental, justice, faith, labor, and community groups, UUP was outspoken in its support for the state's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act—one of the world's most progressive climate change laws when it was approved in 2019.

The CLCPA mandates that greenhouse gas emissions in New York be reduced by 85 percent by 2050. The law accelerates the use of solar, wind and other renewable energy sources, and orders that up to

40 percent of the benefits from the CLCPA go to historically disadvantaged communities.

As this issue of *The Voice* went to press, UUP continues to advocate for the state's Climate and Community Investment Act—a bill that, if approved, would penalize corporate polluters and use the fees to aid communities disproportionately affected by the climate crisis, and which would create as many as 150,000 good-paying green jobs.

WORKING TOGETHER

Our work as unionists cannot be accomplished in a vacuum. To be successful, we must find others who share our causes and believe that the only way to succeed is by working together.

I have made it a priority to cement relationships with state and federal lawmakers, and we have made great strides. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer spent an hour talking with UUP statewide Executive Board members in an exclusive virtual meeting March 29.

Our union has also reached out to community groups and organizations to join us to further the proposals in our New York HEALS (Healthcare, Education, Accessibility, Leadership, Sustainability) agenda. NY HEALS is a dynamic plan that would make SUNY a leader for economic, social, and environmental change.

A NEW WAY

To strengthen that effort, I, along with your statewide officers, recently created the new UUP Mobilization and Outreach Department to help forge those relationships with statewide organizations and local community groups. You can read more about those efforts in this issue of *The Voice*.

The new department, working with UUP's Executive Director Kristie Sammons and Political Director Dan Brown, set up a successful series of virtual roundtable discussions in April and May on sustainability, health care and higher education. At each forum, experts discussed what SUNY's role should be in addressing those issues and how the University



can be used to make an impact.

That was the case at our April 22 roundtable on sustainability. I led the forum, which included state Assemblymember Steve Englebright, chair of the Assembly Committee on Environmental Conservation; and experts from The Nature Conservancy, the New York State Climate Action Council; New York Renews, and Environmental Advocates of New York. A UUP member, Susan Fassler, sustainable facilities manager at SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry, was also a panelist.

The hour-long discussion was interesting and informative. You can read more about it on page 13 of this issue.

MAKING IT PERSONAL

In January, more than 300 delegates to UUP's 2021 Winter Delegate Assembly made the climate catastrophe personal by passing a resolution to demand that SUNY pressure the Teachers Insurance and Annuity Association of America—the company that manages retirement accounts for SUNY faculty and staff—to divest from fossil fuels and agribusiness land grabs.

Most of UUP's 37,000 members have money invested with TIAA, which has invested \$8 billion of our retirement funds in fossil fuels and agribusiness, including ExxonMobil, ConocoPhillips, and Halliburton. It has also directly financed two fracked gas power plants, including one in New York.

Why would we work our whole lives nurturing and developing young people only to leave them a dying planet?

see KOWAL, page 7

Left behind

SUNY hospitals hailed as heroic; forgotten by state lawmakers

BY DARRYL McGRATH

In the last 15 months, UUP members at SUNY's four academic medical centers have lived through a real-life horror show as the coronavirus pandemic wreaked devastation at hospitals in Brooklyn, on Long Island, and in central upstate and Western New York.

Hospitals jettisoned normal work schedules and pulled in every staffer who could still stand during the exhausting weeks of the pandemic's worst surges, last spring and again in the fall. Those who were not qualified to provide direct patient care either assisted those who could, or they filled in for the staff who were redeployed to hospital COVID units. Days off became a thing of the past; staff barely got respite breaks as they worked double shifts for days and even weeks at a stretch. The coronavirus briefly abated in the summer, and then returned with a vengeance in the fall, continued into the winter and quickly overwhelmed central and western parts of the state which thought they had averted disaster in the spring.

UUP members recounted heartbreaking situations as they watched frightened patients die without loved ones at their side. Members worked without regard for their safety, and often without adequate protective gear in units overflowing with highly contagious patients. Some mem-



FILE PHOTOS

UUP MEMBERS FROM THE UPSTATE MEDICAL UNIVERSITY CHAPTER DIDN'T HESITATE TO TRAVEL TO STONY BROOK HSC TO LEND THEIR EXPERTISE DURING THE EARLY WEEKS OF THE COVID-19 OUTBREAK. THEY WERE WELCOMED WITH A ROUSING OVATION FROM DOZENS OF GRATEFUL HOSPITAL STAFFERS.

bers got sick, some died, and some carried the virus home to their families and then watched as family members sickened and even died. All three SUNY hospitals set up crisis care services for their emotionally drained staff, but even so, supervisors talked about staff being pushed beyond their limit, beyond even the ability to describe how they felt.

And what did New York lawmakers do to recognize and thank the SUNY medical staff members for all that they did

during the country's worst public health crisis of the last century?

Not much, is the simplest way to put it. Not much at all.

MIND-BOGGLING DISREGARD FOR HOSPITALS

The hospitals once again got no money to cover debt service, making the hospitals the only part of SUNY expected to cover that expense on their own. They got no hazard pay for staff, even though

RIGHT, MARIA THERESA ESTRELLA CONTINUED TO WORK AT STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL, DESPITE LOSING A FORMER COLLEAGUE AND CLOSE FRIEND TO THE CORONAVIRUS.

FAR RIGHT, SUNY DOWNSTATE BEGAN ADMINISTERING COVID-19 VACCINES IN DECEMBER 2020. AMONG THE FIRST STAFFERS TO RECEIVE A SHOT WAS RADIOLOGIST AND UUP MEMBER ADRIAN MOORE.





FAR LEFT, BUFFALO HSC CHAPTER MEMBERS BOUGHT FOOD FOR AND DELIVERED IT TO HOSPITAL EMPLOYEES WORKING OVERTIME TO CARE FOR COVID-19 PATIENTS.

LEFT, UPSTATE CHAPTER MEMBER AND ER DOCTOR CHRIS TANSKI SPENT MONTHS IN NEW YORK CITY SERVING AS CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER AT THE JAVITS CONVENTION CENTER, A 1,000-BED MAKESHIFT HOSPITAL CARING FOR COVID-19 PATIENTS.

many other major hospitals provided hazard pay during the pandemic.

“The failure to authorize hazard pay for these front line workers is a particularly bitter pill to swallow,” UUP President Fred Kowal wrote in a message to members about the final enacted New York state budget. He has told members that the union will try a different tact, by seeking federal money for the hospitals. The fact that “there was nothing done for SUNY hospitals ... just boggles the mind,” he said in one virtual meeting with members as he briefed them on the final enacted budget.

The budget did include \$230 million for Disproportionate Share Hospital expenses, which will supplement federal monies used to cover extraordinary costs that hospitals incur when they routinely provide care to large numbers of low-income patients. That’s the situation at all three SUNY hospitals, which legally cannot turn away any patient. But that money cannot be used for operating expenses or debt service. The lack of funding to cover debt service, when the state used to provide \$157 million a year to the three hospitals for that purpose within recent memory, and the lack of hazard pay left UUP chapter leaders at the academic medical centers frustrated but hardly at a loss for words to express that frustration.

EMPTY PROMISES

That frustration sewed out with good reason. Hundreds of members who attended at least a dozen virtual town halls last year with lawmakers listened as those lawmakers, many of them longtime friends to UUP, praised the hospital staff

as heroes and pledged to do everything possible to remember them in the budget. Some backed those public pledges up in private conversations with chapter leaders at the hospitals, offering reassurances that never came to fruition. Members had already heard Gov. Andrew Cuomo also praise the hospitals and their staff for their hard work during the pandemic; unlike the lawmakers, however, he never pledged to remember them in the budget.

In the end, nothing made much difference.

“I could not believe that the state did not consider the hospitals in the formulation of its 2021-2022 budget,” Carolyn Kube, UUP chapter president at Stony Brook HSC, wrote in response to an inquiry from *The Voice*. “In the middle of a pandemic, I found it to be reprehensible. The reason supplied to me was inadequate and factually wrong, which was the hospitals got a substantial amount of federal funding. The hospitals received money in the first CARES stimulus act and nothing in the following CARES II and the American Rescue Plan. The money in the CARES Act I was in the form of a loan that has to be paid back to the federal government starting as soon as this month.

“The UUP front line workers at Stony Brook are demoralized by the lack of recognition of the myriad sacrifices they made,” Kube added. “All we asked for was a one-time \$2,500 bonus for the recognition of our members’ putting their lives, and their families’ lives, on the line.”

At Buffalo HSC, UUP members working as medical staff provide clinical care at

many hospitals in the region, as Buffalo HSC is the only one of the four SUNY academic medical centers that does not have its own state teaching hospital. And those members more than rose to the challenge, Buffalo HSC Chapter President Phil Glick recalled, in response to an inquiry from *The Voice*. He called the lack of hazard pay for UUP medical staff members “unconscionable,” and he predicted a major exodus of highly trained staff over their frustration with the underfunding and lack of hazard pay.

“Amazing, innovative and life-saving therapies were developed at our academic medical centers, which saved thousands of lives,” Glick wrote. “And simultaneously, the academic medical centers’ faculty and staff, the so called ‘front liners,’ were risking their own lives and the lives of their families to protect the people of New York state that they served. Leaving hazard pay out of the 2021-2022 New York state budget was unconscionable and will have both short-term and long-term negative institutional consequences for our four SUNY academic medical centers.”

NEW APPROACH FOR FUNDING

So, what now? The union must look forward and change tactics, as pleading with New York state lawmakers for help to the hospitals, only to be disappointed time and again, is doing no good.

“On the federal side, we’re going to be working aggressively with our supporters Sens. Chuck Schumer and Kirsten Gillibrand, and the New York delegation, to get critical funding that would come through the SUNY hospitals,” Kowal said.

see LEFT BEHIND, page 6

LEFT BEHIND ...

continued from page 5

It helps, he noted, that the SUNY hospitals are known for fulfilling some very specific needs that also match some of the health care interests of the new Biden administration, including maternal and infant care, and rural medicine—needs that might generate federal dollars for the funding of new programs, or the enhancement of existing services.

For example: Downstate is one of only 17 hospitals in the state designated as a regional perinatal center that delivers the highest level of care to women in their last weeks of pregnancy and to infants in the first weeks of life. Upstate Medical University Hospital is the only Level 1 trauma center in its region, and it serves a growing number of rural patients in an area where some community hospitals have struggled to stay open in recent years. Stony Brook, as a major teaching hospital that is also required to treat all patients, has an invaluable role in a region packed with private hospitals that have expanded from their Manhattan base.

So while UUP will continue to demand that the state adequately fund its own

hospitals, the union is coming up with a plan to seek help elsewhere, Kowal said.

“I’m particularly optimistic because I think there’s an awareness that these institutions have proven themselves through the pandemic as critical to pro-

viding care for those of us who had COVID and those of us who survived it,” Kowal said. “With the Biden administration, especially, there’s a commitment to public health that we’ve not seen in a very long time.”



FILE PHOTOS

STONY BROOK HSC CHAPTER MEMBER NICHOLAS RICO, LEFT, WAS ONE OF MANY UUPERS ON THE JOB AS FRONT LINE WORKERS DURING THE PANDEMIC.

RIGHT, DOWNSTATE CHAPTER UUPER DERICK AGBONTAEN WAS ONE OF MANY MEMBERS TO UNLOAD AND DISTRIBUTE ISOLATION GOWNS AND SURGICAL GLOVES PURCHASED BY THE UNION. IN THE EARLY DAYS OF THE PANDEMIC, HOSPITAL STAFF WERE FORCED TO REUSE GLOVES, GOWNS AND MASKS.

BELOW, DOWNSTATE CHAPTER MEMBER DR. LORENZO PALADINO, RIGHT, WAS AMONG MANY UUPERS FEATURED ON A CNN SPECIAL, “INSIDE THE E.R.: THE INCREDIBLE FIGHT AGAINST CORONAVIRUS.”



SUNY gets some breathing room in state budget

BY DARRYL McGRATH

Around the inexplicable absence of state support for the SUNY hospitals and the lack of hazard pay for front line members, the final enacted state budget did help the four-year campuses, even if it did not correct the long history of underfunding the state university.

“It will come as no surprise, given the impact of COVID-19 on the state’s fiscal condition, and the lack of clarity about additional federal aid coming to New York until late in the budget cycle, that this was an unprecedented and complex budget season at best,” UUP President Fred Kowal wrote in a message to members. “While the ultimate result may not reflect all that we had hoped for, there were nevertheless critical, and in certain respects, historic gains.”

How SUNY FARED

The gains include:

- The enacted budget maintains direct state aid to the four-year campuses at Fiscal Year 2020-2021 levels, and it restores virtually all cuts that had been proposed in the Executive Budget, including a proposed 5 percent cut in operating aid.



- A four-year plan to close the TAP Gap, which occurs when tuition exceeds the maximum award allowed under the state tuition grant program. Campuses must make up the difference, which most recently has been nearly \$1,000 for students who received the maximum TAP award, and more for those who did not receive the maximum. The maximum TAP award goes up by \$500 to \$5,665 under the new budget, and the budget also established a matching increase in the TAP credit calculation, which determines how much tuition campuses must waive for TAP-eligible students.

“It is estimated that this historic increase will generate an additional \$26 million for the state-operated SUNY campuses this year,” Kowal said. “This additional support will grow in subsequent years as the plan to close the remaining

TAP gap over the next three years is implemented. This is a critical achievement and one which we have been advocating about for years.”

- A \$9.9 million increase in University-wide program funding includes an additional \$6.8 million for the Educational Opportunity Program and \$3 million for Educational Opportunity Centers.

- \$100 million in new capital support for projects related to program expansion or enhancement,

which will help fund sustainability efforts at SUNY.

- The budget rejected a proposed tuition increase, and in effect supports a three-year tuition freeze.

- The budget also includes authority to pay all negotiated salary increases, including delayed 2020 pay raises, due to all the state bargaining units, including UUP.

Kowal just announced the payment schedule for the delayed raises. Go to <https://bit.ly/3f0s7Nd> for more information about the raises.

- New revenue raisers, primarily through revisions in the state tax code that will end some tax breaks for the state’s richest residents, but which generally avoid major new taxes on them, which the governor never supported.

KOWAL ...

continued from page 3

It is questions like these, coming from our diverse membership across New York, that spark the socially responsible actions that we take.

Those of us who care about the future must work together to leverage our collective power and influence. We call on and welcome all who wish to join our growing movement.

Make no mistake: UUP always puts its members first. We will always demand better salaries, better benefits and stronger protections for our members. From fighting for hazard pay for our brave front line workers at SUNY’s public teaching hospitals to ensuring that our members receive pay raises delayed by the

state due to the coronavirus pandemic, we are dedicated to defending our contract and fighting for our members.

But we will also stand for issues that are right and just. Why? Because we must.

Our students are watching us, and they will judge us by the actions we take on behalf of the world that we are—in fact—borrowing from them and all the generations to come.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'F. Kowal'.



SENATE MAJORITY LEADER CHUCK SCHUMER MET VIRTUALLY WITH UUP EXECUTIVE BOARD MEMBERS MARCH 29. HE ANSWERED MEMBERS' QUESTIONS AND PROVIDED DETAILS ABOUT PRESIDENT BIDEN'S \$1.9 TRILLION AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN.

Schumer to UUP: 'Help is on the way'

BY DARRYL MCGRATH

If a union is going to have someone powerful on its side, it can't do better than the majority leader of the United States Senate.

That's why UUP so values its strong relationship with Sen. Chuck Schumer, a longtime fan of the labor movement and public higher education who is now at the pinnacle of his career as a leader who clearly relishes the ability to help the causes in which he believes.

UUP has long enjoyed a personal channel of communication with the senator, which has allowed UUP President Fred Kowal to advocate directly to Schumer about the tremendous needs at SUNY. That access to the senator was never more helpful than in the days leading up to the passage of the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan, which brought \$915 million in desperately needed federal funding to the university (see related story, page 9). Kowal spoke with Schumer as word of the bill's passage became news, and a few days later, the senator held an exclusive virtual meeting with the UUP Executive Board.

Fresh off one of the most transformative legislative triumphs of the last century, he delivered a warm, deeply personal message of hope.

"Our friends, I just want to report to you, help is on the way," Schumer said as the meeting opened. He had just steered it through a challenging pathway in a Senate with a 50-50 split that left no margin for error. The bill has been likened to a modern-day version of President Johnson's Great Society because it addresses so many social issues, including child poverty and relief for low-income and working-poor Americans.

HELP REACHES MEMBERS

The rescue package brought crucial pandemic aid to New York's residents, colleges and universities, hospitals, municipalities and state agencies. Colleges and universities in New York got \$2.6 billion, of which half will be direct financial assistance for students. The \$915 million to SUNY brought the total amount of federal pandemic aid to the University since last year to \$1.7 billion, Schumer noted. An added plus: The American Rescue Plan was crafted so that much of the aid would flow directly to municipalities, agencies and higher education systems.

"Do not let the governor or anyone tell you they don't have the money for SUNY," said a talkative, visibly relaxed and unhurried Schumer in his hour-long meeting with UUP, during which he alternated between a proud recitation of facts and figures about the bill and warmly personal anecdotes about his long association with the labor movement. "As we say in Brooklyn, we have the effin' money. Tell 'em Uncle Chuck said that."

The bill's reach is more expansive than many UUP members may have first realized. For example, the expanded child tax credit could help many members, as Schumer noted.

Under the expanded credit, an adult with a single income of less than \$75,000 and one child under age 6 would qualify for the full yearly credit of \$3,600, which will be distributed to qualifying parents as monthly payments. The expanded child tax credit extends through tax season for the current year, although the Biden administration is already examining ways to make it permanent. The plan recognizes the hardships imposed by the coronavirus pandemic on many middle-class families and—as is

Thanks for passing the ‘rescue plan’

BY MICHAEL LISI

U.S. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and New York’s congressional delegation were instrumental in the passage of President Biden’s \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan Act, and New York’s unions are saying thank you.

UUP is one of hundreds of NYSUT locals listed in a newspaper ad purchased by NYSUT and the AFT that ran March 15 in a number of papers, including *The New York Times*, *The Daily News* and the *New York Post*.

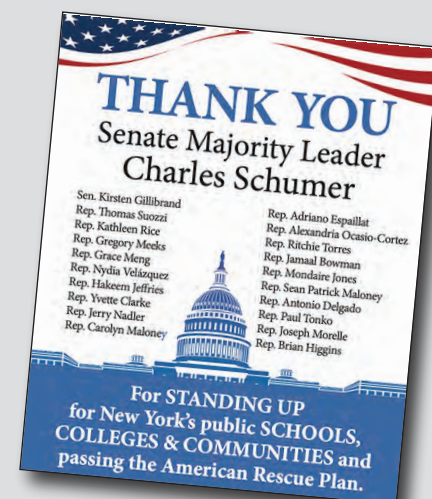
It also ran in the *Albany Times Union*, *The Buffalo News*, the *Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*, *The Journal News*, *Newsday* and the *Syracuse Post-Standard*.

The ad thanks Schumer and New York’s congressional delegation for “standing up for New York’s public schools, colleges and communities, and passing the American Rescue Plan.”

UUP President Fred Kowal said he happily signed on to the ad.

For months, UUP members pushed for passage of a COVID-19 recovery bill. UUP members, as part of our union’s letter-writing campaign, sent nearly 6,000 e-letters to their congressional representatives urging them to approve Biden’s recovery bill.

The American Rescue Plan Act provides \$1,400 direct payments to people who earn up to \$75,000 annually, \$350 billion in aid to state and local governments, and \$14 billion for



vaccine distribution. The bill also provides \$130 billion to elementary, middle and high schools to assist with safe reopening.

Biden signed the bill March 11.

the case with some UUP members—the child tax credit can help if one wage-earner in a two-income household lost their job in the past year of economic hardship and has been unable to find new work—a common situation during the pandemic. The expanded child tax credit payments will begin in July.

“We’re going to take half the children in America out of poverty,” Schumer said. “To take half the kids out of poverty in American is incredible. This is good for America.”

UUP President Fred Kowal hailed Schumer as a true friend to UUP, who has a warm spot for SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University, which is in the heart of Schumer’s native Brooklyn.

“You have delivered hundreds of millions of dollars to our campuses, funding that has saved jobs and kept alive the dream of a college education for countless young people,” Kowal told the senator. He also noted that Schumer “made sure our public hospitals got the help they needed.”

HOSPITALS LIKELY TO GET DEBT RELIEF

SUNY hospitals got direct aid in a series of federal relief packages last year, and they also received quick-turnaround loans to help make up the extraordinary shortfalls and expenses they faced last spring when all revenue-generating elective surgery stopped, and the hospitals began treating an overwhelming number of COVID patients.

Schumer told UUP leaders that Congress expects to lower the current 10 percent interest rate on those loans to 4 percent, and it will probably extend the fast-approaching deadline for starting

repayment by another year, with the strong possibility that eventually, the federal government may forgive the loans altogether. The American Rescue Plan also seeks to reduce hospital costs, by making health insurance more affordable and thereby reducing the number of uninsured or underinsured patients, and by providing funds for the purchase of equipment needed to treat COVID-19 patients.

And that’s just the beginning, Schumer said. Next on Congress’ agenda: President Biden’s major infrastructure bill that could be a source of high-paying jobs for SUNY graduates, and legislation that would provide funding to address even more poverty-related issues, including the high mortality rates of expectant and postpartum Black women, and of Black infants in their first year of life.

Senate Democrats may use the fast-track budget reconciliation process to pass the infrastructure plan without Republican support, as they did with the American Rescue Plan. The infrastructure plan is moving more slowly, and the White House is still seeking support among moderate Republicans. The plan is of special interest to UUP because it goes well beyond the traditional bridges-and-roads definition of infrastructure and would, for example, tackle climate change through funding for clean-energy projects.

Kowal pledged UUP’s continued support, noting that the union is ready and willing to advocate for legislation at the federal level.

“If you need any help, the largest higher education union in the country is with you,” Kowal told Schumer.

UUP Mobilization and Outreach to connect

BY DARRYL MCGRATH

First there was the *Janus* decision. Then there was the Trump administration, which instituted so many anti-worker policies and laws they could have filled a briefing book for a presidential debate.

And then the coronavirus pandemic happened.

The last five years have not been easy for unions. But UUP has turned the tables and directed its energies into making this a time of strength, unity and empowerment for its members, through the creation of the UUP Mobilization and Outreach department. The department brings together seven UUP staff members, three of them new hires and all of them experienced in working for the labor movement—and passionate about it.

The new department is under the supervision of UUP Executive Director Kristie Sammons.

TELLING MEMBERS: *YOU'RE UUP*

UUP Mobilization and Outreach has two main goals: connecting with members so that they can stay involved with UUP and have more opportunities to be heard by their union; and mobilizing and engaging with members, UUP leaders and partners in the labor and social justice movements.

Four months into its inception, it's clear that Mobilization and Outreach is achieving both aims, UUP President Fred Kowal said.

"We know that there are anti-union forces out there that aren't just hoping the labor movement falters, but are actively trying to destroy it, and that effort has not let up during the pandemic," Kowal said. "But what UUP has found is that instead of faltering or fail-



BURTON



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JUDGE

ing during the worst challenge we have ever faced, our members have never been more engaged. We believe that the work of Mobilization and Outreach will help us stay on track with that engagement, as we look toward the end of a difficult period that lasted longer than any of us originally expected."

A SHARED PASSION FOR LABOR

Department staff consists of Amy Sheldon, associate director of outreach; Rob Trimarchi, mobilization and engagement project manager; Danielle

and UUP that started two and a half years ago. UUP hired them in January. Sheldon started with UUP as an intern while earning her master's degree in public administration at the University at Albany's Rockefeller College. She joined UUP full time in 2018 and has worked in communications, organizing, outreach and policy.

Trimarchi has also worked in a variety of roles at UUP; he moved into organizing and member engagement several years ago. Sprague started nearly seven years ago in UUP's IT department; in

his new role, he is managing membership engagement and mobilization data, identifying innovative opportunities to improve outreach, and ensuring that the engagement strategy maximizes UUP's reach to members,

activists, leaders and allies. Becker started as a rep for the UUP Benefit Trust Fund in 2009, and she has also worked in field services and organizing.

WIDE RANGE OF PROJECTS

The department has worked with chapters on numerous projects, including outreach to members who may not feel as connected to their union because their schedules or jobs do not always allow time

"We know that there are anti-union forces out there that aren't just hoping the labor movement falters, but are actively trying to destroy it ..."

— UUP President Fred Kowal

Judge, assistant director of social justice and mobilization; Richard Burton, strategic campaigns and mobilization coordinator; Jordan Helin, mobilization and political training coordinator; Josh Sprague, strategic engagement and data analytics coordinator; and Mary Becker, mobilization and outreach assistant.

Judge, Burton and Helin began working with UUP as professional organizers through a joint project between the AFT

union members, coalition partners

for engagement. Members in this group include medical residents, contingent employees and athletic department members.

It has also provided ways for members to get involved in UUP projects and campaigns that have been especially important during the pandemic, such as child care, and advocacy for federal and state funding to SUNY. UUP is also in the early stages of planning for its next contract negotiations—the agreement with the state goes to July 1, 2022—and Mobilization and Outreach will work with the Membership Committee to engage and activate members around contract negotiations.

Other topics for which the department can help members connect with UUP include diversity, equity and inclusion; introducing new employees to UUP; and environmental issues, including the work UUP has done with NY Renew

and its development of a team of environmental advocates within the union. The department is also working with chapters to expand and engage chapter-level political teams.

The staff members of Mobilization and Outreach clearly share a sense of mission, which drew them to union work.

“UUP’s advocacy on behalf of its members, students and patients is unwavering, and I am proud to be part of the team that supports that important mission,” Sheldon said.

Helin, Judge and Burton reflect a similar commitment; Judge describes working for the labor movement as “the most meaningful work I have ever done.” Helin became a committed unionist while a graduate student at SUNY Stony Brook, where he was a department mobilizer for the Graduate Student Employees Union (CWA Local 1104). Burton

was a faculty member for a dozen years at Seattle Central Community College; while there, he served as the political action chair of his faculty union, AFT Local 1789.

“UUP is fortunate to have every one of the dedicated staff members working in the Mobilization and Outreach department, and we are especially happy to have gained three people with the energy, drive and experience that Danielle, Jordan and Richard bring to their new positions,” Kowal said.

Judge summarized a feeling threaded through the comments about the new department by all of the staff when she offered this recollection: “Someone once asked me ‘How do I want people to remember me?’ At the time I didn’t have an answer, but now I can say, ‘I want people to know that I really cared and wanted to make a difference.’”



Are You a Member?

Thomas P. DiNapoli New York State Comptroller				J. DOE		Total Gross		Fed Taxable Gross	
Advice # 123456789				Pay Start Date 1/10/2019		Current 3456.78	1234.56		
Advice Date 1/10/2019				Pay End Date 1/24/2019		YTD 45,678.90	34,567.89		
Department ID 1234						Pay Rate 56,789.10			
EARNINGS						Net Pay 1,234.56			
Hrs./Days		Current	Earnings	YTD		TAX DATA			
Regular Pay Salary Employee		3456.78		45,678.90		Federal 4	State 4	NYC	Yonkers
Location Pay		56.78		678.90		Allowances 2	0		
						TAXES			
						Current		YTD	
						Fed Withholding	3,456.78	12,345.67	
						Medicare	5,678.90	4,567.89	
						Social Security	3,456.78	1,234.56	
						NY Withholding	5,678.90	4,567.89	
						DEDUCTIONS			
		Current	YTD			Current		YTD	
Regular Before Tax Health		456.78	1,234.56						
Supplemental Ret. Annually Prog.		678.90	5,678.90						
TIAA Retirement Before Tax		56.78	1,234.56					34.56	456.78

CHECK PAY STUB TO MAKE SURE

To be a member of the union, your paycheck **must** say “UUP Member” under “Deductions.”

Please contact your chapter officers for a membership card or go to <https://bit.ly/1RYG65y>

The Benefits of Being UNION!

Membership in your union goes well beyond fair and equitable wages, and quality, affordable health insurance. It’s a statement: There is strength in numbers, and our collective voice will be heard.

Together, our voice is heard when bargaining with New York state and SUNY. Our voice strengthens our leverage in contract talks and enforcement, and in addressing problems in SUNY labor-management meetings.

Our voice is heard as the main advocate for SUNY campus and hospital funding, and for other legislative issues of importance to you—issues that help us better meet the needs of our students and our patients.

Being a member of UUP also means you maintain:

- Representation in interrogations or disciplinary actions, or in legal actions brought on behalf of members;
- Representation if Title IX harassment complaints are filed against you (for student or co-worker complaints);
- Access to benefits and services provided by UUP Member Services Trust, and discount programs and services provided by UUP’s state and national affiliates: NYSUT, AFT and NEA;
- Access to UUP’s vision, dental, and life insurance plans in retirement; and
- The right to vote on the union contract, and to provide input in chapter and statewide union elections.

UUP debt clinics continue to help members

BY DARRYL McGRATH

Pamela Malone's student debt moment of reckoning came in July 2018 at an AFT convention in Pittsburgh.

A resolution was coming up for debate on the convention floor about an imminent class-action lawsuit by the AFT against Navient Solutions Inc., the giant student loan servicing company. Malone was chatting with UUP President Fred Kowal, and remembers telling him, "Oh, Fred, I have a story for you."

A few minutes later, she stood on the convention floor and spoke to several thousand unionists in support of the resolution. She recounted her own hellish experience with her student loan, which was not serviced by Navient, but which was mired in years of misinformation that Malone had followed in good faith. She spoke in support of legal action that would hold Navient to account for what the AFT considered a long history of insufficient help to student borrowers, especially when it came to advising them about public service loan forgiveness. A short time later, Alyssa Picard, director of the AFT Higher Education Division, approached Malone and said, "Have you come to one of our debt clinics? You need it."

Fast-forward to 2021. Navient and the AFT reached a settlement in June 2020, in which Navient agreed to revise its



FILE PHOTO

ESC CHAPTER PRESIDENT PAMELA MALONE, RIGHT, EDUCATES MEMBERS ON STUDENT LOAN FORGIVENESS PROGRAMS AT A RECENT UUP-SPONSORED STUDENT DEBT CLINIC.

internal training and practices, and also agreed to pay a \$1.75 million settlement that will go toward education and student loan counseling to borrowers who work in public service.

REACHING HUNDREDS OF UUPERS

And Malone, who has long since eliminated her student debt with the help of the AFT, has paid that help forward by educating hundreds of UUP members on how they can do the same.

She was one of the first UUP members to train as an instructor for the wildly successful student debt clinics that UUP started in 2019, under the guidance of the AFT.

The clinics provide information on income-driven repayment plans and the federal Public Service Loan Forgiveness program.

Two years later, the student debt clinics for members are still going strong, under the oversight of UUP statewide Secretary/Treasurer Jeri O'Bryan-Losee. The union has presented nearly 80 clinics, and it switched them to virtual mode during the pandemic without missing a beat.

"Our members do so much for this union, and UUP is proud and happy to do something this constructive in turn for its members," UUP President Fred Kowal said. "Student debt is a burden on individuals, and a terrible burden on society. It's a problem not only

for recent graduates just starting their career as UUP members, but also for some of our more established members, especially if they attained advanced degrees in their fields. I would encourage any UUP member to explore the resources we offer through our student debt clinics."

In a one-hour session, a UUP student debt clinic offers members a primer on income-driven repayment, the application for public service loan forgiveness, advice on common mistakes and resources for credible help during the process.

MISINFORMATION IS COMMON

Malone paid off her student debt under the federal loan forgiveness program in October 2019. The federal government

see CLINICS, page 23

Summer app helps with student debt

UUP members have access to an online app that makes it easier to check their eligibility for—and to enroll in—federal student loan repayment programs.

"Summer" is a website created in 2019 to help student loan borrowers navigate the complex repayment process. Summer combines innovative technology and policy expertise to help borrowers track their loans in one place, and recommends the best repayment plan for their individual situation, such as the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program that enables qualifying public workers to discharge their loans after 10 years.

Go to AFT Member Benefits at <https://www.aft.org/benefits/summer> to find out more about enrolling in the free online student loan management platform.





UUP MEMBER AND ESF SUSTAINABLE FACILITIES MANAGER SUSAN FASSLER, TAKES PART IN A UUP PANEL DISCUSSION ON SUNY'S ROLE IN DEALING WITH CLIMATE CHANGE. SHE LATER TESTIFIED ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CLIMATE LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY PROTECTION ACT (CLCPA) AT A MAY 13 STATE ASSEMBLY HEARING.

UUP panel: SUNY key to addressing climate change

BY DARRYL MCGRATH

SUNY could be a key player in the fight against climate change—and UUP stands ready with its partners in environmental advocacy to help SUNY achieve that goal.

UUP President Fred Kowal and six experts in renewable energy and sustainability made that point during a virtual roundtable hosted by UUP April 22, the 51st celebration of Earth Day. The roundtable, which drew an audience of more than 200 viewers, came on the same day that President Biden announced at a virtual international climate change summit that the U.S. will cut its carbon emissions at least in half from 2005 levels by 2030.

“I can’t think of a better way to spend Earth Day than by talking about ways we as a union, we as a university system, can reduce our carbon emissions and help reduce climate change,” Kowal, the moderator, said in his opening remarks as he referenced the president’s announcement. “UUP must have a leading role in this. We are educators and we are healers. All the work we do is all keyed to the future, and the future must be environmentally just.”

Panelists included State Assemblymember and longtime UUPer Steve Englebright, a Long Island Democrat and chair of the Assembly Committee on Environmental Conservation; Jessica Ottney Mahar, New York policy and strategy

director for The Nature Conservancy; Dennis Elsenbeck, president of Viridi Parente and a New York State Climate Action Council member; Stephan Edel, coalition coordinator for New York Renews; UUP member Susan Fassler, sustainable facilities manager at SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry; and Peter Iwanowicz, executive director of Environmental Advocates of New York and also a member of the state Climate Action Council.

MUCH DONE; MORE TO GO

The discussion ranged from efforts already underway—SUNY ESF, for example, aims to recycle, reuse or compost most of the trash produced on campus by 2025—to better ways to work with communities toward just transition. That’s important not only in urban areas, but in the rural communities where many SUNY campuses are based, panelists noted.

At the heart of the just transition philosophy is the recognition that many jobs that harm the environment are also major sources of employment in areas with few opportunities for low-income residents. The challenge is to replace those harmful jobs with employment in green technology and sustainable fields.

As one of the largest property managers in the state—SUNY owns roughly 40 percent of the buildings in New York—UUP has long proposed that SUNY should make a concerted effort to develop greater sustainability and reduce its

carbon footprint. UUP sees that goal as part of an overall effort that should also include starting new certificate and degree programs in green energy fields.

THE TIME IS RIGHT

And several developments make this a good time to raise these points: SUNY Chancellor Jim Malatras, who has a good cooperative relationship with UUP, is a member of the state Climate Action Council. Two days ago, Englebright announced that the Assembly had just passed a package of legislation aimed at reducing waste, emissions and contaminants. Fassler testified at a May 13 Assembly hearing on the implementation of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, which UUP backs.

And UUP has two policy proposals that call on SUNY to work with the union toward the goal of greater sustainability: the UUP legislative agenda, [New York HEALS](#) (health care, education, access, leadership, sustainability), and UUP’s [NY25](#) proposal, which also includes an environmental component.

UUP and SUNY face many challenges in this area, but they are not unattainable, panelist Stephan Edel of NY Renews told the audience.

“SUNY is a huge player,” Edel said. “Faculty members, students and staff can play a part as advocates. We know this is a huge, challenging task, that SUNY is almost uniquely prepared to deliver.”

Members address Black maternal, infant mortality

BY DARRYL McGRATH

UUP is helping to shine a light on a tragedy of Black families in this country: the high number of Black women who suffer severe or fatal complications during pregnancy in the year after giving birth, and Black infants who die in their first weeks of life.

“This is really unacceptable,” said Dr. Christina Pardo, a UUP member and assistant professor of obstetrics and gynecology at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University. “We know Black women have increased risk of pre-term labor, higher death rates from breast and endometrial cancer, and the highest rates of infant mortality. What we have finally started to acknowledge are the effects of racism and disparity in our communities. The hospitals in our Black and Brown communities are typically less resourced.”

UUP members are taking a major role in publicly addressing this staggering and shameful gap in health care in the wealthiest nation in the world. They are in positions of power to influence change, and they are in clinical settings that allow them to make a real difference, both through direct care of their patients, and through observations that give them an important voice in helping set policy.



RASHEED DAVIS, A CLINICAL ASSISTANT PROFESSOR AT STONY BROOK HSC, SAID IT IS IMPORTANT TO EDUCATE PROVIDERS ABOUT PERINATAL DEPRESSION. “JUST BEING BLACK IS A RISK FACTOR,” SHE SAID.

Among the members working on this problem: Pardo, who is director of global women’s health and social obstetrics and gynecology at Downstate; and Rasheed Davis, an emergency medicine physician’s assistant and a clinical assistant professor at Stony Brook HSC with a special interest in women’s health. There is also Downstate employee Dr. Camille Clare, newly appointed chair of obstetrics and gynecology. All three participated in a panel of experts on Black maternal and infant health sponsored by UUP in February, as part of the annual conference of the New York State Association of Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislators Inc.



A LONG, TRAGIC HISTORY OF RACIAL DISPARITY

There is nothing new about the terrible numbers. Black women in the U.S. have long had a much higher rate of death during pregnancy and childbirth than



Buy a UUP face mask; make a donation!

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

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

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

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

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

white women.

Black women are more than three times more likely to die during pregnancy and childbirth, or within 42 days of the end of a pregnancy, than white women in the U.S., according to the *American Journal of Managed Care*. The overall average of all maternal deaths in the U.S. increased in 2019 from 17.4 deaths per 100,000 live births—a figure that is higher than 10 other industrialized nations—to 20.1. Broken down by race, the maternal mortality rate was 17.9 deaths per 100,000 live births for non-Hispanic white women, and 44 deaths per 100,000 live births for non-Hispanic Black women.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has tracked similar—and similarly shocking—numbers that reveal an infant mortality rate for Black babies that is 2.3 times higher than for non-Hispanic white babies. The rates of babies born with low birth weight and babies who die from sudden infant death syndrome are higher for Black infants than for non-Hispanic white infants, and Black mothers are far more likely to get either no prenatal care, or care that comes late in the pregnancy.

The overall problem of maternal mortality in the U.S., much less the identification of this problem within any particular racial group, was obscured for too long by inadequate record-keeping by states. As noted in a January 2020 report issued by the National Center for Health Statistics, a division of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “... the ability to correctly identify and report maternal deaths has particularly been a challenge.”

The federal government in 2003 recommended a change in how maternal deaths were reported, through a simple check-box on the death certificate completed by the physician, but it was not until 2017 that every state followed that recommendation.

DOWNSTATE READY TO HELP

UUP has called for long-overdue attention to the problem of Black maternal and infant health in its legislative agenda for this session, New York HEALS. As part



“We really want patients to know we are here, and we are providing a full range of labor and delivery systems.”

— Dr. Camille Clare
SUNY Downstate

of its health care focus in that agenda, the union is urging the state to expand resources to Downstate directed at this effort. Downstate is already one of only 17 regional perinatal centers in New York, a designation conferred by the state Department of Health Services that recognizes the hospital as providing the highest level of care to women in the last weeks of pregnancy and also to infants in the first weeks of life.

Additionally, the union supports passage of the Chisholm Chance Act—introduced by state Sen. Zellnor Myrie, a Brooklyn Democrat representing the 20th Senate District—which would create an administrative hub in Kings and Bronx counties to coordinate community-based organizations and community health workers to combat the maternal health crisis.

UUP President Fred Kowal has pledged a continued push by the union to help change these appalling outcomes for Black women and infants, tens of thousands of whom are served by all four SUNY academic medical centers.

“When we call for the restoration of state support to SUNY hospitals, and adequate funding of our academic medical centers, it’s not just a call for support of services,” Kowal said. “It’s a call to address what our colleague Dr. Pardo correctly called a racial and economic disparity. These high-needs academic medical centers reflect a lack of attention by the state to low-income families.”

UUP hailed the state’s 2019 law that created a Maternal Mortality Review Board, which followed the governor’s 2018 task force on maternal mortality and disparate racial outcomes. The first executive committee and review board included six faculty members affiliated with SUNY academic medical centers, of which four were UUP members. Those appointees were members Aleida Llanes-

Oberstein at SUNY Downstate, Vanessa Barnabei, of the University at Buffalo; Ellen Steinberg, of Stony Brook HSC; and Brian Thompson, of Upstate Medical University. The appointees also included Clare, then at New York Medical College and now at Downstate; and Christopher Plummer of Stony Brook HSC.

UUP’S CONCERN BEING MET FEDERALLY, STATEWIDE

Other initiatives at the local, state and federal levels in the last few years have variously involved SUNY academic medical centers, lawmakers who have supported UUP’s legislative agenda, or federal legislation that UUP supported. Among these efforts:

- In 2018, the New York City Health Department named SUNY Downstate as one of 23 public and private maternity hospitals that would receive four years of targeted help to reduce life-threatening complications during and after childbirth. All the hospitals were in low-income neighborhoods with the city’s highest rates of pregnancy complications.

- President Biden’s \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan for coronavirus relief allows states to extend postpartum Medicaid coverage for a full year, instead of the existing extension of only 60 days after delivery. The plan provides states with funding for the extended coverage.

- Prior to the American Rescue Plan development, the respective chairs of the state Senate and Assembly health committees—Sen. Gustavo Rivera and Assemblymember Richard Gottfried, both New York City Democrats—had last year introduced a bill to extend Medicaid coverage for a year for women who had just given birth. That bill is in committee, and in light of the federal plan to fund an almost identical extension of Medicaid

see **MATERNAL**, page 23

FREDONIA CHAPTER MEMBER
ADAM LUEBKE RECEIVED A 2020
GRAMMY AWARD FOR BEST
CHORAL PERFORMANCE.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ADAM LUEBKE; INSET COURTESY OF SUNY FREDONIA

Fredonia Chapter member brings home a Grammy

BY MICHAEL LISI

Does any musician ever think they're going to actually win a Grammy Award—even if they're nominated for one?

Adam Luebke certainly didn't—and he won one.

Luebke, a Fredonia Chapter member and assistant professor at the SUNY Fredonia School of Music, won the 2020 Grammy Award for Best Choral Performance for the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus' recording of Richard Danielpour's "The Passion of Yeshua," with the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra and the UCLA Chamber Singers.

Luebke won the Grammy for his work as director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Chorus; he has directed the chorus since 2015. He found out about the win in a live virtual ceremony; he wore a tuxedo for the event.

"I never expected it," said Luebke, in a recent phone interview from Fredonia. "I was proud of the recording and the work

that went into it, and you just hope for the best. It got a lot of great reviews, nationally and internationally, and that kind of buzz is crucial. It certainly helped."

IT TAKES A VILLAGE

Two Fredonia Chapter members, Alex Jokipii and Jonathan Lombardo, played on the Grammy-winning recording. Both are adjunct lecturers at SUNY Fredonia; Jokipii is the principal trumpet player for the BPO, and Lombardo is the orchestra's principal trombonist.

Bernd Gottinger, a Fredonia Chapter member and associate professor who leads the college's Sound Recording Technology Program, engineered the recording of the album. That earned him a Grammy Award nomination for Best Engineered Album, Classical.

"We are so proud of professor Luebke and our Fredonia Chapter members for winning this prestigious award," said UUP President Fred Kowal. "The number of talented individuals we have at SUNY Fredonia and across SUNY is truly stag-

gering. It is people like professor Luebke and his Fredonia Chapter colleagues who make SUNY and UUP great."

STIFF COMPETITION

The album, released in February 2020 on the Naxos label, beat out some tough competition, including Grammy Award-winning The Crossing chorus and its Grammy-winning conductor, Donald Nally; and multiple Grammy-winning conductor Leonard Slatkin, who led four choruses and the Orchestra of St. Luke's in the premiere performance of Alexander Kastalsky's "Requiem for Fallen Brothers."

The two-disc album "The Passion of Yeshua," recorded live in Buffalo in 2019, is a dramatic oratorio that tells the story of Christ's last hours on Earth. The piece, written by Danielpour over the last 25 years, takes from original Hebrew scriptures—sung in Hebrew—and the four Gospels.

A 2020 *Fanfare* magazine review said the album "is almost certain to go down

SPOTLIGHT SHINES ON UUPERS

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

Scott Ferguson, a professor of business and management at SUNY Cobleskill, was named executive director of the college's Institute for Rural Vitality, which addresses the region's most pressing issues in economic development and education, from college access and career readiness to legal support for agricultural businesses.

Ferguson will lead the institute's continued work in engaging regional partners in a collective effort to enhance the community and economic vitality in rural New York.

Ferguson has served as the college's inaugural chief diversity officer, and chaired SUNY Cobleskill's 2017 Strategic Planning program.

Ferguson also serves on the Schoharie County Chamber of Commerce Education Committee and is a former president of the chamber's Board of Directors. He also serves as president of the Cobleskill Auxiliary Services Board of Directors and as vice president of the Canajoharie Central School District Board of Education.



FERGUSON

Samantha Friedman, an Albany Chapter member and associate professor of sociology is this year's recipient of the University at Albany Faculty and Student Engagement Torch Award.

The Torch Award is a UAlbany tradition that dates to the 1930s. The award honors a faculty member who has had an outstanding positive effect on a graduating senior's academic and personal success. Seniors submit nominations.

Friedman is director of the UAlbany Center for Social and Demographic Analysis, the sociology department's internship director, a 2014-15 Fulbright U.S. Scholar Award winner, and the author of one book and more than 25 peer-reviewed journal articles on topics dealing with urban sociology, immigration and housing.

She has five studies in the journal review process, including two on COVID-19 mortality in New York City neighborhoods based on racial, ethnic and nativity status composition.



FRIEDMAN

Nick Pitas, an assistant professor in the department of recreation, therapeutic recreation and tourism at SUNY Brockport, recently published "Social Capital in the Response to COVID-19" in the *American Journal of Health Promotion*. The paper has about 4,600 views and 28 citations.

"Social capital" defines the resources that a person can get from relationships, whether with people that are really close or acquaintances.

According to the paper—which Pitas co-wrote with Colin Ehmer, a public health practitioner for Save the Children Federation—many of the necessary protective practices instituted in response to COVID-19 further undermine social capital in American communities, exacerbating a trend that many argue has been in place for decades. Practices like isolation, physical distancing, less time in public spaces, and a change in regular day-to-day activities, as well as historic lows of trust for the government.



PITAS

in history as Danielpour's magnum opus, not only in length (at 100 minutes) but in scope, breadth and quality."

"The musicians, singers, Richard and I are truly humbled and honored by this award," said JoAnn Falletta, the Grammy Award-winning director of the Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra. "'The Passion of Yeshua' was an incredible project that brought together hundreds of musicians and voices in a simply unforgettable performance."

MUSIC TO HIS EARS

Luebke said he found out about the project—and his involvement in it—from Falletta; she and Danielpour have known each other since their days at The Juilliard School.

"They are old friends from Juilliard and they had been planning the performance," said Luebke. "Because we are the resi-



JOKIPII



LOMBARDO

dent chorus, we became involved with the performance and the recording."

Luebke said he worked with Falletta and Danielpour as he prepared the chorus for the recording, which came nine months after the debut of "Yeshua" at the Oregon Bach Festival in July 2018.

"The chorus director teaches all the music to the chorus," he said. "So I worked with the conductor and the composer to interpret the music. I sat down with JoAnn, I sat down with the

score and worked off of that."

With more than 140 members, the all-volunteer chorus practiced the 14-scene piece for months, working in some extra rehearsals before the recording. After the live recording, the chorus returned for a chorus-only session recorded in the intimate, acoustically superior Kleinhans Music Hall in Buffalo.

"What I do is make the chorus as flexible as possible," said Luebke. "My stamp is on the sound of the chorus; the tone, diction and character of the sound."

Luebke, who accepted his Grammy in a virtual ceremony in March, said he's proud of the recording—even though winning the Grammy is still quite surreal.

"It's never something I ever planned for in my career," he said. "Just to have the opportunity to work on this project. I'm really proud of it. I think it stands on its own two feet."

Dangler named higher ed member of the year

BY MICHAEL LISI AND DARRYL McGRATH

It was never a question of whether Jamie Dangler would eventually be honored as a NYSUT Higher Education Member of the Year; it was only a question of how much of her remarkable career could be recapped in a two-and-a-half-minute tribute video.

The answer, as more than 2,000 attendees at the virtual NYSUT Representative Assembly May 1 learned, was just enough to show why UUP leaders turned to Dangler time and again to tackle projects that were often daunting, always difficult, and sometimes seemingly intractable. And she came through for her union every time, not only with solutions, but often with real change that made life better for her UUP colleagues and for SUNY students.

Dangler, a sociologist at SUNY Cortland who has been a union activist for much of her 36-year career, has announced she will not run for re-election when her term ends this summer. She capped her long service with a nearly decade-long tenure as statewide vice president for academics.

"Jamie is dedicated to unionism and to her union," UUP President Fred Kowal wrote in his nomination of Dangler for one of NYSUT's highest honors. "She cares about UUP's members and has never been afraid to speak out to defend them or in opposition to anything that would impact them negatively or weaken the union. She has spent a lifetime working for members of United University Professions."

A PASSIONATE UNION ACTIVIST

As a sociologist and a unionist, Dangler had a particular passion for the challenges that families face as they balance



FILE PHOTO

UUP STATEWIDE VP FOR ACADEMICS JAMIE Dangler IS THIS YEAR'S CO-RECIPIENT OF NYSUT'S HIGHER EDUCATION MEMBER OF THE YEAR AWARD.

work with home life, and she had a keen awareness of the special effort many women make to achieve that balance. She knew about that from personal experience, as she and her husband juggled their careers and raised two sons, and she recounted formative impressions from her childhood during her NYSUT interview.

"I think my interest in unions was influenced a lot by what I observed growing up," she said in the tribute video.

She referred to a childhood in a small town outside of Newburgh, N.Y., where her family owned a grocery store, and where she saw other working families striving to attain a good life for their children—an area that would later figure into her academic research as well as her work for UUP. She is the author of "Hidden in the Home: The Role of Waged Homework in the Modern World-Economy," about piecework production done by workers in their homes, with a special focus on the electronics industry.

A STELLAR CAREER

Her interest in work-life balance made her ideally suited for many of her roles at UUP, where she started the Family Leave Committee in 2001 and chaired it from its inception to 2010. She also compiled the first Family Leave/Work Life Services Guide for UUP members. She continues to represent the union on the state's multi-union Labor/Management Work-Life Services Advisory Board.

In 2009, Dangler co-authored an extensive report for UUP on gender and salary inequity. The report, titled "Gender Inequity," studied potential salary inequities at Albany, Buffalo, Cobleskill, Cortland, Farmingdale, New Paltz and Plattsburgh, measuring years of service, rank, terminal degree and discipline-specific market salaries. It also includes information on focus groups, interviews and discussions about gender inequity with UUPers at 13 chapters.

Dangler also leads UUP's Teacher Education Committee that strongly—and suc-

UUP front line heroes honored for life-saving efforts

BY MICHAEL LISI

A trio of UUP members on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic has been honored as 2020 Empire Whole Health Heroes for their heroic efforts.

Downstate Medical Center Chapter members and physicians Robert Gore and Lorenzo Paladino, and Stony Brook HSC Chapter member Dr. Marc Shapiro received the award, given by Empire BlueCross BlueShield and Crain's New York Business. They were three of 50 people who received the award.

The honorees received their awards at a Feb. 18 virtual ceremony. Go to <https://bit.ly/3v2mwvD> to read more about the awardees.

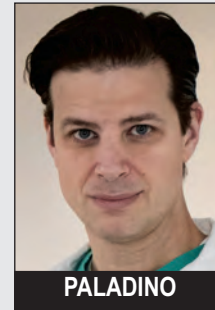
"Doctors Paladino, Gore and Shapiro are true heroes who put their lives on the line to care for COVID-19 patients, especially during the early days of the pandemic," said UUP President Fred Kowal. "We are proud of our doctors, and every one of our members who risked their health and the health of their families to care for those sick with COVID during this year-long pandemic."

Gore teamed up with state Sen. Zellnor Myrie in July 2020 to offer a free "virtual healing" workshop for the community. His Brooklyn-based nonprofit group, Kings Against Violence Initiative, visits young people in schools, hospital rooms and community centers; the program helps them recover from the emotional trauma of gun violence.

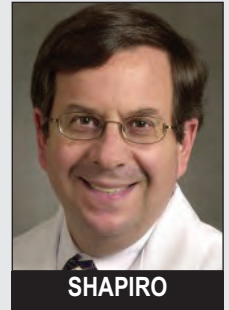
Paladino participated in a White House task force that established protocols for putting multiple patients on ventila-



GORE



PALADINO



SHAPIRO

tors designed for single-patient use during the height of the pandemic in New York City in spring 2020. He is a flight surgeon in the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing.

Gore and Paladino, who work in Downstate's Department of Emergency Medicine, were featured in CNN's April 2020 documentary on the early days of the coronavirus pandemic in New York City. The documentary, "Inside the ER: The Incredible Fight Against Coronavirus," focused on the effect of COVID-19 on the heroic health care workers at SUNY Downstate. It aired April 5, 2020.

Shapiro cared for 130 ventilated and critically ill COVID-19 patients at Stony Brook University Hospital during the pandemic's peak there in spring 2020. He worked 70 days straight, rotating among five ICU units; none of his patients died. He did all he could to facilitate communications with patients and their families during a time when visitations were prohibited.

cessfully—advocated against new State Education Department mandates for teacher certification that were put in place in 2014.

Working with NYSUT, UUP members, the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY and state Board of Regents members, Dangler led a three-year fight against a certification process that was unfair, flawed and which discouraged students considering a teaching career from entering the profession. That led to a March 2017 decision by the Regents to make significant changes to the process, including eliminating one of four exams, and instituting a review process to help teaching students complete the edTPA requirement.

Reflecting on that and other long efforts, Dangler said in her video, "One of the things I've learned in the union is you have to keep your eyes on the prize, and it might take a long time to get close, but every step you take is a step forward."

Known for her calm, steady demeanor in potentially fractious discussions, Dangler was the chief negotiator for UUP's 2011-2016 contract with New York state, and served on the Negotiations Team during bargaining talks that produced the 2007-2011 contract. She served as UUP's chief negotiator during its contract negotiations with the union's CWA staff in 2009. But she was also one of UUP's most enthusiastic and vocal advocates in the many demonstrations

she either led or participated in over the years, including a day-long protest in front of the U.S. Supreme Court Building in February 2018 as justices heard oral arguments in the landmark anti-union case, *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*.

Never one to highlight her own achievements, and always quick to credit others for their efforts, Dangler grew visibly emotional and fought back tears as she reflected on her long career with UUP during her NYSUT interview.

"I can't envision my life without being part of the union," she said. "It's been such a wonderful experience."

Check out Dangler's RA video tribute at <https://bit.ly/3ulYgEb> on the UUP website.

Progress made toward federal minimum wage; Amazon

BY DARRYL MCGRATH

President Joe Biden accomplished much of what he wanted with the American Rescue Plan, the \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package that stands as his first legislative accomplishment. But he couldn't get a \$15 federal minimum wage into the final bill.

So the president did an end-run around the legislative obstacles to a federal wage hike, and he issued an executive order April 27 that raises the minimum wage for federal contractors to \$15 an hour.

Many of these workers earn a minimum wage of \$10.95 an hour. The president's executive order will apply to a wide range of workers, including cleaning and maintenance staff, food service contractors, seasonal recreational service workers and shuttle bus drivers. Their last wage increase came during the Obama administration.

Progressive groups and unions have long favored a hefty increase in the federal minimum wage, which has stood at \$7.25 an hour since 2009, and is the minimum amount that employers must pay their employees unless they work in a state that has set a higher minimum. Many states, including New York, have taken matters into their own hands and



FIGHTFOR15.ORG

PRESIDENT JOE BIDEN ISSUES AN EXECUTIVE ORDER THAT RAISES THE FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE FOR FEDERAL CONTRACTORS TO \$15 AN HOUR. THE ORDER COVERS A WIDE RANGE OF EMPLOYEES, INCLUDING CLEANERS, FOOD SERVICE CONTRACTORS, SEASONAL RECREATIONAL WORKERS AND SHUTTLE BUS DRIVERS.

have set a graduated increase in the minimum wage so that it will reach \$15 an hour at a specific point in the future. But advocates of a higher federal mini-

mum wage have long said that a hike would have a symbolic as well as economic value, signaling that this country recognizes workers and all that they

PRO Act a boon for unionizing

The PRO Act (Protecting the Right to Organize Act) is much in the news these days, as the Senate debates this important bill that would enhance protections for workers who want to organize. The House has already passed the bill.

The Economic Policy Institute, an independent policy research organization in Washington, D.C., has prepared this summary of the bill's features, which can be found at <https://bit.ly/33ok861>.

President Joe Biden said he will sign the PRO Act into law if the Senate approves the bill.

UUP members need to keep up the pressure.

Here's how members can help get the PRO Act through the U.S. Senate:

- UUP has posted an e-letter that you can send to your senators asking them to approve the PRO Act. Go to <https://bit.ly/2SUZ8BQ> to send the e-letter.
- Go to <https://bit.ly/2T647zR> to use UUP's PRO Act Social

Media kit to spread the word about the PRO Act on social media.

- Go to <https://bit.ly/33ZpODW> to endorse the PRO Act by signing an online UUP petition calling for approval of the bill.

States reject federal unemployment \$

The rejection of pandemic unemployment benefits started with Montana in early May, and then snowballed. Now, at least a dozen states have decided to end federally funded pandemic unemployment benefits ahead of schedule.

Mind you, this is free money to the states, and it is provided to recipients at no additional cost to participating states. The American Rescue Plan, President Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus rescue package signed into law in March, will cover these benefits to Sept. 6, 2021.

The unemployment benefits have come under criticism in some states as an incentive for people to not return to work, an

organizing effort fails, but there's hope

do to keep the U.S. productive.

UUP has long supported the effort to raise the minimum wage nationally, and it has participated in many events around the national Fight for \$15 campaign to accomplish that goal. Go to <https://fightfor15.org/> to learn more about the Fight for \$15 movement.

A report issued by the Congressional Budget Office in the first month of the Biden administration sent very mixed signals about what would happen to U.S. workers and the U.S. economy under a phased-in \$15-an-hour federal minimum wage. Entitled, “The Budgetary Effects of the Raise the Wage Act of 2021,” the report predicted a \$54 billion increase in the federal budget deficit in the decade over which the minimum wage would gradually rise toward \$15, as well as higher prices for goods and services and the possible loss of 1.4 million jobs.

But an analysis of the report by Business Insider noted that the scare headlines from the report obscured the positive effects that the Congressional Budget Office calculated, including the fact that the raise in the federal minimum wage would lift 900,000 people out of poverty.

Go to <https://reut.rs/3vNpHan> to read more about President Biden's executive order.

SUCCESSFUL ORGANIZING DRIVES

Yes, the Amazon vote failed—but several other, smaller organizing efforts have succeeded in recent months, with far less fanfare.

Here's a sampling:

- Mass MoCA (the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art) in North Adams, Mass., voted 53-15 April 28 to join the United Auto Workers Local 2110, with both professional and nonprofessional staff to be represented in the bargaining unit.

Temporary layoffs last year at the start of the coronavirus pandemic have been cited as one of the galvanizing factors in the decision to unionize.

Go to <https://bit.ly/3h962gZ> to learn more about the vote.



DAILY NEWS

- Several noteworthy organizing efforts have taken place at newspapers in the last few years. The newspaper staff at *The New York Daily News* voted in February to join the NewsGuild of New York, which is affiliated with the Communications Workers of America. This effort is

especially noteworthy, because management broke the editorial union at the paper in the mid-1990s.

The new union has asked the parent company, Tribune Publishing, for voluntary recognition.

Several other Tribune Publishing papers have also joined the NewsGuild in the last three years, including the *Hartford Courant*, one of the country's oldest continuously publishing papers.

About 30 years ago, the *Courant's* staff tried to join what was then called the Newspaper Guild. Management threatened to end the paper's very generous annual bonus for employees if they voted to unionize. The vote failed, and soon after, management ended the bonus anyhow. Evidently, that was a lasting lesson.

Read more about organizing at *The New York Daily News* at <https://bit.ly/2R1T0ar>

The New York Times

- And ... this stands to be a successful technology organizing effort that also happens to be at a newspaper: The digital staff at *The New York Times* announced in April that it intends to try to join the NewsGuild. The traditional news staff at the *Times* is already in the NewsGuild.

argument that rarely considers the fact that it was difficult for people to survive on minimum wage or barely above-minimum wage even before the coronavirus pandemic, especially in regions where good-paying jobs are few and far between. Add to that the fact that many child care providers have not yet reopened, and some may never reopen, and it begs the question of how someone is supposed to work if they have no one to care for their children.

There's plenty of information out there to debunk the idea that unemployment is keeping people from seeking work, but the federal pandemic benefits have clearly become a rallying cry about the “pampered unemployed” in some states. This study from Yale University at <https://bit.ly/33MWyJL> dispels that idea, but the early cutoff of federal unemployment benefits is a done deal in a number of states.

Go to <https://nyti.ms/33UiWra> to read more about the move to cut off unemployment.

Rescue plan also saves union pensions

The American Rescue Plan, President Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus relief package signed into law in March, held so many sweeping reforms that some barely received notice. Here's one that changed the lives of thousands of union retirees for the better.

The law contains \$86 billion in emergency funding for multi-employer pensions, which pay benefits to union workers in industries such as construction, manufacturing, mining, retail transportation and entertainment.

The approximately 1,400 multi-employer pension plans in the U.S. cover 10 million people. An estimated 124 such plans were underfunded, which meant that thousands of retirees faced either severe cuts to their pensions or risked losing them altogether.

Go to <https://bit.ly/3uUircT> to read a summary of the pension relief funding.



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MATERNAL ...

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coverage, its fate is unknown. Rivera also introduced a bill earlier this year that would update the information that hospitals are required to provide patients to include maternal health outcomes.

Just getting practitioners together in public forums to talk about their findings and observations can help shed light on this important topic. Rasheed Davis, for example, said that although much has been written about postpartum depression, far less is understood about perinatal depression—that which occurs during pregnancy—and its special implications for already at-risk Black expectant mothers. Depression and anxiety can increase the levels of stress hormones in the body, which can lead to medical complications for a pregnancy.

“It often isn’t recognized,” Davis said during her presentation at the panel in February. “Just being Black is a risk factor. This is something that is quiet—you don’t see it unless someone talks about it. We need to continue to create support for providers to become aware of perinatal depression.”

With hospitals returning to normal services following a year of curtailed

in-patient procedures or care that was diverted to other hospitals during the pandemic, the subject of maternal health for New York’s most high-risk women is likely to get renewed attention. Globally, there are indications that the coronavirus pandemic worsened pregnancy outcomes. The state designation of Downstate as a COVID-19-only hospital has been lifted, and the hospital is offering a full range of services, during pregnancy and after birth, and is working with statewide and citywide efforts to provide not only life-saving in-hospital care to pregnant women, but post-partum care to women and their babies, Clare said.

“Now that we’re open, we really want patients to know we are here, and we are providing a full range of labor and delivery systems,” she said.

With the Biden administration’s focus on improving the conditions of the country’s poorest residents—and with a view toward that long past the immediate relief packages of the pandemic—UUP expects to find receptive listeners at the state and federal level as it continues to address this devastating inequity and national shame.

Said Kowal, “It’s a terrible injustice, and UUP will be working to change this, not just in this legislative session, but for the long haul.”

LEARN MORE ▶

Maternal and infant mortality is getting long-overdue attention in state government and the news. The following links provide information on measures at the federal and state levels, as well as within UUP:

- **New York State Taskforce on Maternal Mortality and Disparate Racial Outcomes**, at <https://on.ny.gov/3fo8lu5>
- **New York State Maternal Mortality Review Board members**, at <https://on.ny.gov/343NkzP>
- **UUP President Fred Kowal’s statement on creation of a Maternal Mortality Review Board**, at <https://bit.ly/2RgWpCz>
- **US News report: Maternal Mortality Surged Ahead of the COVID-19 Pandemic in the U.S.**, at <https://bit.ly/3tWp4df>
- **New York Times report: Small Piece of the Stimulus Has Ambitious Aim of Saving Mothers’ Lives**, at <https://nyti.ms/3ozG7Rv>
- **City of New York website: De Blasio administration launches plan**, at <https://on.nyc.gov/3tWuntb>

CLINICS ...

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forgave \$30,182.16, and that still did not make up for the \$100,000 she had paid between 2002 and 2018, when she thought the payments were being applied to loan forgiveness. In fact, Malone was not properly enrolled in the public service forgiveness program, even though she thought that she was. She joins untold thousands of student borrowers who found the information from their student loan servicer so confusing that they believed they were working toward forgiveness, only to get a shocking correction on that belief years down the road.

“The original loan was \$65,000,” Malone said. “I had paid 150 percent of the loan and I still owned 50 percent of the original debt.”

Although some Democrats have raised the possibility of a national student debt forgiveness plan, the idea also has many skeptics and some outright opponents. Chief among the concerns: Student debt is a problem that will never go away, so forgiving the debt of millions of borrowers now will do little to prevent a new generation of graduates from accumulating their own staggering debt burden. The Biden administration is not pushing a student debt forgiveness plan, but it is working on ways to make college more

affordable, through a recent increase in the amount of the Pell Grant, and a proposal to make community college free.

In the meantime, UUP will continue to educate its members about public service loan forgiveness. Chapters that wish to schedule a student debt clinic can contact O’Bryan-Losee at jobryan@uupmail.org.

Looking back at her own experience, Malone highly recommends that members avail themselves of this service.

“The number one advice I have for people is, they have to know the facts, because you will not get the facts through your servicer,” Malone said. “AFT—and UUP through AFT—will give you the facts.”



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