

THE VOICE



Summer 2026

contract ratified

4.5%

raise

Premium Contributions
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Joint Committee on Health Benefits

retention *bonuses*

AI protections

ARTICLE 44
44.1 The ultimate accountability for work complete
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rest with human beings.
44.2 Courses shall be offered under the direction a
sponsibility of the assigned human instructor of r
or other human instructional personnel, consistent
applicable law, accreditation



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.

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Photo: Gregory Kie



Photo: Patrick Dodson

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OUR NEW CONTRACT: THE POWER OF LABOR

Congratulations and thank you. Those are the two words that immediately come to mind when I think about the overwhelming ratification of our five-year contract with New York state, which is easily one of the best contracts we've ever negotiated.

When I say overwhelming, I mean it. Nearly 98% of eligible members who voted cast ballots to approve the contract. That's completely understandable, considering that this incredible agreement will benefit UUP members for generations.

To call this contract historic is not at all out of line.

From significant across-the-board salary increases in each year and increased retention awards, to increases in per-course minimum salaries for academic adjunct employees, and a new Higher Education Differential—which awards UUP bargaining unit members who have a Master's degree or higher with a \$600 lump-sum payment—we can all be proud of this pact.

By building on the success of past contracts, we were able to negotiate stronger due process and job security protections. We also got a new contract article that addresses the threat of artificial intelligence to our members and to the quality of a SUNY education.

UUP is one of the first bargaining units in the country to negotiate AI protections, which ensure that all courses will be under the “direction and responsibility” of humans, and that humans will have the “ultimate accountability” for work done by AI systems.

You'll find more details about what's in the contract in this issue of *The Voice*.

I am proud of this contract because it provides proper compensation and strong job protections for our members, who make SUNY a world-class university system.

I am prouder still of the hard work of our Negotiations Team—under the leadership of Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin—which hammered out this agreement. Bret and Team members then set out to explain it to members at each one of our campuses, either in-person

or virtually. A yeoman's task, to be sure.

That we achieved this agreement before our last contract expired was certainly impressive. We also wanted this contract in place before the chaos that's anticipated in the coming months, thanks to Donald Trump's reprehensible big ugly bill—which imposes massive cuts to Medicaid and other vital programs to fund tax cuts for billionaires.

So, yes, congratulations and thank-yous to those who saw fit to vote for this contract, which protects and provides so much for all UUP members.

Speaking of thank-yous, I'd like to thank Bret, NY-SUT Staff Director for UUP Jeremy Ginsburg—who played an integral role in the negotiations process—and our Negotiations Team for the amazing work they did to bring home this contract.

Our team members—Redetha Abrahams-Nichols,

“To call this contract historic is not at all out of line. This pact is one to be proud of.”

Solomon Oyo, Abigail Cooke, Jennifer Drake, Mike Green, Mindy Heath, Alissa Karl, Carolyn Kube, Aaron Major, Pamela Malone, Brendan McGovern, Stephanie Petkovsek, Jaclyn Pittsley and Bill Tusang—did an incredible job. Thank you as well to UUP staffers Mary Taber, Alex Hemmerstein and Shane Brownell, who ably assisted the Team.

Above all, this contract is proof of the power of UUP and the power of organized labor. Standing together, we collectively bargained a solid agreement that will provide our members with fair compensation, increased job protections and security for the future.

That is at the heart of what a union does.



Frederick E. Kowal
President, UUP

Federal employee union sues TSA over secret privatization

The American Federation of Government Employees has sued the federal Transportation Security Administration to release records about its new “Gold+” plan to privatize airport security, claiming that TSA has kept Congress and the public “in the dark” about the program.

In the suit, filed Aug. 5 in U.S. District Court, AFGE wants the records public because they will unveil TSA’s “secretive push” to privatize airport security screening. The union, which represents about 47,000 TSA employees nationwide, maintains privatizing screening at airports would jeopardize the jobs of “tens of thousands” of TSA workers and compromise the travelers’ safety.

“TSA has been keeping everyone in the dark about its privatization plans — TSA employees, members of Congress, airport authorities, and the flying public,” AFGE National President Everett Kelley said in an Aug. 10 press release. “And it’s little wonder why — this privatization expansion is a major departure from the aviation security system established by Congress in the wake of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks. Changes of this magnitude must not be made in the dark.”



According to Federal News Network.com, the TSA has been quietly pushing its Gold+ program to airports. Billing itself as “The Future of Aviation Security” on its website, the program would entrust luggage and passenger screening to private contractors. The contractors would oversee employees and manage scanning technology.

» Read more at
bit.ly/TSAsues
bit.ly/TSAGoldPlus



UUP member to direct new UB midwifery program



Buffalo Center Chapter member Jennifer Guay is one of the midwives who will lead the University at Buffalo’s new Midwifery Doctor of Nursing Practice program when it launches in the Spring 2027 semester.

The program will prepare registered nurses for advanced practice as certified nurse-midwives able to provide primary, reproductive and maternity care to patients. The program, approved by the Accreditation Commission for Midwifery Education, is one of five nurse-midwifery programs in the state and the only Upstate-based program.

Guay, shown at left, is a clinical associate professor at UB’s School of Nursing.

» Read more at
bit.ly/UBmidwiferyprogram





Loan forgiveness for members nearing \$17.5 million

UUP members who have attended union-sponsored loan forgiveness clinics have had nearly \$17.5 million in student debt canceled.

Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O'Bryan-Losee, who has been leading the sessions since 2017, keeps a running tally of student debt UUP members have had forgiven through Public Service Loan Forgiveness and other federal programs open to public service workers.

Recently, the total exceeded \$17.4 million when two members learned in rapid succession that they had achieved loan forgiveness that totaled several hundred thousand dollars for them both.

"We earned this," said O'Bryan-Losee. "You should never be ashamed of taking out loans to go to school. Shame keeps people from trying."

Loan forgiveness for public service employees was introduced under President George W. Bush in 2007. Despite efforts by the Trump administration to dismantle the program, it is still going and still working.

O'Bryan-Losee urges members to attend a clinic even if they're not sure they will qualify. She said people are often slow to talk about their debt. If the clinics have helped you, please let us know.

Visit UUP's calendar page to see when the next clinics are scheduled and to register:
<https://uupinfo.org/calendar/>



UB member to lead semiconductor center

Buffalo Center member Uttam Singiseti is now directing the Center for Advanced Semiconductor Technologies at UB.



Singiseti

Center researchers address increasing energy needs of modern computing, develop energy-efficient devices for AI computation and power semiconductors for electric vehicles and AI data centers, among other tasks. That work will continue under Singiseti's leadership.

"It's essential to emphasize how important this sector is to the regional economy and to national security not only from a research and innovation standpoint, but also in meeting an increasing demand for a trained manufacturing workforce proficient in emerging technologies," he said in a UB press release.

Read more at
bit.ly/UBsemiconductor



Oswego member speaks out on African students ban

A recent Wall Street Journal story about the U.S. ban on students from Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan draws on the expertise of Oswego Chapter member Joshua McKeown, director of SUNY Oswego's Office of International Education and Programs.

In the summer of 2025, McKeown was in a delegation from Oswego that visited Kenya, Rwanda and Nigeria to bolster SUNY's presence in Africa and build on relationships.

In March, the U.S. began banning students from several African countries, despite the fact that many of the students had acceptance letters and scholarship offers from American universities.

"The uncertainty of the visa process really hurt us, and also the general perception that the U.S. may be less welcoming," McKeown said in the story.

Read more at
bit.ly/AfricanStudentBan



UUP members speak up for higher ed at AFT convention

With the midterm elections less than three months away, the AFT national convention in Washington, D.C., July 16-19, projected a sense of urgency but also optimism in the face of the federal administration's attacks on education and working people.

The 47 UUP members at the convention joined nearly 3,000 delegates in reelecting the incumbent AFT officers: Randi Weingarten as president, Evelyn DeJesus as executive vice president and Fedrick Ingram as secretary-treasurer.

"The other side has enormous power," Weingarten told delegates in her state of the union address. "But this is what they don't have: the power of the people."

Also reelected to two-year terms as AFT vice presidents were: UUP President Fred Kowal; NYSUT President Melinda Person; NYSUT Secretary-Treasurer Philippe Abraham, a former statewide vice president for professionals at UUP; and James Davis, president of the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY.

Kowal speaks up about contract

Kowal also took the floor during the convention to describe UUP's impressive new contract with the state, which was in a ratification vote at the time of

the AFT convention and was overwhelmingly ratified by UUP members July 27.

Both Kowal and Bret Benjamin, UUP's chief negotiator, have said the five-year deal with the state sets a new standard for higher ed bargaining.

"This is a contract that can carry our union through good times and bad, and we hope it serves

UUP belongs to the Amherst Compact, a pact among more than 50 higher education unions in the Northeast.

as a model and an inspiration for what a higher ed union can achieve with a strong membership and the groundwork of a good relationship with state leadership," Kowal said.

UUP belongs to the Amherst Compact, a pact among more than 50 higher education unions in the Northeast. The compact aims to coordinate bargaining priorities that improve working conditions for employees in all higher ed job categories for participating unions.



UUP members at the AFT convention project an upbeat mood about the new contract that was in a ratification vote during the July 16-19 convention, and which members ratified July 27. UUP President Fred Kowal spoke from the convention floor about the contract as a model for higher ed bargaining. Left to right: Kowal; Morrisville Chapter President Stephen Hinkle, UUP Executive Board member Bekkie Bryan of Cortland, Delegate Stephanie Lawhorne of Morrisville; retired Upstate Chapter activist Rich Veenstra; and Fred Floss, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion officer for the Buffalo State Chapter.

STAY CONNECTED!

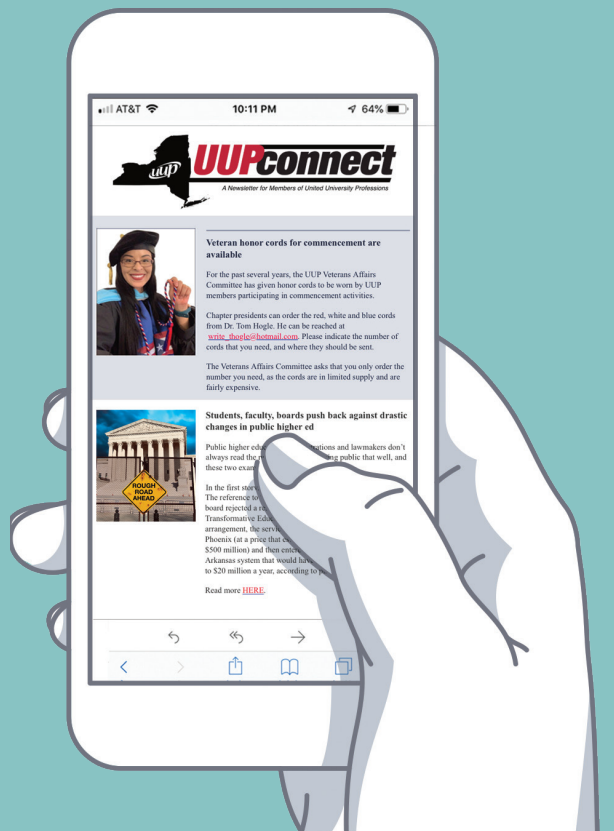
UUPConnect is the newsletter that collects union happenings, current events and issues that affect you, your field and your career each week.

From Supreme Court decisions to issues in education, from changes in the healthcare 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.



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**UUP members
overwhelmingly
ratify a contract
that locks in solid
benefits for the
next five years**

A contract with staying power

By Leigh Hornbeck and Darryl McGrath

The single most important accomplishment that a union can achieve for its members is the negotiation of a solid, strong contract that sets out the best possible terms and conditions of employment.

By that measure, UUP just knocked one out of the park.

Members agree, because they overwhelmingly ratified the new contract with the state on July 27. Nearly 98% of the members who voted on the contract approved it.

“This is a historic contract, one that will carry UUP members through good times and bad,” UUP President Fred Kowal said after the ratification vote. “This agreement addresses many of the priorities members shared with us throughout the negotiations process, and it reflects our union’s commitment to securing the strongest possible contract for our members.”

Kowal also thanked Gov. Kathy Hochul for working quickly and cooperatively with UUP toward the goal of a fair contract.



UUP Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin reviews highlights of the tentative agreement with members of the Binghamton Chapter on June 30.

The agreement sets a UUP record for how quickly it moved from the opening of negotiations on Feb. 4, 2026, to ratification. The start-to-finish speed with which this contract unfolded was surpassed only by the extensive benefits it will confer on the UUP bargaining unit.

The five-year agreement, which runs from July 2, 2026, to July 1, 2031, provides monetary gains for members that go well beyond across-the-board raises. There's more than \$3 billion in new money

“THE GOVERNOR’S OFFICE TOOK OUR PROPOSALS SERIOUSLY AND WE ENDED UP WITH A ROBUST AGREEMENT. WE THINK IT’S A BALANCED CONTRACT. WE THINK IT MEETS EVERYONE’S NEEDS.”

spread throughout the membership, with on-base money to all employees in all years. The new agreement follows the tone set in the 2022-2026 contract by making a specific effort to address the financial needs of UUP’s lowest-paid members.

The new agreement includes across-the-board increases from 2026 to 2030 of 4.5%, 4%, 3.5%, 3% and 3%. Existing retention awards have increased and a new award that recognizes 17 years of service has been created. Another new award recognizes employees with a Master’s degree or higher, and stipends for members who work in New York City, Long Island and the mid-Hudson region (including, for the first time, members at New Paltz) will increase. Minimum salaries for the lowest-paid professional and academic ranks will be increased by \$500 in

2026, and all minimum salaries will be increased by the across-the-board raises.

“We think that a five-year deal in this current economic and political climate gives us stability,” said Bret Benjamin, UUP’s chief negotiator. “We need to recognize that the governor’s office took our proposals seriously and we ended up with a robust agreement. We think it’s a balanced contract that we believe meets everyone’s needs.”

Benjamin, Labor Relations Staff Director Jeremy Ginsburg and UUP Negotiations Team members held 18 virtual sessions and five in-person meetings to present the tentative agreement. More than 3,000 members attended the virtual meetings, and hundreds more attended the presentations Benjamin gave in person at Binghamton, Albany, Stony Brook HSC, Upstate Medical University and the System Administration Chapter in Albany.

Benjamin fielded questions concerning prescription costs, out-of-network health-care, Tier 6, student evaluations and how the new contract will affect labor-management negotiations at various campuses.

The Binghamton Chapter followed the presentation with a trip to Mirabito Stadium to see the Binghamton Rumble Ponies, the Double-A affiliate of the New York Mets, play. It was organized labor night and several unions were represented. Benjamin threw out a ceremonial first pitch — over the plate and directly into the catcher’s mitt. About a dozen UUP members and their family members settled in for a few innings of minor league baseball before a rain delay.

» To read the new contract, go to the UUP Members Only page on the UUP website under the Negotiations section at bit.ly/UUPcontract26



COMPENSATION

Across-the-Board Increases:

- July 2, 2026 – 4.5%
- July 1, 2027 – 4%
- July 1, 2028 – 3.5%
- July 1, 2029 – 3%
- July 1, 2030 – 3%

Retention Awards

The new contract establishes a 17-year Retention Award and substantially increases the existing awards at seven and 12 years.

- July 1, 2027
\$250 is added to the seven-year retention award, increasing it to \$1,250
\$350 is added to the 12-year retention award, increasing it to \$1,150
- July 1, 2028
\$250 is added to the seven-year retention award, increasing it to \$1,500
\$350 is added to the 12-year retention award, increasing it to \$1,500
- July 1, 2029
\$250 is added to the seven-year retention award, increasing it to \$1,750. The seven-year retention award shall not be considered in lieu of increases associated with a promotion in academic rank. A new 17-year retention award of \$750 will be established. Time spent on Paid Family Leave now counts toward retention award service time.

Part-time retention awards

New annual lump-sum retention award for part-time employees who have worked for seven and 12 years will be established; replaces existing service award of \$500 every eight years.

- April 1, 2027: An annual \$500 lump sum service award will be established for part-time employees who have worked for 12 years.
- April 1, 2028: An annual \$500 lump sum service award will be established for part-timer employees who have worked for seven years.

Cost-of-Living Differential:

Effective July 1, 2030, all full-time bargaining unit members will receive \$500 added to their base salary, and all part-time bargaining unit members will receive a \$250 lump sum bonus.

Part-time academic course minimum rates:

Increases by \$250 per 3-credit course for 2027, 2028, 2029, 2030, escalating to \$7,000 at University Centers and HSCs, and \$6,500 at Comprehensives and Technical Colleges in 2030. Adjunct faculty will receive either the ATB increase or the new minimum, whichever is greater.

Living-wage increases for lowest-paid members:

All minimum salaries will increase by across-the-board raises with an additional \$500 in the first year of the agreement for professionals in salary levels 1, 2 and 3; and for academics with ranks of Assistant Professor, Lecturer, Senior Assistant Librarian, Instructor and Assistant Librarian.

Higher education differential

Effective July 1, 2027, all full-time UUP bargaining unit members with a Master's degree or higher level of achievement will be eligible for a \$600 annual lump sum payment. Eligible part-time bargaining unit members with at least a 0.5 FTE appointment will receive an annual \$300 lump sum payment.

Discretionary Salary Increase

- 2026 – 0.5% (negotiated as part of the 2022-26 Agreement)
- 2027 – base salary adjustment of \$450 for F-T, \$225 lump sum for P-T
- 2028 – 0.5%
- 2029 – 0.5%
- 2030 – 0.5%
- 2031 – 0.5%

Extra Service Teaching Cap: Employees will be able to teach at least two courses per year as extra service, suspending the 20% extra service cap for this purpose.

On-Call rates will increase as follows:

- July 1, 2028 - \$9 Upstate/\$11 Downstate
- July 1, 2029 - \$10 Upstate/\$12 Downstate
- July 1, 2030 - \$11 Upstate/\$13 Downstate

Inconvenience Pay increases from \$575 to \$825 July 1, 2026.

Location Pay: Increases to Downstate & Mid-Hudson adjustments; include Ulster County (SUNY New Paltz) in Mid-Hudson eligibility

2026 Downstate: \$4,150, Mid-Hudson: \$2,150

2027 Downstate: \$5,150, Mid-Hudson: \$2,400

2028 Downstate: \$6,150, Mid-Hudson: \$2,650

2029 Downstate: \$6,400, Mid-Hudson: \$2,800

2030 Downstate: \$6,650, Mid-Hudson: \$2,950

PGY (Medical Residents) Salary Schedule (A-19): Full PGY schedule increases by across-the-board wage increases while adding to living stipends (\$2,000 increase for Downstate and Stony Brook and \$1,600 increase for Upstate) and Head Resident Stipends (\$1,000 increase for Downstate & Stony Brook and \$500 increase for Upstate).

Joint Labor-Management Committee (Article 21): JLMC funds increase by \$40,000, and then advance each year by the across-the-board raises. This means more money for Individual Development Awards, CLEFR, CLRP-R, Drescher Awards, etc.

Work-Life Services (Article 46): Increase Work-Life Service funds by across-the-board raises. Enshrines current DCAA rates, debit card usage, and rollover fund access in contract language.

UUP Benefit Trust Fund (Article 40): Increase funds to Benefit Trust Fund (BTF) by \$5 per participant per quarter in each year to continue funding benefits including dental, vision and the dependent scholarship program.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

ARTICLE 44 Artificial Intelligence

44.1 The ultimate accountability for work completed and actions made by, or in conjunction with, AI systems must rest with human beings.

44.2 Courses shall be offered under the direction and responsibility of the assigned human instructor of record or other human instructional personnel, consistent with applicable law, accreditation requirements, academic policy, and this Agreement.

The most contentious aspect of negotiations was over language to protect UUP's members from artificial intelligence.

At presentations about the contract, UUP President Fred Kowal said AI was a top priority for UUP coming into talks. It was also a sticking point for the state negotiators. They held out to the end before agreeing to it, he said.

The section is brief: Article 44.1 reads, "The ultimate accountability for work completed and actions made by, or in conjunction with, AI systems must rest with human beings."

And Article 44.2 reads, "Courses shall be offered under the direction and responsibility of the assigned human instructor of record or other human instructional personnel, consistent with applicable law, accreditation requirements, academic policy, and this Agreement."

Members prioritize AI protections

With this language in its new contract, UUP becomes one of the first unions to negotiate AI protections into a collective bargaining agreement. It also speaks to an urgent conversation within higher education about AI's place and how it should be used. It was reflected, Benjamin said, in the amount of concern members showed as UUP's Negotiations Team prepared for contract talks. Unionists worry that the use of AI is getting ahead of labor protections and managers are buying into AI tools without fully understanding whether they are appropriate.

Benjamin said state negotiators resisted adding AI guardrails because they didn't want the state to cede unilateral authority when it comes to the technology. But UUP was ready to take a stand; protecting workers from being displaced by automation is central to any union.

"Now UUP has a place at the table for all iterations of roll outs of AI systems," Benjamin said.

It didn't hurt that the UUP team entered negotiations with an AI win. In February, Gov. Kathy Hochul signed an updated version of the Legislative Oversight of Automated Decision-making in Government (LOADinG) Act, which prohibits SUNY from replacing people with AI, transferring duties to AI or reducing employees' non-overtime hours, wages or benefits in favor of an AI agent or platform.

Contract language key for future bargaining

The next step was to negotiate language addressing AI in the contract, which makes it a mandatory subject of negotiations in future bargaining sessions.

It also makes AI a grievable issue. Members who believe that management has used or is using AI to usurp their work can file a formal complaint to protect their jobs. The new language adds a layer to the statutory protections in the LOADinG Act and builds on other aspects of the contract.

"We have strong academic freedom language (in Article 9) and intellectual property protections that are part of SUNY policies. Now, for the first time, the contract speaks to the intrusion artificial intelligence can bring," Benjamin said.

HEALTH INSURANCE

ARTICLE 39 Health Insurance

§ 39.1 Premium Contributions

(a) The State shall continue to provide all the forms and extent of coverage as defined by the contracts in force on July 1, 2026 with the State's health insurance carriers unless specifically modified by this Agreement.

(b) Enrollees may change their health insurance option each year throughout the month of November, unless another period is mutually agreed upon by the State.

Protect the affordability of Empire Plan's exceptional health benefits with no increases in the following:

- Employee share of health benefits premiums
- Co-payments
- Prescription Drug co-payments
- Annual deductibles
- Co-insurance maximums

Lower premium share tier for Grade 13 job rate equivalent: Effective Jan. 1, 2027, employees earning less than \$67,990 (up from \$54,772) will pay an employee share of 12% (individual plan) or 27% (family plan). Employees earning \$67,990 or more will pay 16% (individual) and 31% (family). This salary threshold will advance by the ATBs in each year of the agreement.

Elimination of stacked co-pays

- Elimination of \$25 laboratory co-pay for diagnostic/laboratory services performed at network national laboratory; there are approximately 25 national network laboratories, including Quest Diagnostics and Labcorp.
- Elimination of \$50 hospital extension clinic co-pay if network physician bills the office visit and any additional services performed (laboratory or radiology) as a hospital-owned facility. Effective 1/1/2027, there will be a single \$25 co-pay.
- Elimination of co-pay stacking for urgent care centers participating with the medical carrier. Effective Jan. 1, 2027, there will be a single \$30 co-pay per visit for all covered medical services provided during the visit.

Vaccines: Vaccine eligibility criteria expanded beyond CDC to consider other state and federal guidance.

Part-time HI Premium spread across semester pay periods: Effective spring 2027 semester, part-time employees will have their health insurance premium spread so that they do not end up with a large deduction in their last paycheck to cover the summer months when not on payroll.

Calculation of sick leave credit: For employees retiring on or after January 1, 2027, the calcu-

lation of sick leave shall be based on the 2015 life expectancy table (updated from the 1999 table).

Out-of-network providers: Effective January 1, 2027, non-participating providers shall be reimbursed at the rate of 150% (reduced from 275%) of the Medicare physician fee.

Out-of-network facilities reimbursements: Out-of-network in-patient care reimbursements move from "billed charges" to a percentage of New York County in-network rates. This applies to both hospital and mental health/substance use facilities.

Out-of-network hospital rates (Percentage of in-network statewide rates of New York County, whichever is higher)

- 2027 – 135%
- 2028 – 130%
- 2029 – 125%

Out-of-network mental health and substance use rates (percentage of in-network statewide rates of New York County, whichever is higher):

- 2027 – 600%
- 2028 – 500%
- 2029 – 400%

Out-of-network acupuncture and massage:

Effective January 1, 2027, coverage for out-of-network acupuncture and massage services will each be limited to 15 visits per calendar year with a maximum reimbursement to the provider of \$125 per visit. In-network acupuncture remains as is.

Hyperinflated Drug Exclusion: Effective January 1, 2027, certain hyperinflated drugs will be ineligible for medical exemption appeals.

Joint Committee on Health Benefits (Article 41): UUP and the state have agreed to explore: establishing a virtual Mental Health Center of Excellence; improving access to IVF/embryo preservation and reduction and/or elimination of the enrollment waiting period; a weight-management support program; a virtual physical therapy program; and additional programming to support employee well-being.

ARTICLE 33

Job Security Review Procedures

33.1 Definitions

a. "Professional staff" shall mean all persons occupying positions designated by the Chancellor as being in the unclassified service.

b. "Initial academic review" shall mean a review and recommendation by a committee of academic employees at the departmental level.

JOB SECURITY

Full-time contingent academic faculty job security: Following a three-year term appointment after seven years of consecutive service, eligible employees will now receive a four-year term appointment after 10 years of consecutive service.

Student evaluations of teaching: UUP and the state have achieved an agreement to amend the SUNY Policies of the Board of Trustees to include the following statement: "Student reaction as determined by surveys shall not be the sole or primary method of evaluation."

DUE PROCESS

Expedited Review of Disciplinary Cases (Article 19 and New Appendix): Establishes an expedited arbitrator review pilot program for disciplinary cases with priority given to grievances challenging a suspension without pay. Additionally, the pilot will establish an expedited arbitration hearing process.

PERB Arbitration Panel Administration (Article 19): The NYS Public Employment Relations Board will administer UUP's disciplinary arbitration panel rather than the state Office of Employee Relations, subject to PERB approval.

Digital Signatures (Articles 7 and 19): Expressly allows for digital signatures to ensure broader accessibility of grievance filings.

Improved A-28 Unsatisfactory Review Procedure: Campus presidents will no longer be able to issue notices of nonrenewal while a review of an unsatisfactory evaluation is pending.

Clarified Special Consideration Rights (Articles 35 and 23): Employees who have been retrenched or removed as a result of their unfitness for duty shall have access to expanded special consideration rights when applying to SUNY job postings for which they meet the job requirements. Retrenched employees, and those whose condition has improved so that they are fit for duty, will receive an immediate interview

TELECOMMUTING

Telecommuting and Remote Work (A-31)

Incorporate the telecommuting agreement into the appendix: The telecommuting policy will be added to the appendix and remain in effect for the life of the agreement.

Establish a pilot program that will allow some workers in IT departments to work 100% remotely.

ARTICLE 42

Professional Development Committee

§42.1 For the term of this Agreement, there shall be a Statewide Professional Development Committee consisting of three (3) representatives appointed by the State and three (3) representatives appointed by UUP.

§42.2 The Committee shall:

a. Review, make recommendations and implement programs for professional development.

PROFESSIONAL ADVANCEMENT

Expanded A-28 Eligibility for Salary and Promotion Review:

Members who unsuccessfully appeal a promotion denial shall be eligible for another review after 12 months, rather than the current 18 months, if they can demonstrate a substantive change in their work.

Improved UUP Participation and Transparency in A-28 Processes:

Notification shall be provided to the UUP Chapter president when an A-28 appeal is submitted and the contact information for committees and the University Review Board shall be published on each campus human resources website to facilitate the appeal process.

Expansion of A-32 Salary Level Review:

UUP achieved a commitment from SUNY to expand title trees beyond current six SL levels and to more fully incorporate UUP's input in the development of new salary bands. We hope that this will allow for more career ladders for professional advancement.

Establish Statewide Lecturer Rank Sequence (A-7): Full-time Lecturers at all campuses will be able to apply for promotion to Senior Lecturer after six years of consecutive service and Advanced Senior Lecturer after nine years of consecutive service.

LEAVES

Prenatal leave: Allows for up to 20 hours of leave (prorated for part-time employees) for prenatal care in excess of existing accruals.

New Fitness for Duty Hearing process: Establishes a new hearing process for employees seeking to challenge a campus president's determination that an employee is not fit for duty. Changes the current five-year hold on a position during a period of disability to a three-year hold with two years of special consideration for similar positions on the same campus.

Increase to the sick day cap: Increases the sick day cap from 225 days to 250 days. No change to the current 200 day maximum toward retirement.

OTHER IMPORTANT GAINS

Improved SUNY Guidance on the Appointment of Librarians (A-48): SUNY will issue improved guidance to campuses informing them of their ability to appoint librarians on either 10- or 12-month appointments and in either Librarian or Professorial titles.

Improved Data on Part-Time Academic Course loads (Article 16): Achieved agreement to require SUNY to improve its reporting requirements to ensure UUP has better information to analyze part-time academic course loads.

FIFTY-FIVE YEARS OF CONTRACT PROGRESS

UUP's contracts kept upgrading equity, work-life balance, even as raises fluctuated

UP's contract history is one of changing attitudes about work-life balance and equality.

Those changes are best illustrated by the fact that women in the bargaining unit in 1971—the year of the first state contract for the union that soon would be known as UUP—were required to report a pregnancy by their fourth month to the campus president.

And no, they didn't get paid maternity leave.

Even so, that first contract between the Senate Professional Association, or SPA—which changed its name to United University Professions in 1973—reads like a template for the subsequent 17 contracts. Current members would recognize many provisions from 1971: academic freedom; grievances; release time; health insurance; and policies addressing discrimination and equal employment.

But contemporary contracts contain provisions that were unimaginable decades ago: paid family leave; per-course minimums for adjunct faculty that have steadily risen, major gains in healthcare and

permanency for non-tenured faculty, retention bonuses and more equitable disciplinary policies.

This is why the new contract and its predecessor can't be viewed in terms of raises alone, says UUP Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin.

A huge and diverse membership

Another major change in just the last four years is UUP's effort to address one of SUNY's longstanding

**THERE ARE PROVISIONS THAT WERE
UNIMAGINABLE 30, 40, 50 YEARS AGO.
THIS IS WHY THE NEW CONTRACT CAN'T
BE VIEWED IN TERMS OF RAISES ALONE.**

but unavoidable inequities. In a system the size of SUNY, there are UUP members who do internationally recognized scientific research; and there are



Members of UUP's Negotiations Team and state negotiators at the signing of UUP's newly ratified contract on July 29, 2026. UUP President Fred Kowal is center, left. Statewide Vice President for Academics Alissa Karl, left, and Vice President for Professionals Carolyn Kube, are standing behind Kowal.



June 1988. On the right, from back to front: UUP negotiators Nancy Auster, Canton; Edward Alfonsin, Potsdam; Chief Negotiator William Scheuerman; UUP President John Reilly; Wilbert Corprew, Binghamton and Paul Martin, Buffalo State, shake on a three-year tentative contract deal.

members who feed livestock and perform the most basic tasks of patient care. One union, hundreds of job titles.

With the 2022-2026 contract, UUP sought to improve the financial and working conditions of its lowest-paid members. That effort continues in the current contract, with new bonuses aimed specifically at those lowest-paid full-time members, and new retention awards for part-time members.

Reaching beyond raises

The current contract reflects the diverse economic needs of the bargaining unit. In addition to the high-

est across-the-board percentage raise increases in 30 years, this contract includes retention awards recognizing longevity, hospital-specific compensation—including gains for Residents/Fellows and increases to on-call/recall rates; raises for adjunct and contingent faculty; bonuses that recognize the educational achievements of UUP's membership and much more.

Raises for nearly the past 20 years have ranged from 2% to 3%. Under the newly ratified contract, members will see raises of 4.5%, 4% and 3.5% and then back-to-back 3% increases.

It's a whole new way of thinking about what a contract can do for its bargaining unit.



2003. Left to right: UUP Chief Negotiator Phil Smith; Tina Kaplan, director, UUP/NYSUT Field Staff; and UUP President William Scheuerman exchange proposals with state negotiators as negotiations began for the union's 2003-2007 contract.

Giving back to Brockport

Three Brockport Chapter members serve on one nonprofit board

With a population of not quite 8,000 residents but a 16% poverty rate, you don't need to look hard to realize that many people in the Village of Brockport are struggling. Even so, Brittany Profit-Rheinwald was surprised by the findings of doctoral research she did a few years ago on housing and food insecurities among students. Her interview subjects described choosing between whether to study and attend class or look for food.

Profit-Rheinwald earned her Ed.D. at Baylor University, but she chose to build her career in Brockport. She chairs the SUNY Brockport Department of Higher Education and Educational Leadership and she's also the membership development officer for the Brockport UUP Chapter.

Given her sense of mission, it's not surprising that Profit-Rheinwald is also board president of a local social services agency she helped found three years ago: Brockport Community Connection.

"We're a grassroots organization that started with a group of women," she explained. "We recognized there was a need in our community around a big disconnect with people getting services in the community."

Two other Brockport Chapter members whose campus work also aligns with a desire to help others have joined Profit-Rheinwald on the eight-person board: Kari Pardun, coordinator of the college's transfer and veterans' programs;

and Rachel Robison, the academic success coordinator. Brockport Chapter member Melissa Szurgyi is a BCC volunteer.

One village, many needs

Brockport Community Connection started in early 2023 out of discussions among a group of local and like-minded women, many of whom knew each other, worked in helping professions and understood that their home village had high needs. The state's average poverty rate is 14%, compared to 16% in Brockport, and fewer than half of the village's residents own and live in their own home. Per-capita income is just under \$30,000 a year.

BCC, as the organization is abbreviated, attained nonprofit status in the summer of 2023 and is seeking a permanent home in Brockport. The organization does not directly run services and programs. Instead, it connects people with the services they need.

Reaching out for help can be daunting and humiliating, Profit-Rheinwald noted.

UUP Brockport Chapter members (and Brockport Community Connection board members) Kari Pardun, left, and Brittany Profit-Rheinwald, at a community health fair hosted by the Oak Orchard Health Center in May 2025. Oak Orchard provides health services in Brockport and surrounding communities.

Photo courtesy Brockport Community Connection



“It’s really distressing to have to explain your needs to 10 people,” she said, describing a situation common to someone who has just lost their job, just lost their housing because of the lost job and now also needs to find food assistance. “We’ve done all the homework so they can connect to the services.”

Brockport is fortunate to have many grassroots services, Pardun said, but most of them are located in spaces that can be physically difficult to reach—at the bottom of an interior staircase, for example—or with limited hours of operation.

“BCC’s long-term goal is to move into a space where these services can be physically accessed by all,” Pardun said. “In the meantime, BCC strives to connect these preexisting services with residents in need.”

A shared effort

Even without a permanent home (the board is working on raising funds for space to use as a base), BCC has been out and about in the village. Open the BCC webpage (see link on this page) and you’ll see a list of events stretching to the end of the year, with board members participating in community events, working to raise awareness of need and getting out the word that BCC can help people find help.

Susan Orr, president of the Brockport UUP Chapter, said in a written response that it should be no

surprise to anyone who knows Profit-Rheinwald’s work with the union to learn that she is a pivotal player in an organization dedicated to the community.

“Brittany is a magnet for positive energy, has a mountain of information and a knack for bringing people together and getting things done,” Orr wrote. “Brockport UUP is truly proud of Brittany and all her accomplishments.”

Profit-Rheinwald said she dreams of the day when BCC’s future home can house several existing services and programs under one roof. The organization has garnered local attention: Profit-Rheinwald has been interviewed on local radio and she’s becoming known as the face of BCC. She is quick to point out that this has been a shared effort that is succeeding only because it’s been so cooperative.

“It is a lot, because we all work,” she said. “But if we’re not doing it, we know people are not getting help. We are doers, and we just recognize our struggles are so insignificant, so we get it done.”

**We recognized there
was a need in our
community around a
big disconnect with
people getting services
in the community.**

Brittany Profit-Rheinwald

» Visit the Brockport Community Connection website at brockportcommunityconnection.org



» Read about Profit-Rheinwald’s doctoral research at bit.ly/FoodHousingInsecurities



Brockport Community Connection volunteers, left to right: Melissa Szurgyi, UUP member; Eliecia Young, BCC vice-president; Kari Pardun, BCC board member and UUP member; Staci Vergin, volunteer; Brittany Profit-Rheinwald, BCC president and Brockport Chapter membership development officer; and Joani Martin, BCC secretary. Photo: Brockport Community Connection

Defending the right to read

As culture wars hit libraries, UAlbany librarian Amanda Lowe speaks out on why libraries must be above politics with books, programming



Librarians enter their profession because they see it as a calling; they love books and they want to share their passion for learning.

That began to change for many librarians around the country a decade ago, as their once-peaceful workplaces became loud and confrontational. The culture wars had landed in the card catalogues of public and school libraries.

Book-banning is nothing new in this country; A 1637 book critical of the Massachusetts Puritans is believed to have been the first banned book in the future United States. Contemporary criticism of books in public libraries—the targets are often but not exclusively books on LGBTQ+ topics—is now extreme enough to make librarians ask: How did we get here? How do we get back to where we were?

At the University at Albany, Amanda Lowe has responded to those questions by speaking out about the challenges her profession faces. She is certainly not the only librarian in the SUNY system to do so, but she has gained attention in the Capital Region for her defense of the freedom to read and her commitment to keeping the UAlbany libraries refuges for all readers and learners.

Lowe, an Albany Chapter member, is an associate librarian who oversees marketing and out-

» **Amanda Lowe**
Albany

Photo: Patrick Dodson

reach for the three UAlbany libraries. She works in a supportive atmosphere that's been largely free of the debates about what books libraries should carry. That freedom, in turn, compels her to advocate for libraries as repositories of even divisive ideas.

"Isn't it sad that we're still talking about this?" Lowe asked as she sat in the main UAlbany library on a spring afternoon. "I long for the day I don't have to talk about this anymore."

"To the extent of what I've heard from colleagues around the country, I never would have thought that things would be this bad."

A decade of bitter backlash

The backlash about library books is now so pronounced that the American Library Association devotes part of its website to guidance for besieged librarians, following a spike in hate crimes at libraries after the 2016 presidential election.

Film director Kim Snyder dug into this with her 2025 movie, *The Librarians*. The documentary was

"To the extent of what I've heard from colleagues around the country, I never would have thought that things would be this bad."

the backdrop for a forum hosted earlier this year by the New York State Writers Institute, moderated by Writers Institute Assistant Director Mark Koplik. Lowe and Capital Region librarians Alicia Abdul and Roger Green were panelists.

The Writers Institute was a natural choice to host this discussion, said Koplik, an Albany Chapter member, because of the institute's mission to explore a range of books, writers and ideas.

"Librarians are trained, but they didn't ask for these kinds of attacks," Koplik said.

Lowe was optimistic when Koplik asked the panelists if they thought that attacks on libraries would ever lessen.

"I get to go into a lot of writing and critical inquiry classes and talk about banned books to students at the college level," Lowe said. "They come up with these really thoughtful questions that they ask, and they listen to each other, and that is what gives me hope going forward, because these are the people who will be going out leading change in their communities."

Keeping libraries open to all

The New York Library Association presented Lowe

with its Intellectual Freedom Award last year. Lowe, who identifies as bisexual, runs the Queer Book Club on campus, where students read and discuss books on LGBTQ+ topics. She has helped organize a read-out of banned books, both in-person and virtual, at the UAlbany libraries as part of a larger event on free speech. In 2024, she was honored as an Unsung Hero at the UAlbany Lavender Graduation, which acknowledges LGBTQ+ students.

"I make sure our popular collection is representative of all students," Lowe said.

Showcasing that collection did finally lead to an incident at the main UAlbany library during Nation-



al Library Week in April 2025. The library marked the week with a display of books from its collection, including books on Queer topics. Someone vandalized the display one quiet night near closing time by removing the signs and books. Staff later found the books hidden in upper stacks. The vandal was never identified.

"It was hard for me," said Lowe, who calls the vandalism censorship. "I had some faculty and students reach out to me afterward—they were very upset."

That incident stayed with Lowe, but she will never stop advocating for the unencumbered freedom to read and conduct research in a public library.

"You have to continue to educate but know that you're not going to always change people's minds," she said. "It's too important not to say anything."



Hello
my name is
TSAWENTONNIH

Spoken with respect

**Canton sociology
professor collaborates
on pronunciation guide
for Mohawk names**

By Leigh Hornbeck

By the time Tsiawentonnih George arrived in Daniel McLane's classroom at SUNY Canton, she was long accustomed to hearing English speakers struggle with her name. She was ready with a phonetic guide for people who wanted to pronounce her name correctly: Jaw-one-due-nee; and an English middle name for people who couldn't: Elizabeth.

But McLane, a Canton Chapter member who teaches sociology, wasn't content with either a cheat sheet or a middle name. He wanted to know more about how Mohawk (Kanien'kéha) names are pronounced in English and he said the burden shouldn't be on George and the other Mohawk students at Canton to familiarize teachers with their language.

Indigenous students make up about 2% of the student population at Canton, in part because of its proximity to the Mohawk Nation at Akwesasne. The sovereign nation is about 33 square miles. It straddles the U.S.-Canadian border and a portion of the St. Lawrence River. It is home to about 12,000

“My name is more than a label, it’s part of my identity. In our culture, a name can only belong to one person in the world at a time.”

residents. The Mohawks are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, also known as the Iroquois Confederacy.

When George and McLane met in 2023, she suggested he call her “Liz.”

“I said, ‘But that’s not your name, right?’” McLane said.

The exchange led to deeper conversations about how to teach both white and Indigenous people at Canton more about the Mohawk language and culture, particularly because the campus is close—roughly 40 miles north-east—to Akwesasne and on Haudenosaunee land.

“I had never experienced a teacher validate an injustice and personally go above and beyond to ensure it is

corrected until I met Dr. McLane,” George said. “It made me feel seen.”

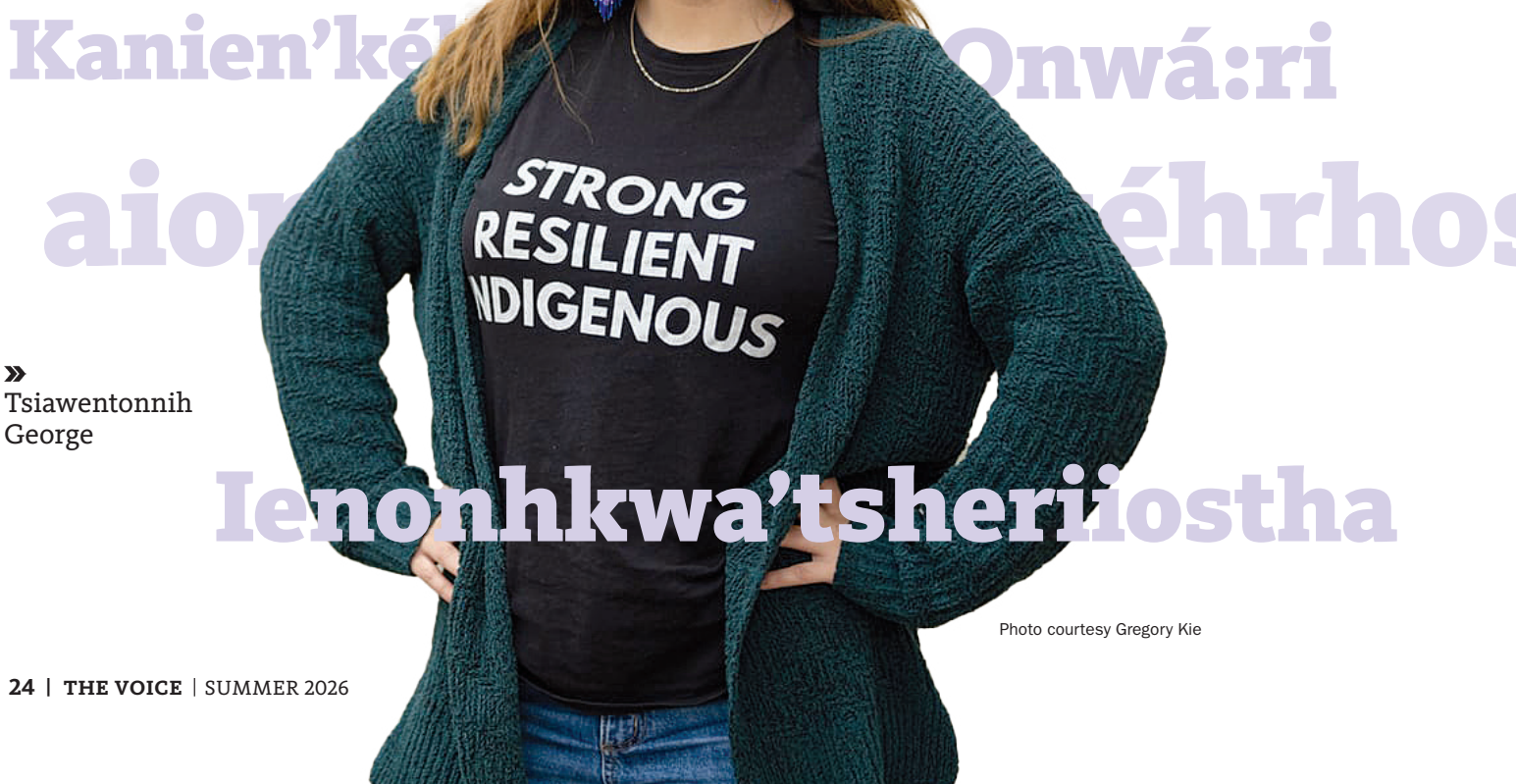
Together, McLane and George created the Mohawk Names Initiative, a series of videos on the Mohawk language. One is about the alphabet, which includes just 12 letters from English. In another, a Mohawk elder explains how Mohawk people receive their names – not from their parents, but a clan mother guided by the spiritual energy they feel from the unborn baby.

Tsiawentonnih means “she brings a new day.” Unlike Elizabeth, there is no short version, because shortening it would change the meaning.

“My name is more than a label, it’s part of my identity,” George said. “In our culture, a name can only belong to one person in the world at a time. One of the reasons for this is so when we pick medicines and pray for a specific individual, the medicine and the creator understand our intentions. It’s also to identify what clan you come from and what family you come from since some names are passed down and what time of year you were born.”

Word of the Mohawk Names Initiative spread through news stories in local media. People reached out to George to offer help and to wish her luck. People from outside the campus, including lawyers from the public defender’s office, called to say it helped them humanize their clients.

The Mohawk Names Initiative inspired more Native students to apply to Canton and two of them worked



»
Tsiawentonnih
George

Photo courtesy Gregory Kie



with George to relaunch an Indigenous student organization, the Native American Student Alliance. George also helped develop Canton's first Land Acknowledgement. Last year for the first time, a Mohawk artist was invited to show his work on campus.

McLane prefers to melt into the background of the Initiative's success. When he reflects on the first time he met George and what seemed like his spontaneous reaction to inequity, he sees a deeper connection to his own life story. McLane's undergraduate degree is in Africana Studies from Binghamton University. He studied field ecology in Botswana. He holds two Masters' degrees, one in natural resource management, which took him to Central America, and the other in international affairs. Dissimilar on the surface, the fields of study were a search for answers, a path that led him to sociology.

"Sociology helped me answer the questions. Articulating the questions lay in sociology," McLane said.

His doctorate also gave him leverage to help others. He likes to be the teacher who demystifies academia for students and helps them open doors for themselves.

"If I'm going to walk around male, white and I happen to be married to a woman, why have this capital



Daniel McLane

if I'm not going to use it? There are many things I don't deal with because I have no visible minority status."

George sees pros and cons to having a white man as the co-director of the Mohawk Names Initiative. When Akwesasne residents learned about it, some questioned McLane's intentions and those questions prompted people to take a harder look at George. It's not uncommon for Indigenous people to ask the ques-

tion, "Who is your family?" to verify ties, she said.

"Native Americans want their stories told, but they are protective of our people, culture and traditions," she said.

"It's beneficial to have a white ally of Indigenous people's rights because when it comes to fighting systemic injustice, there are white people who will only listen to other white people," George said.

McLane is grateful for the opportunity to help. George, who graduated from Canton this year, introduced him to her parents, both teachers who have long worked with Mohawk children at Akwesasne.

To be invited in, McLane said, has taught him more about Mohawk culture and the beauty, wisdom and pain that are part of it.

"Interaction with the Native community has made my life rich," he said.

HEAR THE VOICE

THE OFFICIAL PODCAST OF UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

Hosted by UUP President Fred Kowal, *The Voice Podcast* features interviews with state and national newsmakers on a wide range of in-the-news topics, like reproductive rights, gun violence and gun safety, the climate crisis and student debt.

The Voice Podcast is available on all major podcasting platforms, including Apple Podcasts and iTunes, Spotify.com and Audible.com.

You can also listen to *The Voice podcast* on UUP's podcast hosting website at: thevoiceuup.buzzsprout.com/

A CONVERSATION WITH NEW YORK STATE AFL-CIO PRESIDENT MARIO CILENTO

Kowal talks with New York State AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento about leading one of the most powerful state federations in the country.

Cilento has helped make the state AFL-CIO into a year-round legislative action network that has only grown stronger since he became president in 2011. The NYS AFL-CIO represents more than 2.2 million members across the state in both public and private sectors.

Labor Lookback highlights songwriter and political activist Joe Hill, the House Un-American Activities Committee's 1947 hearings on alleged Communist influence in Hollywood's film industry and singer/songwriter Merle Travis, who wrote the smash working man's hit "Sixteen Tons."

A CONVERSATION WITH CONGRESSMEMBER PAUL TONKO

A longtime state Assembly member who was elected to Congress in 2008, Tonko has been a fighter for his constituents, for higher education and for organized labor.

He's come out against the war in Iran, calling it reckless and unjustified. He's also called for the abolition of U.S. Immigrations and Customs Enforcement, citing the death and destruction the agency has caused under President Trump's cruel immigration crackdown.

He stood with United University Professions in our fight against the Trump administration's drastic 2025 cuts to federal research funding. Tonko also joined with three other New York House Democrats to criticize the National Institutes of Health for drastically reducing grant funding.

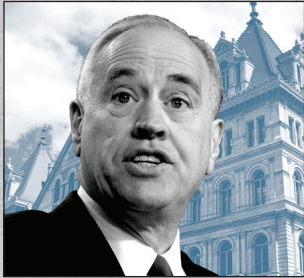


NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION PRESIDENT AND CEO COLLIN O'MARA

Kowal, chair of the National Wildlife Federation's Board of Directors, talks with the organization's president and CEO Collin O'Mara.

O'Mara explains how he became the NWF's president and CEO and what led him to the post. He and Kowal discuss organized labor's role in conservation and environmental efforts, and the NWF's collaboration with unions and union organizations.

O'Mara also strongly supports UUP's fight against proposed SUNY cuts to faculty and staff and important environmental, conservation and forestry programs and facilities at SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry.



A CONVERSATION WITH NEW YORK STATE COMPTROLLER TOM DINAPOLI

Kowal sits down with New York State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli for an in-studio interview that covers DiNapoli's longtime role as a trusted friend of UUP and organized labor.

Kowal and DiNapoli also talk about DiNapoli's political career, his strong support of SUNY and public higher education, his handling of the state's pension plan and his upcoming contested reelection bid in November.

In Labor Lookback, episode producer Mike Lisi goes back in time to revisit the 1937 Detroit Woolworth's sit-down strike and provides an entertaining history of labor's favorite rodent, Scabby the Rat.

THE STRUGGLES, STRATEGIES AND SUCCESSES OF UUP'S CONTRACTS

Over the years, UUP has achieved many gains through collective bargaining, from securing healthcare benefits and per-course minimum pay for part-time employees to annual across-the-board salary increases for our members and everyone we represent in our bargaining unit.

Kowal talks to three people who were at the table to negotiate UUP's last three contracts with the state of New York: Former statewide Vice President for Academics Jamie Dangler (chief negotiator for our 2011-2016 contract), UUP's former Counsel to the President Elizabeth Hough, and current UUP Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin.



A CONVERSATION WITH CONGRESSMEMBER TIM KENNEDY

Kowal talks with Congressman Tim Kennedy, a longtime friend to UUP, about his work in Washington, D.C., and what it's like to be a Democrat in a Republican-led Congress.

Kennedy and Kowal discuss several bills Kennedy has sponsored, including the DHS Release Transparency Act. Kennedy joined Congressman Debbie Wasserman Schultz in Buffalo to call for passage of three bills that would provide more funding for cancer research, screening, education and prevention. He was outspoken in calling for the removal of ousted Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem for the cruel, violent and often unconstitutional immigration sweeps that took place across the country under her watch.



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» MEMBER BENEFITS

Expanded choice of dental plans coming soon

Throughout contract negotiations, UUP repeatedly heard from members that an improved dental network was a priority.

As UUP President Fred Kowal recently told members in a written announcement, UUP heard those concerns loud and clear.

Dental benefits are not part of the negotiated contract with New York state; they are provided through the UUP Benefit Trust Fund. So while the UUP Negotiations Team worked to secure a historic contract with the state, UUP Member Benefits Director Doreen Bango and her team worked behind the scenes to offer members a choice between two dental plans.

Effective January 1, 2027, UUP-represented employees will be able to select the Delta Dental PPO Plan or the newly introduced MetLife Dental PPO Plan.

Delta: No action is required to continue coverage under the Delta Dental PPO Plan.

MetLife: To elect coverage under the MetLife Dental PPO Plan, members must select MetLife during the Open Enrollment period (see below).

Additional information will be shared soon. For now, here are some important dates:

August 2026: Please check the UUP website for dates and times of informational seminars.

September 1-October 31, 2026: Open Enrollment period for members who wish to switch from the Delta Dental PPO to the MetLife Dental PPO.

January 1, 2027: Coverage under the MetLife Dental PPO becomes effective.



For information on
UUP Benefits, visit
uupinfo.org/benefits

