

THE VOICE



Summer 2025



Made in NY

***SUNY grads
working at SUNY***

A LIFE-CHANGING AWARD · NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE · NEW CHAPTER PRESIDENTS



The Voice is a publication of United University Professions (UUP), bargaining agent for the more than 40,000 academic and professional employees of the State University of New York.

Contact UUP at P.O. Box 15143, Albany, New York 12212-5143. Telephone (518) 640-6600 or toll-free at (800) 342-4206. UUP's website is www.uupinfo.org. UUP is Local 2190 of the American Federation of Teachers (AFL-CIO) and is affiliated with NYSUT and the National Education Association.

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KATE MORANO
Staff Writer



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A REFLECTIVE STATE OF MIND

If things look a little different in this space than they usually do, it's not you.

It's me.

I've decided to try something a little different—a little bit laid back, if you will—in this, the Summer issue of *The Voice*.

Instead of sitting down and writing my column, which would normally be presented here in print, I've decided to be a little less formal—it is summer, after all—and record it.

This is, without question, the first time that a UUP president has ever recorded their column. Whether it's a good idea, well that will depend on how many of

virtual listening tour. Members of the UUP Negotiations Team, led by Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin, led the sessions, which were held in July, August and September.

At each forum, members shared what they'd like to see in a new contract. The team will strongly consider that input as they put together their negotiations strategy.

We need you to get involved and keep being involved. As I say in my video column, it's about these three things: protecting each other, protecting our work and protecting our principles.

It's our members that make our union strong. I know that we will succeed if we stand together. Solidarity forever!

**“IT'S ABOUT THESE THREE THINGS:
PROTECTING EACH OTHER,
PROTECTING OUR WORK AND
PROTECTING OUR PRINCIPLES.”**

you follow the QR code on this page or type bit.ly/ToThePoint2025 into your browser and watch the video.

Don't feel like watching? That's OK. Read on for a quick synopsis of what's in the video.

Most of my column focuses on our preparations to begin negotiating a new contract with the state. Even though we've got 10 months left before our 2022-2026 contract expires next July 1, we're moving quickly.

Unlike past negotiations, both sides are motivated to get to the table sooner rather than later. Speaking for UUP, we'd like nothing better than to nail down a good contract—one with fair salary increases that builds upon our current agreement—before our contract runs out.

We took the first step over the summer with our



Frederick E. Kowal
President, UUP



Watch the video at
bit.ly/ToThePoint2025



AFL-CIO chief economist on July jobs numbers

AFL-CIO Chief Economist Dr. Darrick Hamilton issued the following statement on the July jobs report from the Bureau of Labor Statistics:

Average job growth over the past three months has fallen to its lowest level in more than a decade. Core sectors of the economy—manufacturing, government, retail and mining—are hemorrhaging jobs. Without modest gains in the health care and social assistance

This data doesn't yet capture the ripple effects of mass federal layoffs or the full force of recent budget cuts.

sectors, we'd be facing three straight months of net job loss. And yet, in the midst of this instability, the administration has pushed through what will likely be the largest health care cut in American history. And this data doesn't yet capture the ripple effects of mass federal layoffs or the full force of recent budget cuts.

Over the past two months, the Black unemployment rate has jumped by a full percentage point



and now stands at more than 7%, nearly double the national rate of 4.2%.

For Black workers, the picture is not only a reflection of persistent racial bias—it may also be a harbinger of something more ominous. This disparity isn't new—it's a long-standing feature of a racialized economy. But historically, sharp economic distress in Black communities has often preceded broader downturns. If that pattern holds, we're not just looking at a crisis for Black workers—we're staring down a warning for the entire economy.

Read the full report at
bit.ly/AFLCIOjobs



HELU chair: Attacks on higher education make higher ed workers more determined

The federal administration's attacks on higher education have coincided with more than 5,000 unionized higher education employees around the country winning new contracts.

That's the affirmative update from Higher Education Labor United, as it considers a possible galvanizing effect for higher education organizing in the face of endless attacks.

As the latest message from HELU Chair Levin Kim notes, "These are just a few of the countless victories that higher ed workers have won so far



this year through a commitment to organizing. Higher ed workers across the U.S. are fighting back by forming coalitions, taking political action, organizing mass actions, and more. Even amidst a challenging landscape, higher ed workers across the US are organizing — and winning."

UUP is a member of HELU, a coalition of wall-to-wall higher education workers.

Read the full message at
bit.ly/HELUmessage



NLRB stalled by administration's firing of chair

The National Labor Relations Board has been unable to issue decisions throughout most of the past year after the president fired Democratic member Gwynne Wilcox and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to reinstate her while she legally challenges her firing.

Her absence brought the NLRB below a quorum. On July 17, the president announced two nominees, Scott Mayer, chief labor counsel at Boeing Co., and James Murphy, a former NLRB attorney.

The timing of potential Senate confirmation is unknown and could take months.



NLRB member
Gwynne Wilcox

Read more at
bit.ly/NLRBstalled



Latin American labor decries sweeping arrests of workers

Workers from immigrant and marginalized communities need protection against the excesses of the federal administration, especially in the face of sweeping roundups of people by immigration agents.

That message set the tone for the annual convention of the Labor Council for Latin American Advancement, held in Atlanta July 28-Aug. 2.

Evelyn DeJesus, president of the LCLAA and executive vice president of the AFT, led the gathering. AFT President Randi Weingarten delivered sharp criticism of Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents who detain people on the street and at their workplaces, often—as immigration attorneys have noted—with limited, delayed or nonexistent regard for due process.

J. Philippe Abraham, the NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer, as well as a UUP member and former statewide UUP Vice President for Professionals, also attended the convention.

Delegates approved several resolutions on topics of concern to UUP, including solidarity with campus protesters and the right to free speech; defending public sector workers and the right of students to learn free from the threat of deportation.

Read more at bit.ly/AFTLatinoLabor
or www.lclaa.org/



Correction

A story in the Spring 2025 issue of *The Voice* left out information about the leadership of UUP's statewide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee.

Darleyne Mayers and Lisa Marie Anselmi serve as co-chairpersons of the committee. The DEI Committee works to implement affirmative action goals within UUP. They work with other committees to implement equal opportunity goals within SUNY and develop programs designed to aid members and chapters in their pursuit of equal opportunity goals on their own campuses.



Darleyne Mayers
co-chairperson, Diversity, Equity
and Inclusion Committee



Lisa Marie Anselmi
co-chairperson, Diversity, Equity
and Inclusion Committee

Empire State Chapter member leads NYC Central Labor Council

Brendan Griffith brings long familiarity with NYC labor history, issues to presidency

Empire State Chapter member Brendan Griffith is the new president of the powerful New York City Central Labor Council. Griffith, who's also a member of Iron Workers Local 40 and recently served as the NYCCLC's interim president, was elected by acclamation by council delegates July 17. He takes over for former NYCCLC president Vincent Alvarez, who stepped down in July.

"I'm honored by the trust delegates have placed in me and grateful for the opportunity to continue serving our city's labor movement," Griffith said in a NYCCLC press release. "Going forward, I'm committed to working in partnership with our affiliates to meet this moment and fight for a fairer, more just city, with an economy that works for all working people."

Griffith, appointed NYCCLC chief of staff in 2011, has done the day-to-day work of the council, including overseeing its annual Triangle Shirtwaist Fire Commemoration and the New York City Labor Day Parade—the nation's oldest and largest Labor Day parade. UUP members will march in the Sept. 6 parade.

Griffith is an adjunct instructor at SUNY Empire State University's Harry Van Arsdale Jr. School of Labor Studies, where he's worked since 2016. He became a UUP member in December 2015.

"Congratulations to Brendan from his union siblings at UUP," said UUP President Fred Kowal. "We're proud that one of our own has been chosen

to lead the New York City Central Labor Council. We wish him well and we're certain that he'll do great things as the NYCCLC's president."

"Brendan Griffith is intelligent, genuine, and deeply committed—traits that make him an ideal fit for the crucial role of President of the New York



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NYC CENTRAL LABOR COUNCIL

City Central Labor Council," said New York State AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento.

The NYCCLC is the nation's largest regional labor federation, representing 300 New York City unions and more than 1 million members.

» MEMBER BENEFITS

New benefit for UUP members

There's another voluntary benefit available for UUP members: identity and fraud protection through MetLife and AURA.

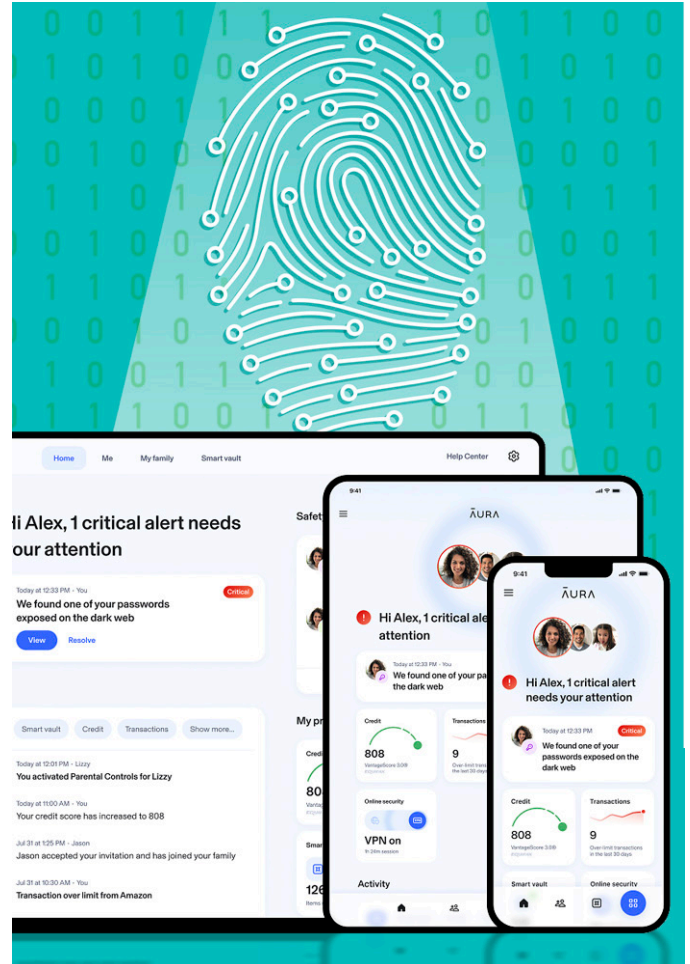
The program, which carries a monthly fee, provides identity theft protection, financial fraud protection, and privacy and device protection to participants.

Two plans, an individual plan and a family plan, are available. The individual plan costs \$7.95 per month. The family plan, which extends protections for up to 10 adults and an unlimited number of dependents under age 18, is \$11.95 per month.

Online payment options are monthly by credit card, debit card, Apple Pay or PayPal. Once your payment method is on file, it will automatically deduct your monthly payment.

You can cancel the service anytime by calling customer support at 844-931-2872.

» Read more about this benefit at bit.ly/UUPIdentityFraud



STAY CONNECTED!

UUPConnect is the newsletter that collects union happenings, current events and issues that affect you, your field and your career each week.

From Supreme Court decisions to issues in education, from changes in the health care profession to the latest news from the SUNY system, UUPConnect keeps you connected.

To receive UUPConnect in your inbox, email UUP Communications Director Mike Lisi at UUPconnect@uupmail.org.



KEEPING YOU CONNECTED.
www.uupinfo.org



Made in New York

UUP members who graduated from SUNY reflect on coming back to work there.

Maybe you love your college alma mater, but did you like it enough to work there?

While it's unknown if anyone tracks exactly how many former SUNY students returned to campus as employees, an informal survey of chapter presidents revealed that at least a dozen graduates are now employees.

They are purchasing agents, doctors, faculty members, information technology technicians and more. We picked three to talk to about their experiences, both as students and staff.

Claire Gravelin, originally from Voorheesville, earned a Bachelor of Science in psychology from SUNY Brockport and now works as an associate professor and faculty assistant to the dean of the School of Arts and Sciences at SUNY Geneseo.

Ekow King, from the Bronx, has bachelor's and master's degrees in Africana studies from the University at Albany, where he is now the assistant to the vice president of student affairs for diversity, equity and inclusion.

Brendan McGovern, chapter president at Binghamton University, earned a Bachelor of Science in geology at SUNY Cortland and a master's in planning from Binghamton, where he is now the program coordinator for the Geology Department.

BRENDAN MCGOVERN

SUNY BINGHAMTON (HOMETOWN: QUEENS, N.Y.)

Brendan McGovern was a nontraditional student when he enrolled at SUNY Cortland at 30 years old, but his desire to have a college education was a long time in the making. McGovern, 57, grew up in Queens, the child of Irish immigrants. He saw the value of unions early because his father, who grew up in poverty and had little education, worked for the phone company and bought a house within 12 years of moving to the United States. He was a member of the Communication Workers of America.

"We had a house with a backyard, Christmas presents every year and he sent his children to private Catholic school," McGovern said. "Being in a union is a ticket to the middle class."

Higher education, however, wasn't a tradition in McGovern's family. His siblings and cousins became police officers, firefighters, electricians and carpenters. McGovern became an owner of the bar he worked at in high school. It was a good time, for a while, but after a few years McGovern said he was bored and restless. He started taking classes at Queensborough Community College where he resurrected the school newspaper and joined protests against tuition increases.

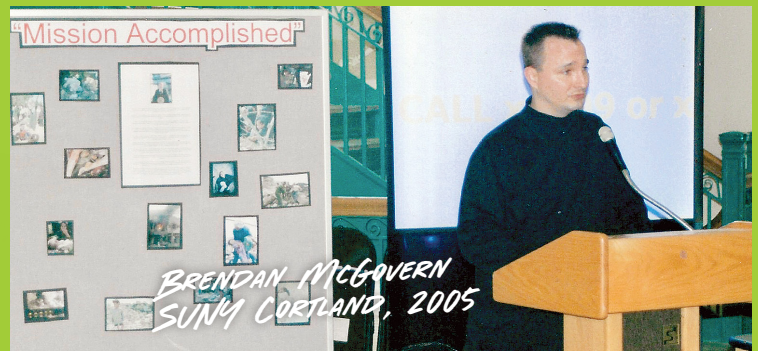
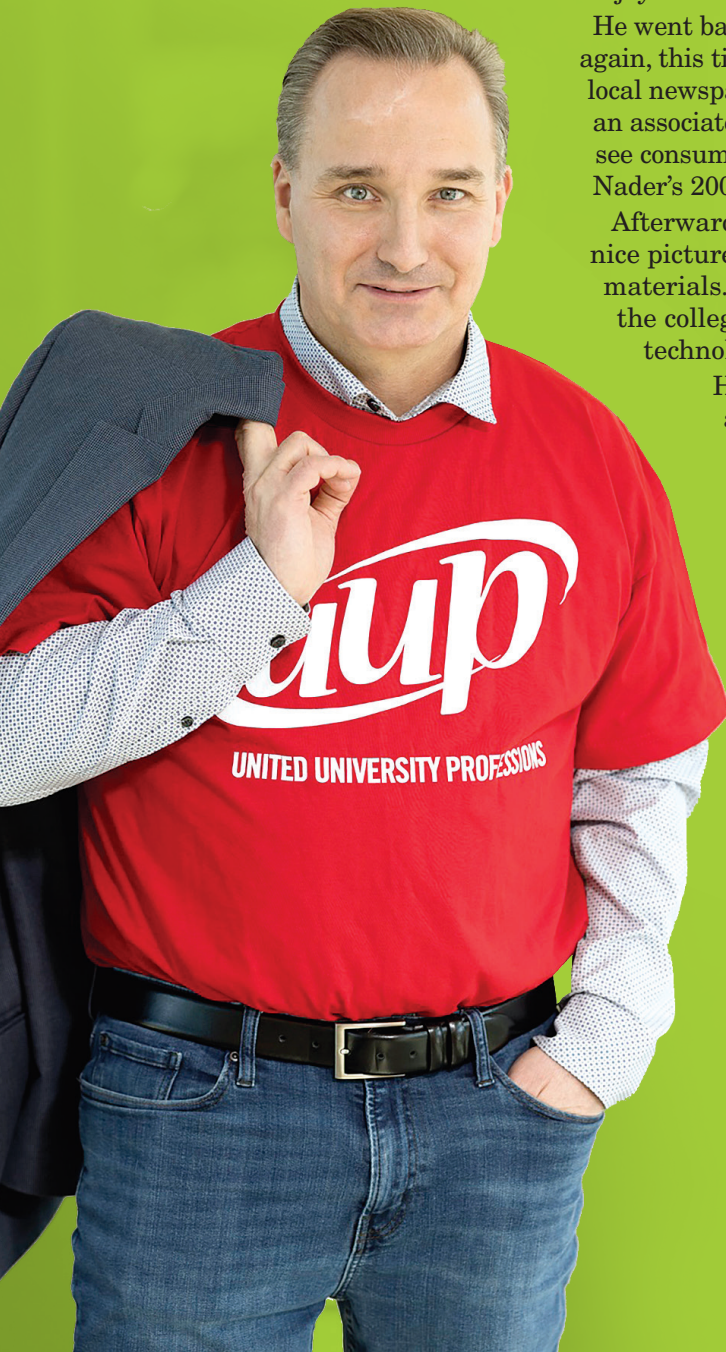
"I enjoyed the feeling of purpose," McGovern said.

He went back to tending bar, but within a few years started taking classes again, this time at Nassau Community College where he began freelancing for local newspapers and working at a progressive radio station. McGovern finished an associate's degree at the school, and along the way he had the opportunity to see consumer advocate Ralph Nader give a speech. He would go on to work for Nader's 2000 presidential campaign.

Afterward, McGovern enrolled at SUNY Cortland, his decision based on a nice picture of the Tioughnioga River on the cover of the college's marketing materials. He had no idea what he wanted to study but soon fell in with the college's geography department and learned about what was then new technology: the global information system.

He quickly put that talent to work, taking a job at SUNY Cortland—and joining UUP—immediately after graduating in 2004.

McGovern said his teachers encouraged him to go for another degree. He was married and expecting a child by then and thought he should stay put, but the professors prevailed. He went to Binghamton University on a scholarship and earned a master's degree in geography. Now the president of Binghamton's UUP chapter, McGovern is the program coordinator of the geography department and teaches classes on cultural geography. College is now a family tradition. McGovern's son, Jack, just wrapped his first year at Binghamton.



While a student at SUNY Cortland in 2005, Brendan McGovern organized an event in the Old Main building on campus protesting the war in Iraq.

CLAIRE GRAVELIN

SUNY GENESEO (VOORHEESVILLE, N.Y.)

For Claire Gravelin, the research lab isn't just a place for discovery—it's a space for mentorship, growth and collaboration. That's what she realized as a student at SUNY Brockport and now carries with her as a professor at SUNY Geneseo, where she is known as "Dr. G."

Gravelin, 37, grew up in Voorheesville, 14 miles west of Albany. She chose Brockport because the tuition was within her family's budget and it offered the perfect balance of independence—far enough away to establish her own space but close enough to go home if needed. She was also drawn to Brockport's Honors Program, eager to take part in its academic opportunities and community. She started classes in the fall of 2006 with a vague idea of becoming a math teacher or an actuary, inspired by an influential AP statistics teacher. But her math courses left her uninspired, leading her to shift to psychology. When sophomore year started, she found something that truly excited her—working in a research lab.

She was drawn in two directions within her subject: She liked both animal behavior work and social psychology, in part because of teachers John Chelonis, now at the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and Jennifer Ratcliff, now a full professor at SUNY Brockport. Both worked closely with Gravelin and encouraged her to read through psychology journals to help refine her interests, ultimately helping her realize that social psychology was her path.

She was intrigued by the impact subtle clues have on human behavior, especially those that perpetuate marginalization.

"I knew early on I wanted to do research at a college or university, not just to study theories, but to work alongside students as they learned," Gravelin said. "As an undergrad, I was able to serve as a teaching assistant for a statistics course, and I loved helping students navigate challenging concepts."



PHOTO: KEITH WALTERS



Gravelin earned her doctorate at the University of Kansas and began looking for a job at a SUNY school as a way of giving back for her good experience at Brockport.

“I don’t think I would’ve gotten into KU without the experience I had and the mentorship I received at Brockport,” Gravelin said.

“I met so many faculty and staff who wanted to help and support me. As a teacher, I wanted to give students that same opportunity—to gain hands-on experience and build meaningful connections that inspire growth.”

Dr. G’s first stint at SUNY came quickly but didn’t last long. After graduating from KU in 2016, she took a visiting assistant professor role at SUNY Geneseo. At the end of the year and with no options in SUNY, she accepted a job at Franklin Pierce University in New Hampshire, where she became department chairperson in her second year. Gravelin said she learned a lot on the job, but it wasn’t what she wanted for the long term.

When a permanent position teaching social psychology opened at SUNY Geneseo, she jumped at it. Part of the interview involved giving a research talk and a teaching demonstration open to students

and faculty. “I walked into the classroom, and it was full—many of the students I worked with as a visiting professor came back to show their support for me,” she said.

Gravelin started as tenure-track faculty at Geneseo in 2019, securing tenure and promotion to associate professor in 2024. At the beginning of the 2024-2025 school year, Gravelin began dividing her time across academic and administrative roles as she was appointed a faculty assistant to the dean of the School of Arts and Sciences. Her role is centered on student success and curricular innovation, largely focused on improving students’ experiences in their first year and leading the general education committee.

Gravelin still ensures she has time to work with students in her lab and has co-authored papers with several undergraduate

students. Gravelin continues to maintain a connection to SUNY Brockport, returning to campus to speak with psychology majors, serving as a mentor for students completing their Honors thesis. To her absolute delight, Gravelin is now collaborating with one of her former teachers and mentors, Laurel McNall, now a full professor in the psychology department.

“
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”

EKOW KING

UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY (BRONX, N.Y.)

As a student, the University at Albany was a refuge for Ekow King. Now, 35 years after graduating, he works to make the campus a welcoming place for new generations of students.

King, the sixth of 10 children, grew up in the South Bronx. His family, often homeless, sometimes lived in abandoned buildings. By 7, King already knew the ways to make money on the street: dancing or juggling on 42nd Street for tips; delivering groceries, taking wiring and pipes out of vacant buildings to sell; and delivering newspapers with his brother, Wayne.

"If you didn't come home with \$7 to \$10, you didn't eat," King said.

Identified as gifted at an early age, King often skipped school to earn money for food but showed up at DeWitt Clinton High School on assignment and exam days. His scholastic goals rested at the bottom of the hierarchy of needs: to make enough money to avoid being hungry. But he knew what he wanted: to go to college outside of New York City.

King left the Bronx in the summer of 1985 on a bus to UAlbany.

On campus, King created families among teachers and classmates. He was interested in social justice and joined the effort to push SUNY to divest from South Africa during apartheid. He pledged a fraternity, Phi Beta Sigma, as a sophomore and later became its president.

"SUNY is a diversity initiative. There was a time in history when you had to have a sponsor, a benefactor, a patron. Rich people got an education. We have a different paradigm here," King said. "I know my SUNY education changed my life and lives of all my brothers and sisters. They benefit from the information I have."

King graduated in 1990 and accepted a job at UAlbany in resident life.

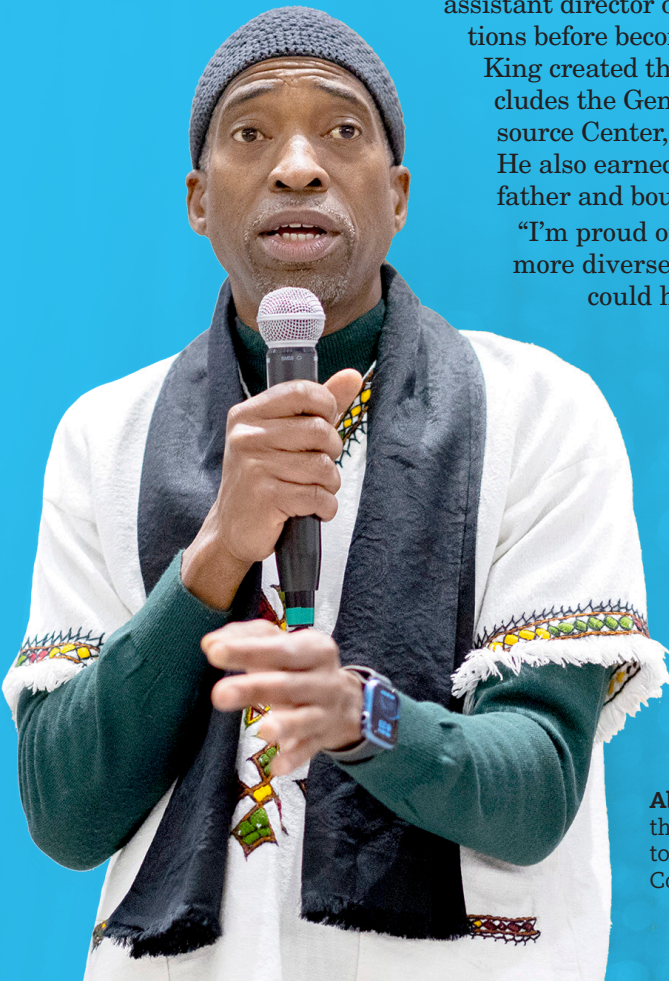
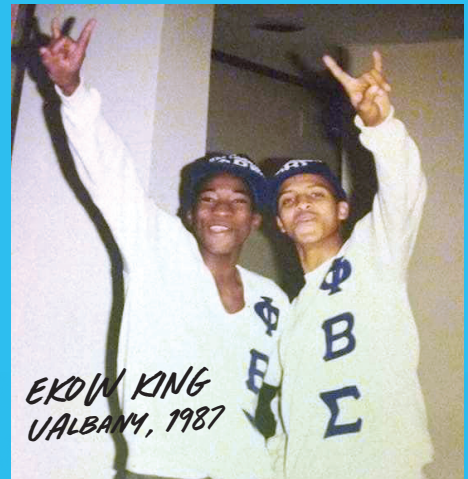
He was promoted to coordinator and worked as assistant director of facilities and operations

before becoming associate director for student activities. In that role, King created the Office of Intercultural Student Engagement—which includes the Gender and Sexuality Resource Center, the Multicultural Resource Center, the Women's Resource Center and the Interfaith Center. He also earned a master's degree in Africana Studies, married, became a father and bought a house—the first person in his family to do so.

"I'm proud of the work to bring Black students here. The campus is more diverse than when I started here. I felt an obligation to see if I could help create an environment I knew more of us needed to be exposed to," King said.

Today, King is the Assistant to the Vice President of Student Affairs for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. It's not easy to have diversity, equity and/or inclusion in your job title when the sitting president of the United States views those concepts with contempt and suspicion. King said he's not worried about himself. He's received death threats before. He's worried about his colleagues in red states and at institutions that don't have the same commitment to the principles as UAlbany.

"I would feel lonely if I worked at another institution. I feel I can speak comfortably here," he said.



Above: King (left) with Fermin Espinosa in 1987. The men met on the bus ride to UAlbany from New York City, pledged Phi Beta Sigma together and remain friends today. **Left:** King speaking at the Cultural Connections Festival on campus in 2024.

A low-angle, sepia-toned photograph of the Statue of Liberty against a cloudy sky. The statue is the central focus, holding the torch aloft in her right hand and a tablet in her left. The image is framed by a thin white border with decorative leaf motifs at the corners.

FIGHTING FOR THE VALUES THAT ARE IMPORTANT TO OUR MEMBERS.

Democracy. Diversity.
Equality. Compassion.
Respect.

These are the ideals that have inspired
our union since its founding.



UUP SUPPORTS THE VALUES THAT
ARE IMPORTANT TO OUR MEMBERS.

Careers that carry promise, lives that carry commitment

Seven UUP members named to inaugural class of SUNY Horizon Award for Faculty Research and Scholarship

SUNY's Chancellor's Horizon Award
for Faculty and Scholarship
honors achievements by faculty
early in their careers.

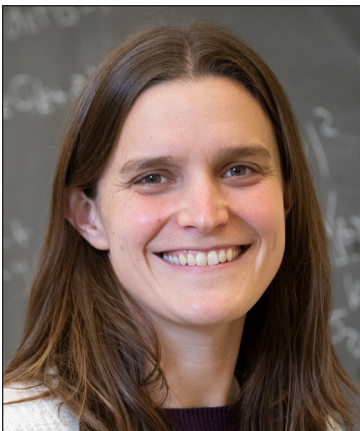
*UUP congratulates the seven UUP members
in the inaugural class of 10 professors who
have been recognized as Horizon scholars.*

Hanna Brant · Geneseo

An associate professor in the Department of Political Science and International Relations, Hanna Brant focuses on American politics and institutions, from Congress to state/local government. Her research examines state legislatures, the legislative process and the political careers of members of Congress. She's especially interested in the effect of women in legislatures and the role of legislative staffers. She was a 2024 recipient of a leave through the Dr. Nuala McGann Drescher Leave program.



PHOTO: JOHN GRIFFITH/STONY BROOK UNIVERSITY



Jennifer Cano · Stony Brook

An associate professor of physics and astronomy, Jennifer Cano received a National Science Foundation Faculty Early Career Development Award in 2019 and a Sloan Research Fellowship in 2022. She is a theoretical physicist who won the 2025 Stony Brook Discovery Prize, and she is a visiting scholar at the Center for Computational Quantum Physics in the Flatiron Institute in New York City.

Matthew Crayne · Albany

Matthew Crayne is an industrial/organizational psychologist and an expert in organizational behavior, with a particular focus on leadership, work values and social identity. He is interested in expanding the reach of organizational science to national security and public policy. He is a member of the National Counterterrorism Innovation, Technology, and Education (NCITE) consortium, which is sponsored by the United States Department of Homeland Security.



Kathryn Hauschild · Farmingdale

Kathryn Hauschild is an assistant professor of psychology and a developmental psychologist with expertise in early cognitive development and autism spectrum disorder. Her research focuses on how individuals gain and categorize knowledge about the people and objects in their everyday environment, with an interest in the core cognitive competencies such as face perception, category knowledge and language acquisition.

Sheena Mason · Oneonta

Sheena Mason, assistant professor of African American literature, is devoted to examining why traditional ways of fighting racism have fallen short. She has been named twice to fellowships exploring that topic, with the Program on Pluralism & Civil Exchange at the Mercatus Research Center of George Mason University and The Atlantic Fellows for Racial Equality. She is the founder of the anti-racism consulting and training organization, The Togetherness Wayfinder.



PHOTO: DOUGLAS LEVERIE



Yotam Ophir · Buffalo Center

An associate professor of communication, Ophir studies media effects, persuasion, misinformation, conspiracy theories and extremism. He heads UB's Media Effects, Misinformation, and Extremism lab, is a member of UB's Center for Information Integrity, and is a distinguished fellow at the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania. In 2023, he received UB's "Exceptional Scholar: Young Investigator Award."

Yaqi You · ESF

An assistant professor of environmental engineering, You has received the National Science Foundation's Faculty Early Career Development award and a New Investigator Award from the Joint Genome Institute at the Department of Energy. She is an expert on emerging contaminants and their effect on microbial communities. Her work has been recognized by the Royal Society of Chemistry and the Syracuse Center of Excellence in Environmental and Energy Systems.





NWF

**NATIONAL
WILDLIFE
FEDERATION**

force of nature

UUP president Fred Kowal now chairs National Wildlife Federation board

By Kate Morano

Fred Kowal remembers that when he was growing up, his whole family was involved in environmentalism.

“My dad fished and we took up hiking in national parks at a relatively early age, so I became very involved in environmental work with a variety of groups and causes,” Kowal said. “My older brother joined National Wildlife and the whole family would read the magazines.”

His dedication to protecting the planet led Kowal to become the first union leader appointed to National Wildlife Federation’s board of directors. He was elected NWF board chair in June.

As chair, Kowal will serve as the NWF spokesperson in certain circumstances, and will preside over the board as it makes decisions regarding the organization’s finances. He will also be able to do more advocacy work.

A formative time with indigenous tribes

Kowal relates to the NWF’s partnerships with indigenous people. Decades ago, Kowal lived on the Flathead Reservation in northwestern Montana—home to the Salish, Kootenai and Pend d’Oreille tribes. He describes that time as “phenomenal.”

“They are really welcoming people. I got involved in the work they were doing with their sovereignty fights, and I struck up a great friendship with the tribal chairman at the time,” said Kowal, who formed bonds that have transcended time.

The tribes were working on land preservation in the Mission Mountains of Montana's northwestern corner.

"It's some of the wildest country in the lower 48 states," Kowal said. "In some areas you can only go in there if you are an enrolled tribal member, and you go in only on foot or on horseback."

That tribal conservation work impressed Kowal. He eventually returned to New York, where he helped develop a Native American Studies minor at SUNY Cobleskill. The NWF's tribal partnerships also evoked memories of his Montana years.

"It was a big part of why I wanted to be on the board, and why to me it's a real honor to be chair of the board coming up," Kowal said.

Bringing labor and environmental movements together

Kowal was appointed to the NWF board in 2016, three years after being elected UUP president.

Stephen Allinger, former legislative director at NYSUT, knew and admired Kowal's passion for social justice and the environmental movement, and recommended Kowal for a seat on the NWF's national board, where Allinger served for years.

Kowal "has a deep connection to land and open space, and this wonderful association with Native American Tribes out West," Allinger said in a recent interview. "He also has a very sophisticated understanding of national politics as a political scientist himself. It became clear to me that he was a fantastic match for a national organization that is so rooted in conservation. I was delighted when he joined the board."

Kowal's appointment to the board came as labor and the environmental movement sought common ground.

"These are two issues which are inextricably linked, but which seem to be at odds constantly," said Kowal, "and I see that as shortsighted."

The BlueGreen Alliance, founded in 2006, unifies unions and environmental organizations. NWF

president and CEO Collin O'Mara is co-chair of the alliance, alongside United Steelworkers International President David McCall. UUP's national affiliate, the American Federation of Teachers, is part of the BlueGreen Alliance; AFT President Randi Weingarten is an alliance board member.

"AFT is a strong example of what unions can be in environmental advocacy and conservation," Kowal said. "AFT is of course my union and NWF is my conservation organization, so it's pretty cool."

Kowal, who grew up with a foot in each camp, believes that labor and the environment go hand in hand. He sees similarities between UUP and the NWF; both are large organizations which must consider the interests of different smaller chapters.

"It's a balancing act. We [UUP] don't tell local chapters what to do, but ultimately we all must work together," Kowal said. "In the NWF, there's constant tension between state affiliates and the national organization, and we manage that push and pull well here at UUP."

Kowal is thrilled to take on the voluntary position of board chair.

"This will in no way, shape or form take me away from my leadership role in UUP, and the NWF knows that," Kowal said. "But I'm honored to take on this responsibility and hope to show that unions and environmental groups go hand in hand, and how powerful we can be when we work together."

About the National Wildlife Federation

Formed in 1936, today the National Wildlife Federation is a leading voice in the protection of habitat, species and waterways. The NWF is dedicated to the recovery of wildlife, solutions to stop climate change and promote clean energy, the advancement of environmental justice in marginalized communities and the inclusion of state and territorial affiliates as partners in the NWF's work.

For more info visit www.nwf.org.



Schaffer remembered as passionate and fiery

Jo Schaffer was a strong woman with a passion for organized labor—and her union.

And it didn't go unnoticed.

"I know that Jo did a lot of different things in her life, but union work seemed to be the central focus," said Jamie Dangler, a Cortland Chapter retiree who served as statewide vice president for academics for nearly a decade. "I know at the campus level, she was a presence. It was hard not to know about UUP when Jo was in leadership positions. She was very visible, very much out front and in your face, and I mean that in a positive way and certainly with admiration."

"I was always struck by her candidness," said Cortland Chapter President Justin Neretich, who cites Schaffer as one of his "UUP mentors." "When she was up at the microphone at a delegate assembly, it didn't matter what the time clock said. She was going to stand there and get her point across."

Schaffer, a Cortland Chapter member, died in June of cancer. She was a UUP member for decades, serving as statewide membership development officer (1987-1997), a statewide Executive Board member and Cortland Chapter president, among other roles.

But of all her accomplishments as an active member, her proudest moments came through her work to help create UUP's Committee on Women's Issues and to launch two of UUP's most prestigious member awards: the Nina Mitchell Award for Distinguished Service—UUP's highest honor—and the Pearl H. Brod Outstanding Retiree Award.

She was honored with both awards, in 1996 and 2008, respectively.

Schaffer remained active in UUP after her retirement in 1996. She was a longtime member of UUP's statewide Committee on Active Retired Membership and was elected COARM chair in 2015. She was chair when COARM changed its name to the Retiree Membership Governing Committee in 2019 and served as RMGC chair until 2020.

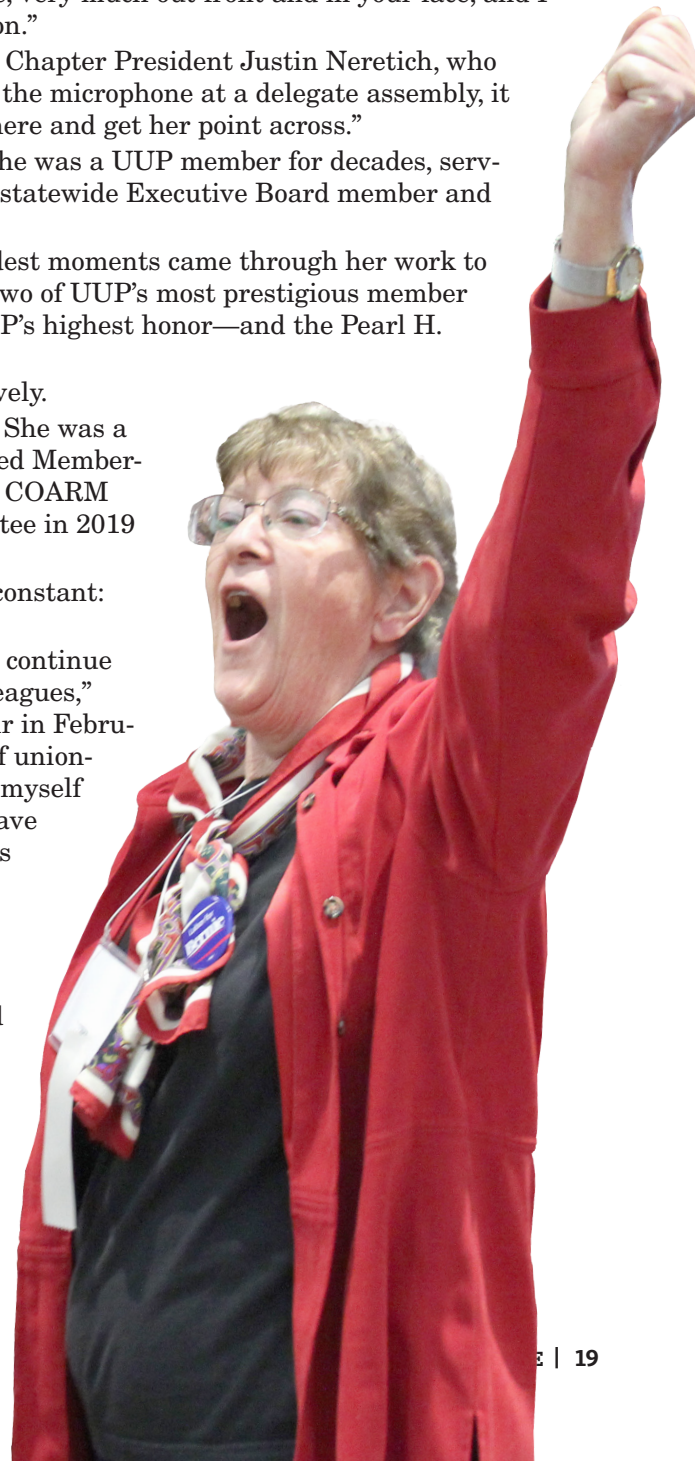
Her employment status had changed, but one thing remained constant: She still had a desire for union work.

"I would continue working with the active membership, indeed continue teaching them, that retirees have much to offer their 'active' colleagues," Schaffer wrote in her 2015 candidate statement for COARM chair in February issue of *The Active Retiree*. "We represent the living history of unionism, UUP in particular, which must not be forgotten. I often find myself at chapter meetings reminding my younger colleagues that we have 'been there and done that.' Let's use the knowledge of our retirees and together, let's move the union on!"

Outside of UUP, Schaffer was very involved in the community, helping to establish the SUNY Cortland Children's Center and the Cortland Arts Council. She also established two SUNY Cortland scholarships, the Jo Schaffer Scholarship in Art History and the Jo Schaffer Award in Social Justice.

For Dangler, Schaffer will always be remembered as a feisty, fiery union member and leader, epitomized every time she joined the "Mac-ettes"—a group of retirees led by late Fredonia Chapter retiree Mac Nelson—to sing "Solidarity Forever" at UUP delegate assemblies.

"She was a very important presence in partnership with some wonderful, strong leaders," Dangler said. "Union work was her life. I don't think there was any question about that."



Negotiations Team schedules new contract listening sessions

UUP's contract doesn't expire for another 10 months, but the union's Negotiations Team is already hard at work, preparing for the possibility of opening talks on a new agreement with the state over the next few months.

"We think we have a chance to get to the table in the fall, which would be notably in advance of what we've done in the past," UUP Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin said. "If that opportunity presents itself, we want to be ready to walk through that door."

To facilitate that, the Team started its "Virtual Listening Tour" in July. This series of listening sessions gave members an opportunity to share what they'd like to see in a new UUP contract. And here's a change: Instead of holding forums for each chapter individually, the Team held some sessions with chapters grouped together geographically.

"We combined some campuses because we're trying to expedite our preparations to get to the table early," Benjamin said. "With our listening sessions, we want-

ed to hear whatever people see as pressing concerns in their work lives. We were eager to hear what people are saying, and we will do our best to address their concerns as a union."

The Team also scheduled three statewide virtual listening sessions for members who missed their chapter forum or just wanted to find out more about the negotiations process. As *The Voice* went to press,

Negotiations for a new contract usually begin closer to the end of the current pact, but things could move much more swiftly this year.

those meetings were scheduled for noon Sept. 16 and Sept. 22; and at 4 p.m. Sept. 19.

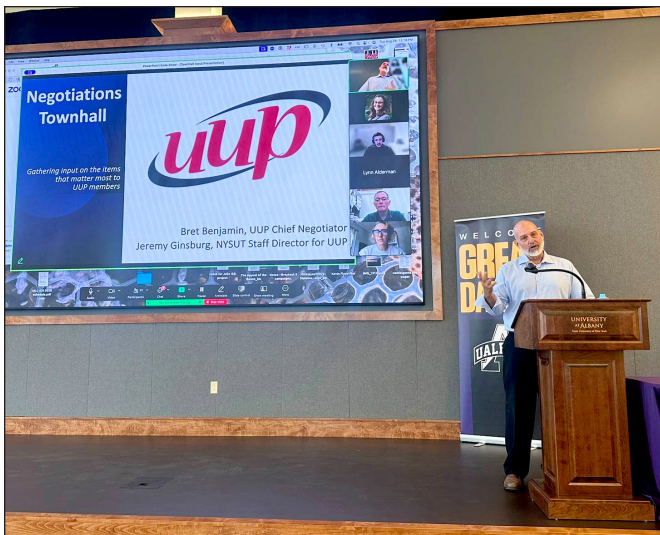
Even though UUP negotiates a contract for all SUNY employees in UUP's bargaining unit, non-UUP members are barred from the listening sessions. UUP members vote to ratify the contract once the Team reaches a tentative agreement. Non-members who join UUP will be allowed to take part in the feedback sessions and vote on the contract.

See links below on how to find your chapter and/or join UUP.

The Team has also sent out surveys to members at each campus with questions about what their priorities are for a new contract—including questions about compensation, health benefits, job security, artificial intelligence, academic freedom and more.

Members can also send questions, comments and suggestions to the Team at contract@uupmail.org.

"We've always tried to reach as many members as we possibly can," Benjamin said. "Our process emphasizes a member-driven union. Between the campus visits, the survey and the email address, we want members to have every opportunity to voice their priorities and shape the contract negotiations process."



UUP Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin on stage inside the University at Albany Campus Center, joined by at least 75 people both in person and online.



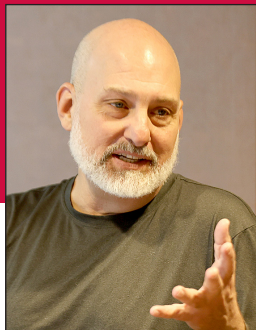
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NEGOTIATIONS TEAM



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University at Albany
Academic
Chair



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ABRAHAMS-NICHOLS**
Downstate
Professional



SOLOMON AYO
Farmingdale
Professional



ABIGAIL COOKE
Buffalo Center
Academic



JENNIFER DRAKE
Cortland
Professional



MIKE GREEN
SUNY Poly
Academic



MINDY HEATH
Upstate Medical
Professional



ALISSA KARL
Brockport
statewide VP for
Academics



CAROLYN KUBE
Stony Brook HSC
statewide VP for
Professionals



AARON MAJOR
Albany
Academic



PAMELA MALONE
Empire State
Professional



**BRENDAN
MCGOVERN**
Binghamton
Professional



**STEPHANIE
PETKOVSEK**
Canton
Academic



**JACLYN
PITTSLEY**
Cortland
Academic



BILL TUSANG
Cobleskill
Academic



KEEP UP TO DATE ON NEGOTIATIONS

Members are encouraged to sign up for the UUP Members Only portal on the UUP website, where contract negotiations information and updates will be posted.

Members can access that portal and find instructions on how to create an account with a password by scanning the QR code at right or by going to bit.ly/UUPMembersOnly



Drescher leave changes careers and lives

Applications for spring 2026 close Oct. 1

If you have ever yearned for the time to delve into research and writing with the goal of attaining tenure or permanent appointment, then consider the Dr. Nuala McGann Drescher Leave Program.

Drescher leave recipients describe it as a restorative and transformative gift of time.

A negotiated benefit for UUP-represented employees, the Drescher program helps those preparing to apply for tenure or permanent appointment to strengthen their applications by affording them up to a year's leave to complete their research or writing on a project pertaining to their career.

The Drescher leave is open to full-time, UUP-represented employees who are eligible for continuing or permanent appointment, as long as they have at least one term renewal or prior service credit at the time they apply.

Named after the first woman president of UUP, the Drescher program aims to promote diversity, equity and inclusion by focusing on applicants from under-represented groups. Recipients are required to return to their

campus for at least a year after they complete their Drescher leave, unless they obtain a waiver.

The application must include a detailed project or activity proposal, the endorsement of the applicant's campus for full-time leave for at least one semester, a current CV and copies of all appointment letters.

Campuses must commit to a financial contribution of at least 20% of the salary cost for the replacement of the employee during their Drescher leave. Campuses also are required to continue paying the employee's salary.

Drescher leave applicants also no longer have to worry about grant funding drying up if UUP negotiators don't have a new contract in place before the current agreement with the state expires on July 1, 2026. A new provision in the 2022-2026 pact continues Drescher funding if a new contract isn't ratified before the existing one expires.



**For more information visit
bit.ly/DrescherProgram**



Dr. Nuala McGann Drescher, namesake of the Drescher Leave Program, was UUP president from 1981 to 1987. She is a Distinguished Service Professor Emerita at SUNY Buffalo State who oversaw the resounding ratification of two three-year contracts with the state. Those contracts also created the NYS/UUP Joint Labor-Management Committees, a negotiated benefit that provides UUP-represented employees with training, leaves and career advancement opportunities.

The Dr. Nuala McGann Drescher Leave Program

provides paid leave for employees preparing to apply for tenure or permanent employment, to allow them time to complete work that enhances their application. It is a Joint Labor-Management program.

A rich past and an exciting future

New Paltz Drescher winner learned power of pre-tenure support

Matthieu Chapman, an associate professor of theater at New Paltz, took a Drescher leave in the fall of 2022, and he remembers that semester as a rich and restorative time.

The country was still in the throes of the coronavirus pandemic, which made teaching, researching and publishing more difficult. Chapman used his Drescher leave to produce a chapter for a book on cross-racial casting in drama, and as he reflected on his work during his Drescher, he said, “We rarely actually talk about the effect that this has on the Black actor.”

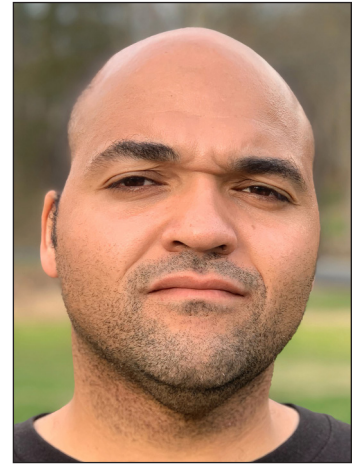
Chapman has experienced that himself. An accomplished theater performer, Chapman had acted in the role of Macbeth. The play contains references to the lead character as “black Macbeth,” a description that indicates the character’s evil intentions and actions, but which took on a double meaning of evil associated with a racial identity for Chapman, who is Black.

He echoed a recurring theme about the Drescher when he noted that it gave him time to reflect on why he is teaching in the first place.

“When you’re a graduate student, your focus is on research,” Chapman said. “Faculty have many responsibilities. In addition to the available hours in the day, it’s how many different directions you’re being pulled—so just having the time to write is valuable.”

He appreciates that UUP has made the Drescher leave possible.

“I think that everybody should get a pre-tenure sabbatical, and I think everyone should get a lot of post-tenure support,” Chapman said. “UUP is doing—at least what I’ve seen nationwide—a lot in both areas ... even if you only need time to step away from the job and reflect on your you can do better ... this is like a gift.”



A precious gift of time

Geneseo member used Drescher leave to write, research

Hanna Brant, an associate professor of Political Science at Geneseo, applied her 2024 Drescher leave toward peaceful, productive immersion in writing and research. For a young faculty member, that was a precious gift of time.

“There was just no way I could have published and researched the way I did without the Drescher leave,” said Brant, who is waiting to hear if she has gained tenure. She learned about Drescher from Professor Karleen West, a past Drescher awardee who chairs Political Science and International Relations at Geneseo.

The transition from graduate school to tenure-track life can be an adjustment, Brant said. Graduate students focus on research and writing. As faculty, they are teaching, advising, serving on committees, doing course preparation ... and suddenly they wonder where all that writing time went?

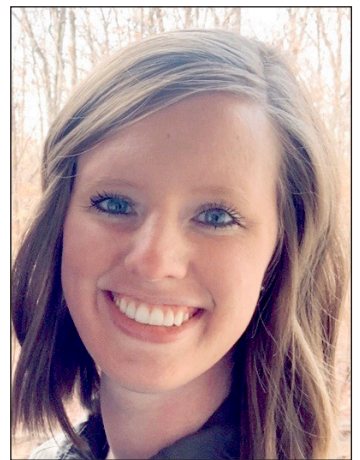
So Brant plunged into writing during her Drescher leave. She completed one article that was published, and she did substantial work on another. She revised and resubmitted an article for her dissertation, and she chaired a search for her department.

A political scientist who specializes in examining the political careers of lawmakers and legislative staff, Brant is interested in the role of women in legislatures and how staff members support lawmakers’ work.

The Drescher Award helps underrepresented academic and professional faculty achieve tenure or permanent appointment. Brant, who identifies as a lesbian and has researched the role of Queer women state lawmakers, said that “I didn’t feel that I could research on LGBTQ topics until I got to Geneseo.”

She has friends at other universities who don’t enjoy that freedom of identification, she said.

“I feel fortunate to be at Geneseo at this time, and I feel fortunate to have protection from the union,” Brant said.



NEW CHAPTER PRESIDENTS 2025

Leaders invoke optimism, inspiration, despite challenging times

Ten new chapter presidents took office this spring. The Voice spoke to each of them about what prompted them to become active in UUP and why they chose to become leaders in the union. The Voice also asked for a personal detail or story from their lives — and the responses did not disappoint. Read on to find out more about our newest chapter leaders.

Kathleen “Kat” Kielar *Buffalo Center*

Kat Kielar is the professional and continuing education coordinator at the University of Buffalo’s Office of Curriculum Assessment and Teaching Transformation. She’s worked in higher ed for 34 years and joined UUP in 2004.

Kielar’s hobby is genealogy. She researched her family lineage thoroughly and knows her maternal line back to the year 55 A.D.—yes, you read that correctly: 55 A.D. She learned through a chance encounter with former Buffalo HSC Chapter President Tom Melendy that the two of them are distantly related. Further research also showed that a different member of her family tree supervised the execution of Melendy’s ancestor during the Salem Witch Trials in Massachusetts.



SaQuan Herring *SUNY College of Optometry*

SaQuan Herring works as a billing manager in the patient services department at the SUNY College of Optometry, where he became known as someone who could explain the contract and how things worked between employees and management. He liked being someone others knew they could go to and it inspired him to become more active in the union and run for chapter president. And he’s always looking to encourage more members to engage with the union—especially if they need help. Herring worked with the labor relations specialists assigned to the Optometry Chapter and learned how the grievance process works.



Justin Neretich *Cortland*

Neretich graduated from SUNY Cortland with a degree in adolescent education and history in 2017. After graduation, he took a job on campus in the residence life department and joined UUP. Neretich now works in the Extended Learning Office as the community engagement and academic coordinator. His goal as a union leader is to transform the loyalty to institutions he sees among his coworkers to solidarity with one another. The pandemic taught him that depending on and supporting one another fosters resilience.



Jim Lichtenthal
Buffalo HSC

Jim Lichtenthal works in information technology at the UB School of Nursing. Jim and his brother, John, a NY-SUT labor relations specialist, were raised listening to Pete Seeger and Woody Guthrie. Unions and rights for workers were valued in his family. Lichtenthal joined UUP in 2018 and attended a Delegate Assembly for the first time in 2019. During the coronavirus pandemic, he helped deliver personal protective equipment to UUP members in the Buffalo area. It was a meaningful act of togetherness and service, Lichtenthal said.

UUP members approached Lichtenthal in 2023 to run for chapter president, but he wanted to know more about all the parts of the medical school before he became a leader. Statewide Executive Board member Tom Melendy, a Buffalo HSC member, served as chapter president while mentoring him. Melendy did not run for a second term this year, leaving the path open for Lichtenthal.

Lichtenthal looks for common ground when he's talking to prospective members about joining UUP. He focuses on common themes, like feeling respected at work, having a voice in the workplace and knowing that as a UUP member, you have more than 40,000 members who've got your back, he said.

And here's a fun fact about Buffalo HSC's new chapter president. In 2003, the Lichtenthal brothers and a friend started a President's Day tradition. They hosted a party honoring unpopular presidents—one each year. There were coloring pages, trivia and pictures of the honoree. The brothers started with Grover Cleveland because his political career began in Buffalo. They've since run out of presidents, but Lichtenthal is still married to his wife Stephanie, the woman he met at the first presidential party.



Mindy Heath
Upstate Medical Center

Mindy Heath likes to say she ascended to chapter leadership because she can't say no. Heath, a physical therapist, was motivated to become active in the union because she looked around and saw her department wasn't represented at meetings and management was ignoring suggestions. Like many unionists, Heath grew up with union parents. Her father was a steward at a P&C warehouse near Syracuse.



"The whole family supported the union. When I was a kid, I had a job cleaning the union office," Heath said.

Heath served as Vice President for Professionals at Upstate before running for chapter president. She's seen substantial change during her time as leader, including raises for underpaid staff.

Heath belongs to the Free Poker Network. She's been the state champion and attended the national championships in Las Vegas.

Annessa Babic
Old Westbury

Annessa Babic is an adjunct at Old Westbury, where she is among the founding members of the Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies program faculty. Her published work includes "America's Changing Icons: Constructing Patriotic Women from World War I to the Present" and anthologies she's edited, such as "Comics as History, Comics as Literature: Roles of the Comic Book in Scholarship, Society, and Entertainment."

Babic first became a member of UUP as a graduate student at Stony Brook University in 2003. Working as an adjunct can be lonely and isolating, Babic said. As a member, she met people outside of her department. Belonging to UUP gave her a sense of camaraderie. It's an attribute she uses to appeal to people who are considering membership.

Babic grew up moving from place to place and as an adult she frequently travels overseas. This summer she made a cross-country road trip by herself. She's proud of the time her father, then a member of the Ruritan Club in Virginia, asked her to enter a pig chase contest as a fundraiser for the organization. She won after catching the greased pig twice.



Lisa Marie Anselmi
Buffalo State

Lisa Marie Anselmi started teaching at Buffalo State University in 2004 and joined UUP the same year. She holds a doctorate degree in anthropology. She is an archaeologist with an interest in Indigenous studies. In addition to serving as chapter president, Anselmi is a statewide Executive Board member and co-chair of UUP's statewide Diversity, Equity and Inclusion committee.

Anselmi grew up in northeast Cleveland, where her father was a United Auto Workers member. The population was mostly white and Christian and the



education she received reflected the homogeneity. In college, she learned history she wasn't taught in high school and more about the historical figures who were included in the curriculum.

Jason Russell Empire State University

Russell has held a union card for his entire career. He joined what was then called the Energy and Chemical Workers Union in Canada when he was 18 years old and became a steward when he was 25. He has also been a member of the former Communication, Energy, and Paperworkers Union of Canada, the Canadian Union of Public Employees, and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

Russell's writings on labor include "Work and Labor in American Popular Culture: Representation in Film, Music and Television in the 1970s and 1980s," an overview of representations of work and labor in America during that period, as well as "Canada, A Working History," published in 2021. Russell is working on a book for University of Toronto Press that focuses on the social history of retirement in Canada. Russell said his years of study have left him amazed at how there are union members who consistently vote against their interests as workers.



Heather Sullivan-Catlin Potsdam

Sociology professor Heather Sullivan-Catlin is passionate about SUNY. A first-generation college graduate from at SUNY Oswego, she earned her doctorate in sociology at the University at Albany before starting her teaching career at SUNY Potsdam, where she's been for 25 years. Sullivan-Catlin is also a dedicated unionist whose organizing roots run back to her grandparents.

Before she was elected chapter president, Sullivan-Catlin served as the chapter's membership development officer and vice-president for academics. She became active because the chapter was stagnant—and in crisis mode. Potsdam has the smallest enrollment of the comprehensive schools and has lost roughly a third of its faculty and staff through retrenchment, attrition and firings.

"My scholarship is on co-housing and ecovillage movements," she continued. "Faculty and students stayed at an ecovillage in Ithaca and our next trip is to an ecovillage in Europe. Many students haven't traveled much before college and it's life-changing for them."



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2025 NYSUT REPRESENTATIVE ASSEMBLY ATTENDANCE

MEETING CODES:

GS= General Session

Com = Committees

Brk = Breakfast

Ele = Elections

ATTENDANCE CODES:

X = Present at Session

LA = Late Arrival

Name	Chapter	GS1	Com	Brk	GS2	GS2
Arnavut, Ziya	Fredonia		X	X	X	X
Ayo, Solomon	Farmingdale	X	X	X	X	X
Banks, David	Albany	X	X	X	X	X
Barneva, Reneta	Fredonia	X	X	X	X	X
Berger, Jacqualine	Empire State	X	X	X	X	X
Bowman, Emma	Empire State	X	X	X	X	X
Bryan, Rebecca	Cortland	X		X	X	X
Day, Doreen	Stony Brook HSC	X	X		X	X
Drescher, Nuala	Buffalo State	X	X	X	X	X
Flax, Henry	Downstate HSU	X	X	X	X	X
Galbraith, Jeanne	Stony Brook HSC	X		X	X	X
Gizzi, Carol	Stony Brook HSC	X	X	X	X	X
Gordon, Wendy	Plattsburgh	X	X	X	X	X
Green, Jack Michael	Polytechnic	X	X	X	X	X
Hartshorn, Walter	Plattsburgh	X	X	X	X	X
Hinkle, Stephen	Morrisville	X		X	X	X
Hoey, Thomas	Albany	X	X	X	X	
Huang, Lei	Fredonia	X	X	X	X	X
Kane, Nancy	Cortland	X	X	X	X	X
Kielar, Kathleen	Buffalo Center	X		X	X	X
Koridis, Nicholas	Stony Brook	X	X		X	X
Kowal, Frederick	Cobleskill	X	X	X	X	X
Licata, Domenic J	Buffalo Center	X	X	X	X	X
Lichtenthal, James	Buffalo HSC	X		X	X	X
Littman, Michael	Buffalo State	X	X	X	X	
Malone, Pamela	Empire State	X	X	X	X	X
Manning, Tina	Stony Brook HSC	X	X	X	X	X
Marquez, Samuel	Downstate HSU	X	X	X	X	X
Matthews, Thomas	Geneseo	X	X	X	X	
McAteer, Charles	Stony Brook	X	X		X	
McGovern, Brendan	Binghamton	X	X	X	X	X
Mefferd Kelty, Shawna	Plattsburgh	X	X	X	X	X
Melendy, Thomas	Buffalo HSC	X	X	X	X	X
Neretich, Justin	Cortland	X	X	X	X	X
Norton, David	Downstate HSU	X		X	X	X
O'Bryan-Losee, Jeri	Morrisville	X	X	X	X	X
Romain, Patrick	Albany	X	X	X	X	X
Russell, Eric	Downstate HSU	X	X	X	X	X
Schultze, William	Alfred	X			X	
Steen, Ivan	Albany	X	X	X	X	
Tang, Chi-Ming	Geneseo	X	X	X	X	X
Tang, Jasmine	Geneseo	X	X	X	X	X
Torres, Idalia	Fredonia	X	X	X	X	X
Veenstra, Richard	Upstate Medical University	X	X	X	X	X
Wesnofske, Edward	Oneonta	X	X	X	X	X

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