

# THE VOICE



Winter 2023

A close-up portrait of Rowena Blackman-Stroud, a Black woman with dark, wavy hair and bangs, wearing a black blazer and gold hoop earrings. She is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

## Rowena Blackman-Stroud

1950 - 2022

THE FIGHT TO FUND SUNY · MEMBER SPOTLIGHT · KUDOS FOR CONTINGENTS





## THE VOICE

Winter 2023

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

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# A LOOK BACK AT A BUSY, SUCCESSFUL YEAR

**A**s we approach the year's end, and our 50th anniversary as a union in 2023, this is a good opportunity to look back and look forward.

Looking back, I can say without a doubt that 2022 was one of our most successful—and eventful—years ever. Looking forward, I can say with certainty that our union is well positioned to flourish in 2023.

Let's take a quick look at all we accomplished together in 2022.

For the first time since the pandemic, we were fully able to bring our message of positive change for SUNY in person to our members, our communities, state legislators and the media.

From Buffalo to Albany and Plattsburgh to Binghamton, we held nearly two dozen press conferences, all with a simple, effective message: The state must fully fund SUNY. To cap our Week of Action in March, UUP joined higher ed advocates in a march across the Brooklyn Bridge to tell legislators to end chronic state underfunding of public higher education.

Our advocacy helped bring millions more in funding to SUNY, including \$150 million to close the TAP Gap and more than \$50 million to hire more full-time faculty. Our efforts helped secure retention bonuses for health care workers on the front lines of the pandemic and we made more of our members eligible for the payments.

In September, Gov. Kathy Hochul signed a new law that qualified thousands more contingent workers for federal student loan forgiveness. We pushed hard for that bill and in recognition, I was invited to speak at the bill-signing ceremony.

We spent the fall holding press conferences in Albany, Buffalo, New Paltz, Plattsburgh, Rochester and Syracuse, focused on projected multimillion-dollar deficits at 19 SUNY campuses. You can read more in this issue of *The Voice*.

Personally, I love getting out to the campuses. There's nothing like being there, in person, while also utilizing the campuses where we work to focus society's attention on the issues that truly matter to all of us.

That's why in October, at SUNY Buffalo State College, we held a roundtable discussion on mental health equity and structural racism. Spurred by the racially motivated mass shooting in Buffalo in May, the event featured four nationally known experts who talked about the intergenerational trauma that grips communities of color—like Buffalo's East Side. We will work to get resources to campuses and build a diverse professional workforce through campus programs. This work will continue in 2023.

Our membership building efforts were unparalleled this year. Our staff organizers spent much of the year traveling to campuses, helping with hundreds of chapter-sponsored membership initiatives. That's in addition to the success of UUP's Organizing Academy.

And UUP launched a podcast, called *The Voice Podcast*. Already, we've taken on some major issues, including systemic racism, environmental justice and abortion rights in a post-Roe world.

So, what's the outlook for 2023? Busy. As *The Voice* goes to press, we are putting the finishing touches on our NY HEALS legislative agenda for 2023-2024. It will be a full-court press to get the governor and legislators to make SUNY a priority in the new budget.

After meeting virtually with members throughout 2022, our Negotiations Team is at the table hammering out a new agreement. I know we'll be asking for your help to show solidarity as we work on securing a fair contract with well-earned salary increases and stronger job protections for all members.

It comes to this: We need you to get involved. If you're not a UUP member, please consider joining us. If you know someone on campus who isn't a UUP member, share your copy of *The Voice* and let them see for themselves how important it is to be part of our union.

If you've been thinking about becoming more involved in UUP, make 2023 the year to make that happen. Take that step. Let's do this—together.



**Frederick E. Kowal**  
President, UUP





## Communications Department mission statement

**U**nited University Profession's Communications Department showcases the union work of UUP members, and produces articles, podcasts, magazines, artwork and illustrations for and about the membership.

To help ensure that the department achieves the goal of member-focused materials, the department will also:

**Serve as a way for UUP leaders** to communicate news about the union to members;

**Spotlight the important and interesting work** that members do on the job, on the campus and in their communities;

**Inform members about the labor movement** in the United States and around the world;

**Offer members an opportunity to comment** on labor issues, through letters to the editors and other means;

**Notify and inform members** about important events in UUP, including elections, delegate assemblies and constitutional amendments, as well as relevant information about affiliate unions;

**Strive to reach members of the bargaining unit** who have not yet joined UUP and encourage them to join UUP, by illustrating the advantages of union membership.

The department follows journalistic rules of accuracy and fairness. Content aims to be inclusive of all UUP members, and the department does not discriminate through its editorial decisions against any member based on race, religion, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

## STAY CONNECTED!

To receive the union's weekly UUPConnect newsletter in your inbox, email UUP Media & Publications Director Mike Lisi at [mlisi@uupmail.org](mailto:mlisi@uupmail.org).

If your chapter has a news item or an event, email it to us so it can be shared statewide.

Questions and concerns about the newsletter can be directed to Mike Lisi or to [UUPconnect@uupmail.org](mailto:UUPconnect@uupmail.org).



**KEEPING YOU CONNECTED.**  
[www.uupinfo.org](http://www.uupinfo.org)





# NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

MEMBERS DESERVE A CONTRACT THAT FAIR RAISES

WHY THAT UUP MEMBERS DESERVE A CONTRACT THAT WORKS FOR TELECOMMUTING

UUP MEMBERS DESERVE PAID FAMILY LEAVE BENEFITS AND CHILDCARE SUBSIDIES!

TELL SUNY THAT UUP MEMBERS DESERVE A CONTRACT THAT WORKS FOR CONTINGENTS

## Special delivery

*17,000+ postcards list members' demands*

**T**he coronavirus pandemic has been brutally tough for untold numbers of UUP members, many of whom juggled worry about their scattered students, the complexities of their jobs, a lack of child care ... just a slew of issues coming all at once.

But in recent weeks, members who wanted campus administrations to know that they have key demands for the next contract—demands that often stem from that terribly difficult time—had a great way to do so, with an attention-getting postcard from UUP.

Throughout the fall, UUP chapters distributed postcards to members and asked them to sign them so that chapter leaders could bring the postcards to labor-management meetings and show strength in numbers. The

postcards covered a range of issues.

The effort was definitely a success, said UUP Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin.

"We had had well over 17,000 post cards signed. We had initially set a goal of 10,000 by the end of the semester, so we've easily surpassed that."

Postcards addressed key negotiations priorities, including a range of compensation proposals, job security provisions, contingent faculty issues, issue

facing hospital employees, telecommuting and child care issues, as well as proposals from the state that UUP opposes, such as post-tenure review.

If you signed or helped distribute post cards to your colleagues, UUP appreciates that effort. This was a great way to send a message to your campus administration that UUP is one united voice, tens of thousands of members strong. If you didn't have a chance to sign a post card, but you'd still like to know how you can help UUP increase its visibility during negotiations, please contact your chapter leaders.

**For updates on UUP's contract negotiations** with the state, visit <https://bit.ly/UUPNegotiations>



**Bret Benjamin**



### You can still get involved

There will be many other opportunities for members to make their voices heard during negotiations.

Find out how you can get involved.

Contact your UUP Chapter at <https://bit.ly/MyUUPchapter>





## Where have all the factory workers gone?

**“Made in the USA” suddenly looks like a great idea**

Union members, who have often despaired of finding products manufactured in the United States, preferably by union employees, will find this noteworthy: Manufacturing in the USA is booming, and likely to continue doing so for some time to come.

And while it is never easy to find any good news out of a pandemic that has killed more than a million people in the United States, some of the changes wrought by this public health tragedy are forcing business owners to reconsider how they supply their businesses and factories.

The results of their evaluation could be beneficial for skilled workers, for workers willing to learn the often high-tech aspects of manufacturing today, and also for women workers—who have long been an untapped resource in manufacturing jobs.

“I think we’re in uncharted territory,” said Jay Timmons, CEO of the National Association of Manufacturers, in a recent story from CNN. “For every 100 jobs openings in the sector we only have 60 people who are looking. I think it’ll take quite a while to fill that pipeline.”



The September jobs report, which came out in early October, showed that U.S. manufacturers added another 22,000 workers in September, increasing employment in the sector by nearly 500,000 over the course of the last 12 months. The nearly 13 million workers employed in U.S. factories make up the industry’s largest workforce since the Great Recession caused employment in the sector to plunge more than a dozen years ago.

This trend continues: A report on job openings and labor turnover released Jan. 4 by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, showed that demand for manufacturing workers grew in November.

**Read more at <https://bit.ly/factoriesUSA>**

## New scholarship honors Blackman-Stroud

The new Rowena Blackman-Stroud Scholarship will help students from underrepresented communities who attend SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University in Brooklyn.

UUP created the new scholarship to honor Blackman-Stroud, the longtime president of UUP’s Downstate Chapter, who died Dec. 3 after a brief illness.

“Rowena was never one who was interested in honors or accolades,” said UUP President Fred Kowal, who worked closely with Blackman-Stroud during her tenures as Downstate Chapter president and UUP’s statewide treasurer. “But she strongly believed in the power of a quality public higher education and the importance of making that life-changing opportunity available to students who might not otherwise get a chance to succeed.

“This scholarship does just that. It helps underrepresented students at SUNY Downstate, the public teaching hospital that Rowena loved and spent so much of her life working to protect and maintain. I know this is an honor that would have made Rowena proud.”

UUP has yet to form a scholarship committee or determine how much the scholarships will be and when they will be awarded—although Kowal said he expects the first awardees will be chosen in 2023. Still, the union has begun collecting donations to begin building a scholarship fund.



**Donations can be made online at <https://bit.ly/RowenaScholarship>**





## Tenure under assault in Florida

**T**enure is being threatened in the Florida State University System.

Florida's Board of Governors, which oversees Florida's 12 public universities, has proposed a regulation known as the Post-Tenure Faculty Review. The board is expected to vote on that regulation later in January.

Public comment on Regulation 10.003 closed Dec. 9.

The regulation would require tenured faculty to undergo a comprehensive review every five years. The review must address accomplishments, productivity, research duties, teaching, service, performance metrics, evaluations, and ratings and compensation, with consequences for underperformance.

UUP President Fred Kowal has urged members to sign the petition in support of the United Faculty of Florida's opposition to the regulation as it is written. United Faculty of Florida plans to submit the petition to the Board of Governors.

"It is critical that we stand together for academic and intellectual freedom and the job security that all higher ed workers deserve," Kowal wrote to members.



"The fights we are engaged in are not limited to New York. From funding for public higher education to the exploitation of part-time contingent labor to attacks on what and how we teach, it's not a good time for us in higher ed."

The United Faculty of Florida notes that tenured faculty can already be dismissed for cause, and that provisions for annual evaluations of all faculty are already in place.

The union maintains that the regulation would have a chilling effect on academic freedom. The regulation could also effectively eliminate tenure by linking tenured faculty members' employment to a new state law, FL Statute 1000.05(4), aka Stop WOKE Act, that claims to fight "indoctrination on college campuses" and censors faculty speech in the classroom.



**To read about the union's campaign against this proposed regulation and sign the petition visit:**  
<https://bit.ly/FloridaTenure>



## Call for candidate statements for spring elections

**U**UP is issuing a call for candidate statements for its upcoming statewide election.

Delegates to the UUP Spring 2023 Delegate Assembly will vote to elect three statewide officers: a president of UUP, a secretary-treasurer and a membership development officer. They will also fill eight seats on the statewide UUP Executive Board.

The deadline to submit a candidate statement is Friday, March 17, 2023.

UUP will publish the statements on its website as soon as possible after the deadline and will widely publicize announcements that the statements have been posted.

### Candidate statements: guidelines

The following provisions apply to candidate statements:

Candidates may submit a statement of up to 500 words and a photo for publication. If a candidate submits a lengthier statement, it will be posted in smaller type to give all candidates equal space.

You can email or mail statements and photos to the at-

tention of UUP Director of Communications Mike Lisi. They must be received at the UUP Administrative Office—P.O. Box 15143, Albany, N.Y. 12212—no later than 5 p.m. Friday, March 17, 2023. Please send email versions to [mlisi@uupmail.org](mailto:mlisi@uupmail.org); please cc to Darryl McGrath, Managing Editor, at [Dmcgrath@uupmail.org](mailto:Dmcgrath@uupmail.org). Email versions must also be received by 5 p.m. Friday, March 17.

Statements will be published by order of election and in alphabetical order in even-numbered years and reverse alphabetical order in odd-numbered years.

Candidates are urged to submit statements and photos by email.

Note: UUP policy prohibits the use of UUP or state equipment or resources (including email) to produce or distribute campaign material for UUP elections.

Copies of the policy on the distribution of campaign material can be found at chapter offices (<https://bit.ly/MyUUPchapter>), or by contacting UUP Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O'Bryan-Losee at [jobryan@uupmail.org](mailto:jobryan@uupmail.org).



# A fighter with a heart

ROWENA BLACKMAN-STROUD

1950 - 2022

**Y**ou didn't want to cross Rowena Blackman-Stroud, not when she was fighting to protect workers at SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University.

And certainly not when she was fighting for her union.

"Rowena motivated me to act with determination like nobody else could," said UUP President Fred Kowal, who gave a remembrance of Blackman-Stroud at her Dec. 12 funeral in New York City. "She could do this because she asked from the heart. Rowena was one of the kindest, most caring people you'd ever be lucky enough to meet, but when she felt that action needed to be taken, she was bold, determined and tenacious. I turned to her for advice constantly. I will miss her deeply; she will be remembered and will inspire me for the rest of my life."

Whether it meant personally meeting with Brooklyn-area politicians—who knew and respected her—bringing busloads of Downstate members to advocate in Albany, or orchestrating rallies to save jobs at Downstate, Blackman-Stroud was always willing to push—and sometimes shove—to get

the result she wanted.

"She was someone who pushed me to be the best version of myself," said statewide Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O'Bryan-Losee. "She was someone who wouldn't settle for you to coast, and who saw things in me that I never saw in myself. I would not be where I am today without her, and I will strive to make her proud."

Blackman-Stroud died Dec. 3 after a brief illness.

## **A lifetime of union service**

She joined UUP in 1982 and quickly became involved, serving in numerous leadership roles at the Downstate Chapter. She was elected chapter president in 1991 and held that post until she stepped down in 2022.

A statewide Executive Board member for eight years, Blackman-Stroud won her first term as statewide treasurer in 1994. She would serve for 23 years, retiring

in 2017. Under her guidance, UUP became a stable, financially strong organization. She was a member of NYSUT's Executive Board and the New York AFL-CIO's Executive Council. She also held leadership positions in the American Federation of Teachers.

**“ROWENA WAS ONE OF THE KINDEST, MOST CARING PEOPLE YOU'D EVER BE LUCKY ENOUGH TO MEET, BUT WHEN SHE FELT THAT ACTION NEEDED TO BE TAKEN, SHE WAS BOLD, DETERMINED AND TENACIOUS.”**

*— UUP President Fred Kowal*









Blackman-Stroud left an indelible impression on those with whom she interacted. She was unforgettable, carrying herself with a grace and a style that were unmistakable—and uniquely hers.

“I am devastated by the loss of Rowena,” said Downstate Chapter President Redetha Abrahams-Nichols. “She was my mentor and my friend, and she provided unconditional support in my development as a union leader. She always emphasized the importance of advocacy. She said the union bridges the members and community to provide equitable health care for Central Brooklyn.”

Blackman-Stroud could be impatient at times, but that impatience always stemmed from a sense of urgency and a grim determination to stand up for what was right—regardless of the opposition.

### Standing up for what's right

In the early 2010s, when the state threatened to cut hundreds of jobs at SUNY Downstate as part of a plan to downsize and privatize the hospital, Blackman-Stroud took action. She rallied the community around the issue, assembling a Brooklyn coalition of faith-based leaders, politicians and others to support Downstate.

Blackman-Stroud organized more than two dozen lunchtime rallies to save jobs at Downstate, many of them on the steps of the hospital's Clarkson Avenue entrance. Letitia James, then New York City public advocate, spoke at her rallies, as did AFT President Randi Weingarten, New York AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento, NYSUT President Andy Pallotta, and state and local politicians.

And she made sure that the dozens of Downstate

members were always at the rallies, wearing matching red shirts emblazoned with the demand “Save Jobs at SUNY Downstate.”

### Pandemic protections

Blackman-Stroud's actions also saved lives during the coronavirus pandemic. With her members forced to reuse masks, gloves and other personal protective gear due to severe shortages, Blackman-Stroud called on UUP, NYSUT and AFT for help.

Working with Kowal and UUP staffers, Blackman-Stroud helped secure thousands of surgical gowns, gloves and face masks for Downstate front-line workers. NYSUT and AFT sent masks, gloves and other gear. She also demanded—and got—mandatory COVID testing and priority vaccines for Downstate front-line medical staff.

In 2020, Blackman-Stroud was also one of the first—and loudest—voices in the state to demand retention pay bonuses for front-line workers at Downstate and SUNY's

other public teaching hospitals.

Her advocacy became an important legislative platform for UUP. In 2022, the state approved \$3,000 retention pay bonuses for eligible health care workers.

For nearly four decades, Blackman-Stroud embodied the compassionate, unrelenting spirit of unionism—and the spirit of UUP. She will be missed.

“Let us remember all that Rowena did for our union and for all of us, and pledge ourselves to carrying on this work,” Kowal said. “That's what she would want—and expect from each of us.”

“SHE ALWAYS EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF ADVOCACY. SHE SAID THE UNION BRIDGES THE MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY TO PROVIDE EQUITABLE HEALTH CARE FOR CENTRAL BROOKLYN.”

— Downstate Chapter President  
Redetha Abrahams-Nichols

# A WARRIOR FOR JUSTICE

*Editor's note: UUP President Fred Kowal delivered a remembrance of Rowena Blackman-Stroud at her funeral service, held Dec. 12 at Saint Bartholomew's Church in New York City. That text, which chronicles his decades-long friendship with Blackman-Stroud, is below.*

**T**o Terrance Stroud, to his sons, Tyler and Dalen, to his wife, Dalia, and to Fred Lee; To all of Rowena's family and friends...I begin by offering condolences on behalf of the 37,000 members of United University Professions. Your loss is our loss.

For those of us in UUP, Rowena was the rock upon which we could lean, the voice we heard more clearly than all others, and the comrade whose wisdom guided us through the most challenging of times. For Rowena, no fight was too small to take on or too unimportant to win. What drove her was an unrelenting commitment to justice, to the duty we all have to make the world a better place, while never losing sight of the need to protect the rights of every individual, whether those rights are the rights of workers, the rights of people of color, the rights of women or the rights of any UUP member who has been a victim of unjust treatment. She, like few I've ever known, lived the principle that an injury to one is an injury to all.

And when I say that she was a rock, I have a particular kind of rock in mind: Volcanic rock. Those of us fortunate enough to have worked extensively with her know exactly what I mean. She was a powerful force of nature. If you disagreed with her, you never won an argument: You survived. Like volcanic rock, she could overwhelm you, while at the same time molding the world around her to meet the needs of the moment to reach her goals. She worked with passion, with unmatched energy, with love for the struggle, and with a force of will that would not brook defeat.

She was intimidating. I confess: She could strike fear into my heart when she had that particular look in her eye and sound in her voice: We were not doing enough! The volcano was ready to erupt. Especially, when she announced, "This is the first I'm hearing of this issue." In those circumstances, it was best to duck for cover.

But she could inspire you in those moments, or sometimes enrage you to get done what needed to get done.

Yet, she could also be funny, caring, or overcome with emotion when discussing a situation faced by one of her members or by her beloved University Hospital at Downstate. Since her passing, I have seen how UUP members were impacted by Rowena. Countless email messages and personal conversations all contained a constant theme: Rowena showed an unwavering concern for and interest in them as individuals. And they all remember and treasure that caring.

Rowena first arrived at Downstate in 1979 in the nuclear medicine department. There, she did her work with the same commitment and drive that we saw for decades as a union leader. As a Black woman, she faced racism and sexism. But she never allowed those injustices to crush her determination to do her work as an equal to her colleagues. In 1991, she was elected to serve as Downstate Chapter president. There, she provided unparalleled leadership in the face of nearly constant efforts to privatize or close that institution, which was central to the health and well-being of the Central Brooklyn

**“WHAT DROVE HER WAS AN UNRELENTING COMMITMENT TO JUSTICE, TO THE DUTY WE ALL HAVE TO MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE, WHILE NEVER LOSING SIGHT OF THE NEED TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF EVERY INDIVIDUAL.”**

community, and the education of a diverse, highly skilled workforce of health care professionals.

When Rowena stepped down two months ago, she was the dean of chapter presidents and a constant voice of wisdom, guidance and strength for all of us in UUP's leadership. On that same day, she resigned as a member of the New York AFL-CIO's Executive Committee, a position she held for 18 years. But before she left, she made sure that another UUPer would take her place to advocate for our members and the betterment of workers everywhere. That member is me. Yes, I do feel her presence and her watchful eye.

As if being Downstate Chapter president wasn't enough, she became UUP's statewide treasurer in 1994, providing the leadership needed to put our union on stable financial footing. It was in this role that I first worked with her. She and I were part-time officers (I was statewide membership development officer) and we shared an office. It never ceased to amaze me how busy



## Rowena Blackman-Stroud: A Remembrance

she was! I have no idea how she ever found time to do all she did because she was constantly on the phone speaking with Downstate Chapter leaders, the chapter treasurers she mentored so well, and always her members. The office also featured a steady supply of Talbots shopping bags. Rowena did like to shop, though she was incredibly conservative when it came to the union's resources. It's why UUP has had such a stellar financial record.

Case in point: She proposed and got delegates to approve the creation of a new statewide secretary-treasurer position in 2017—even though the new full-time job led her to step down as treasurer and decline to run for the new post. Why? Despite my efforts, she had no intention of leaving Brooklyn, a requirement for the new job.

Her finest hours—and the time when my respect and admiration for her grew to its highest—were during the 2012-2015 fight to save SUNY Downstate. In this struggle, I came to see a true warrior for justice who would not rest. Just a couple of weeks after I was elected in May 2013, she “invited” me to Downstate for a rally to save the hospital. I’ve never been more nervous as she called me to speak at the rally, which included American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, NYSUT officers and local ministers from the amazing coalition she created.

Only Ro could bring such a group together. That was her power. We all knew that when she called, it was not because she couldn’t do the work alone, it was because she could do the work and our place was with her... always. The countless hours she put in with Brooklyn community, faith and labor leaders resulted in saving that institution, which serves so many in Central Brooklyn and beyond.

And she didn’t particularly care that we were taking on Gov. Andrew Cuomo and his friends in the health care industry who wanted to see Downstate go away. She was perfectly willing to call out Cuomo before it was popular and easier to do so. She demanded that those of us who claim to be leaders of unions or community leaders—and every one of her members—understand that Downstate would not be lost. She is gone, but our

commitment remains: Downstate will survive and the work to build it up—which our sister was committed to more than anyone else—will continue.

Then there was COVID. During the worst days of the pandemic, her work was not to save a hospital, it was to save the lives of our members. Literally. When the pandemic hit Brooklyn and patients filled the hospital and bodies filled the morgue, Rowena kept me posted daily on the extent of the emergency. Our members were getting sick. They were dying. And it was because they had insufficient protective equipment. She worked with me and with our staff to find and purchase the surgical gowns, masks and other PPE that were so desperately needed.

But Ro being Ro, she didn’t just press me for help. She also went to AFT President Weingarten and NYSUT President Andy Pallotta. Pretty soon, trucks filled with PPE arrived at Downstate and our members got what they needed. Rowena saved lives. There’s no other way to say it.

That’s a warrior for justice. That’s a human with a heart that reaches the whole world she saw with compassion and a desire to help. Constant. Compassionate. Driven. Unrelenting. Loving. She was all of these, for UUP members from Buffalo to Brooklyn and everywhere in between.

I close with words from Madiba, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela: “I have walked that long road to freedom. I have tried not to falter. I have made missteps along the way. But I have discovered the secret that after

climbing a great hill, one only finds that there are many more hills to climb. I have taken a moment here to rest, to steal a view of the glorious vista that surrounds me, to look back on the distance I have come. But I can rest only for a moment, for with freedom come responsibilities, and I dare not linger, for my long walk is not yet ended.”

To you, my sister Rowena, on behalf of all your comrades in UUP, I say that your walk is now on another path. You will make your mark there as well. For us who remain, we must walk onward. And your spirit will be with us. For the work of justice will not wait. You have given your life in service to it. So must we all. So shall we all. Rest easy, my sister, my friend. And travel well on your journey. You have earned the Peace that I pray be granted unto you. Solidarity forever.



**CONSTANT.  
COMPASSIONATE. DRIVEN.  
UNRELENTING. LOVING.  
SHE WAS ALL OF THESE,  
FOR UUP MEMBERS FROM  
BUFFALO TO BROOKLYN AND  
EVERYWHERE IN BETWEEN.**

**Y**ou always knew when Rowena Blackman-Stroud was in the room.

Her kindness, her grace, her compassion and her dogged determination to speak truth to power—especially when it came to standing up for UUP members—could not be denied.

A number of chapters, including Alfred, Binghamton, Cortland, Empire State College, New Paltz, Potsdam and Stony Brook, all passed motions posthumously honoring Blackman-Stroud. Others expressed their condolences for her family and their loss.

And remembrances from leaders came flooding in once UUP President Fred Kowal announced news of Blackman-Stroud's death in a Dec. 4 email.



**Rowena was the epitome of unionism and selfless service.**

I was always in awe of her endless energy, her compassion, and her quick-witted ways addressing any issues that came her way. Her smart thinking and perspective will be sorely missed.

— Idalia Torres,  
UUP Executive Board member

“

**Rowena had a special dignity, a personal integrity and a sense of values**

that was expressed in everything she did, everything she said, and everything she believed in. She was at the forefront of (UUP's) struggles for racial equality, fair wages, better treatment of hospital workers, health inequities and many other numerous issues.

— Ezra Zubrow, retired  
Executive Board member

Her impact was felt in every corner, with her legacy of love and action.

— Bill Tusang, Cobleskill  
Chapter president

I remember back when I first met Rowena, **it was obvious how widely respected and valued her leadership was.** It was clear that everyone knew when she entered the room, and when she spoke everyone listened.

— Andrew Solar-Greco, Stony Brook Chapter President

“

**Rowena saved many careers.**

Always providing support to her members, she was a giant in UUP. Tireless, fearless and patient, she did the work necessary and behind the scenes, she was there. Rowena consoled many souls in distress. She met with members and never gave up on them. Her words of comfort and willingness to mentor them led to the rise of her chapter.

— Rob Compton,  
Oneonta Chapter president

**We have lost a great leader and role model whose life's work will echo far into the future.**

— Steve Hinkle,  
Morrisville Chapter  
president

”







# Fighting to fund SUNY

**UUP launches a  
statewide tour to  
demand action  
on budgets  
stretched to the  
breaking point**

**By Darryl McGrath**

Someone had to sound the alarm on the fact that 19 SUNY campuses are coming up short in their current operating budgets. And so once again, it's UUP taking the lead to avert a fiscal disaster in the making.

UUP is getting ready to advocate for SUNY in the upcoming 2023-2024 state budget. But too many campuses face projected multimillion-dollar deficits months before the end of the fiscal year, and that's a crisis that cannot wait for action.

"These campuses with large budget shortfalls represent the full range of SUNY's four-year colleges and universities, and for most of these campuses—and our members who work on them—this is an unprecedented situation," UUP President Fred Kowal said.



"This is a huge stress on students, because deficits mean that they often cannot get into the classes they need, or access the services they deserve, such as academic advising or mental health counseling," Kowal added. "And these deficits are a demoralizing drain on our members, because UUP members have already made many sacrifices during the coronavirus

**“For most of these campuses—and our members who work on them—this is an unprecedented situation.”**

— UUP President Fred Kowal

pandemic, and now they are once again being asked to do too much with too little.”

Lawmakers and community leaders around the state agree. These SUNY advocates turned out at six press conferences in regions where campuses have

been especially hard hit: the Capital Region; Central New York; the Hudson Valley; the North Country; the Finger Lakes Region and Western New York, where a press conference focused on the plight of Buffalo State and Fredonia colleges, each of which has a projected deficit of more than \$16 million.

The deficits are tied to declining enrollment—a fallout of the coronavirus pandemic—and rising purchasing costs due to inflation. Kowal has pointed out repeatedly that declining enrollment can be reversed if students know they can get the classes and services they need.

“Gov. Hochul clearly sees the value of a strong SUNY,” Kowal said. “She demonstrated that last spring by crafting the best budget for SUNY that we’ve seen in more than a decade. We are asking lawmakers to take steps now so that we are not even further behind as we approach the next budget process.”



## INVEST IN NY'S CAPITAL REGION

### University at Albany

Student/Faculty Ratio..... **19:1**

Budget Deficit..... **-\$15 million**

### Empire State College

Student/Faculty Ratio..... **15:1**

Budget Deficit..... **-\$6.9 million**

### SUNY Cobleskill

Student/Faculty Ratio..... **15:1**

Budget Deficit..... **-\$4 million**

## UUP's multi-region blitz hits the road to demand action on campus deficits

### Oct. 7: University at Albany

**A**s one of four University centers in the SUNY system, the University at Albany should lead the way as a model for student services, academic support and a low ratio of students to faculty.

Instead, the opposite is true: Faculty and students tell of crowded classes; impossibly long waits to see advisors and financial aid staff; a long, slow reduction of humanities courses even as technology, engineering and science programs grow; and counseling services that are stretched to the limit at a time of high need. And with four months to go in the SUNY fiscal year, UAlbany had a \$15 million operating deficit.

With an Oct. 7 press conference on the UAlbany campus, UUP launched its six-region tour of events to call attention to the fact that a number of four-year SUNY campuses are expected to run short on oper-

Albany Chapter President Aaron Major (left), and ESF Chapter President Matt Smith, (facing page) call for more state funding for SUNY campuses at press conferences on Oct. 7 at the University at Albany in Albany and Oct. 20 at SUNY Environmental College of Science and Forestry in Syracuse, respectively.

## INVEST IN THE FINGER LAKES REGION

### Brockport

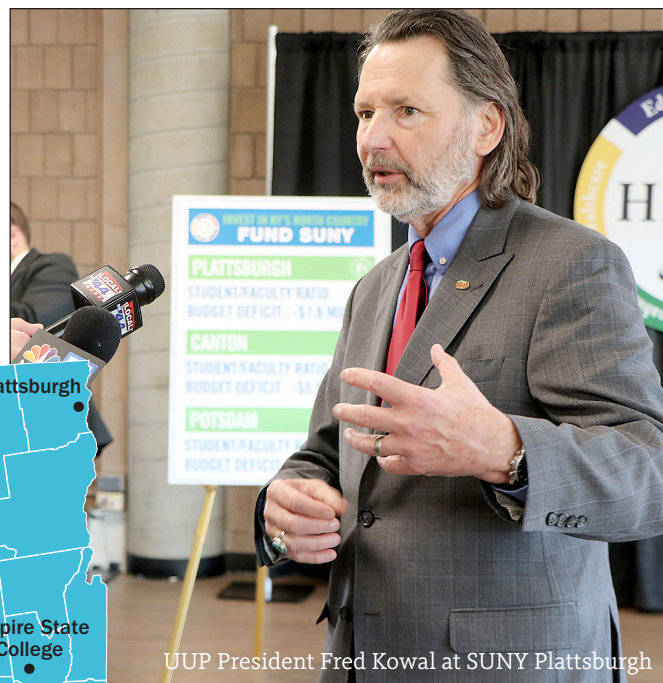
Student/Faculty Ratio..... **17:1**

Deficit..... **-\$9.9 million**

### Geneseo

Student/Faculty Ratio..... **18:1**

Deficit..... **-\$10 million**



UUP President Fred Kowal at SUNY Plattsburgh



ating funds well before the next state budget is approved in April.

“What we’re talking about is making sure our university is everything it can be for our students and our patients,” UUP President

Fred Kowal told a gathering of faculty and students on the UAlbany campus, as community leaders, lawmakers—

including Assembly member

Pat Fahy—and local advocates for public higher education stood by him. “We are delivering a message I think is vital for the University at Albany, for SUNY and the state of New York. Last year we had some significant legislative wins. But last year was just a starting point.

“Let’s get to work,” Kowal said.

### Oct. 18: SUNY New Paltz

After more than a decade of short and long-term cost-cutting measures, SUNY New Paltz faces a projected \$10 million deficit. About 90 minutes away, SUNY Delhi is dealing with a projected \$8.4 million deficit.

Kowal visited the New Paltz campus Oct. 18 to call for more state funding for the cash-starved SUNY campuses. Joining Kowal were New Paltz Mayor Tim Rogers, Ulster County legislator Megan Sperry, New Paltz UUP Chapter President Beth Wilson, Sarahana Shrestha—a Democrat who was at the time a candidate for the 103rd Assembly District and who has since won election to that seat—

## REVITALIZE CENTRAL NY

### ESF

Student/Faculty Ratio..... **13:1**

Budget Deficit..... **-\$9 million**

### Morrisville

Student/Faculty Ratio..... **15:1**

Budget Deficit..... **-\$5.8 million**

### Cortland

Student/Faculty Ratio..... **15:1**

Budget Deficit..... **-\$10.9 million**



along with New Paltz student AnnaLynn DiMarco.

The deficits stem from years of underfunding by the state, declining enrollment and increased costs for everything from energy to food.

“There is no reason New York can’t have one of the best public education systems in the world. Instead, our SUNY campuses in the Hudson Valley and beyond are barely getting by, thanks to sustained budget cuts over the years,” Shrestha said. “At a time when everyday survival is a struggle for many families, young New Yorkers need a direction for something they can work toward. An adequately funded SUNY system can and should play an integral role in that.”

**Oct. 20: Central New York**

Some of SUNY’s most steadfast supporters stood with UUP at a rally that highlighted the incredibly strong role held in the local economy by the four Central New York SUNY campuses: ESF, Cortland, Oswego and Morrisville.

Incredibly, these four colleges—which are among the

“EVERY DOLLAR INVESTED IN SUNY  
BY THE STATE YIELDS A RETURN  
OF \$8.17.”

INVEST IN NY’S NORTH COUNTRY

**Plattsburgh**

Student/Faculty Ratio..... 16:1  
Deficit..... - \$7.8 million

**Canton**

Student/Faculty Ratio..... 8:1  
Deficit..... - \$5.5 million

**Potsdam**

Student/Faculty Ratio..... 11:1  
Deficit..... - \$5.5 million

largest employers in the region—face a combined budget shortfall of \$30.7 million this academic year. Cortland faces the largest single deficit in the group, at \$10.9 million, with ESF not far behind at \$9 million.

Senators Rachel May and John Mannion, Cortland County Legislator Susan Wilson and Syracuse Common Council Member Rita Paniagua,

GROW THE HUDSON VALLEY

**Delhi**

Student/Faculty Ratio..... 14:1  
Budget Deficit..... - \$8.4 million

**New Paltz**

Student/Faculty Ratio..... 16:1  
Budget Deficit..... - \$10 million



**Right:** Brockport Chapter President Susan Orr speaks at the Nov. 17 press conference in Rochester.

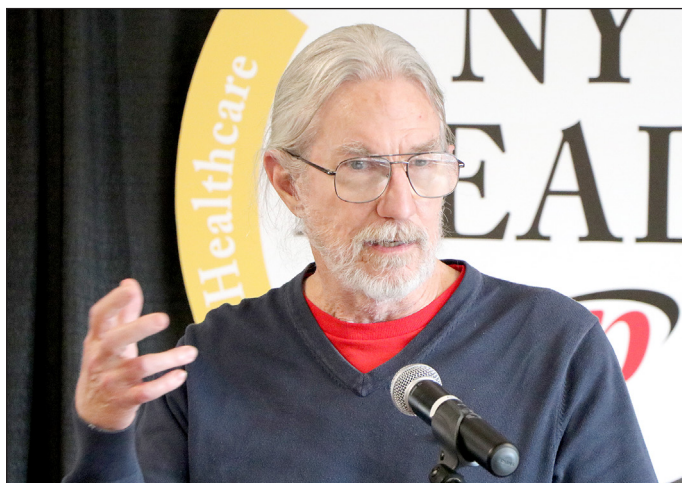
**Opposite page, bottom:** UUP Potsdam Chapter President David Reeder addresses the Nov. 10 event held at SUNY Plattsburgh.







**Above:** Kowal addresses the media at an Oct. 18 press conference at SUNY New Paltz. From left are Assembly-member Sarahana Shrestha, Ulster County legislator Megan Sperry, Kowal, New Paltz Chapter member Madeline Veitch and New Paltz Chapter Vice President for Professionals Kevin Saunders.



among others, gathered at the ESF campus to reiterate the critical and immediate need to fully fund these colleges.

"It is time for New York to show that we recognize all SUNY campuses' tremendous value for students across the state," said May, a former UUP member and an ESF graduate. "Not only do these institutions benefit those who attend, but with thousands of students and employees, they're also economic engines for the local area. I will continue to advocate in the Senate for an increase in funding for our public colleges and institutions."

"The SUNY system is going to play a vital role in fulfilling the unprecedented workforce training demands that come with Micron's \$100 billion semiconductor manufacturing investment in the 50th Senate District that I represent," said Manion. "It is imperative that Central New York SUNY campuses have the funding required to meet this challenge and I will be fighting for SUNY, our students, faculty and staff, and our future economic prosperity in the upcoming budget."

### Nov. 10: North Country

After more than a decade of short- and long-term cost-cutting measures, SUNY Plattsburgh faces a projected \$7.8 million deficit this academic year. SUNY Potsdam and SUNY Canton each face a projected \$5.5 million deficit.

At a UUP-sponsored press conference Nov. 10,





**“BY UNDERFUNDING THE SYSTEM, WE ARE TAKING AWAY THE RIGHTS OF OUR STUDENTS TO AN AFFORDABLE COLLEGE EDUCATION.”**

SUNY Plattsburgh student Celib Azeem

Democratic Assembly member Billy Jones of the 115th Assembly District—who had just trounced his Republican opponent in the Nov. 8 midterm election to win another term—spoke about the importance of SUNY Plattsburgh to the community and the local economy.

“You don’t get \$700 or \$800 million dollars in economic impact if this institution isn’t here,” he said. “You don’t get people coming to visit—families, students, alumni coming back here—if this institution’s not here.”

He said he would strongly support UUP’s push for more funding for campuses and vowed to do all he could in the Assembly to ensure



» Assemblymember (and UUP member) Monica Wallace spoke at the Dec. 6 event in Buffalo.

## SECURE WESTERN NY’S FUTURE

### Buffalo State

Student/Faculty Ratio.....**15:1**  
Budget Deficit..... **-\$16 million**

### Fredonia

Student/Faculty Ratio..... **14:1**  
Budget Deficit..... **-\$16.8 million**

that SUNY is fully funded in 2023-24.

“In my conference, our leadership consistently hears from our members on how important SUNY campuses are around the state,” Jones said. “And you have my word that we will continue to advocate to fully fund [SUNY]. You have my word that North Country SUNY campuses will be fully funded, and we’re going to make it happen.”

SUNY Plattsburgh student Celib Azeem said that while faculty and administrative staff at Plattsburgh definitely feel the effects of underfunding, “eventually, it will be felt by students as a whole. By underfunding the system, we are taking away the rights of our students to an affordable college education. And that is something we need to look at.”

### Nov. 17: Finger Lakes Region

The SUNY campuses at Brockport and Geneseo have long provided top-tier education at a very affordable price in the Finger Lakes Region. And, as UUP and its supporters noted at a Nov. 17 rally in Rochester, that may be about to change.

Massive projected deficits loom at both colleges: \$9.9 million at Brockport; \$10 million at Geneseo.

“As the son of a SUNY professor and a member of the NYS Senate Higher Education Committee, I’m distressed to hear that our public colleges and universities are struggling. I will continue to be an ally in the fight for increased funding so that higher education is available to all New Yorkers,” said state Sen. Jeremy Cooney.

“We can’t expect our students to get good jobs and achieve economic security if they can’t afford the very thing that will get them there—a college degree,” said

Assemblymember Harry Bronson, a SUNY alumnus.

Assembly member Sarah Clark, also a SUNY graduate and a Higher Education Committee member, as well as chair of the Assembly Subcommittee on TAP, told the gathering that “I’m proud of the work we did this past session to help close the TAP Gap, and I’m working to increase the award eligibility for families, recognizing that inflation has made affordability a critical consideration for students.”

SUNY schools in Rochester are a key driver of economic growth in surrounding communities, supporting more than 10,819 jobs in the Finger Lakes region, and helping to generate a positive economic impact of \$1.32 billion. SUNY Geneseo and Brockport contribute significantly to the region’s supply of educators, as well as the greater industry workforce and population.

In the last year alone, SUNY Brockport’s Small Business Development Center (SBDC) worked with 471 small businesses and provided more than 1,822 counseling hours. SUNY Geneseo’s SBDC has helped more than 384,130 small businesses.

“We need Albany to act swiftly to relieve the heavy financial burden that is, and will continue to be, a strain on the very students our system was designed to serve,” Kowal said. “SUNY campuses are under immense pressure, and we cannot solve this alone; we need state officials to act now to preserve access to quality higher education across New York state.”

## Dec. 6: Western NY

Kowal spotlighted projected budget shortfalls of \$16 million at SUNY Buffalo State College and \$16.8 million at SUNY Fredonia at a Dec. 6 press conference at Buffalo State.

Joining Kowal at the late-morning event were Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown, State Sen. Tim Kennedy, Assemblymember Monica Wallace—who is a UUP member—and Assemblymember Jon Rivera. More than 50 UUP members were also at the press conference.

“The future of SUNY and the affordable education it delivers to students is in jeopardy,” said Kowal. “SUNY campuses are under massive financial pressure, and this is not an issue we can resolve on our own. State officials must take action to deliver funding that will safeguard access to high-quality higher education in New York.”

“To have a strong State University of New York, we need to fully fund SUNY,” Brown, a Buffalo State alumnus, said. “SUNY, and funding SUNY, is economic development. “I can’t think about a Buffalo, a Fredonia, a Western New York without a strong SUNY system.”

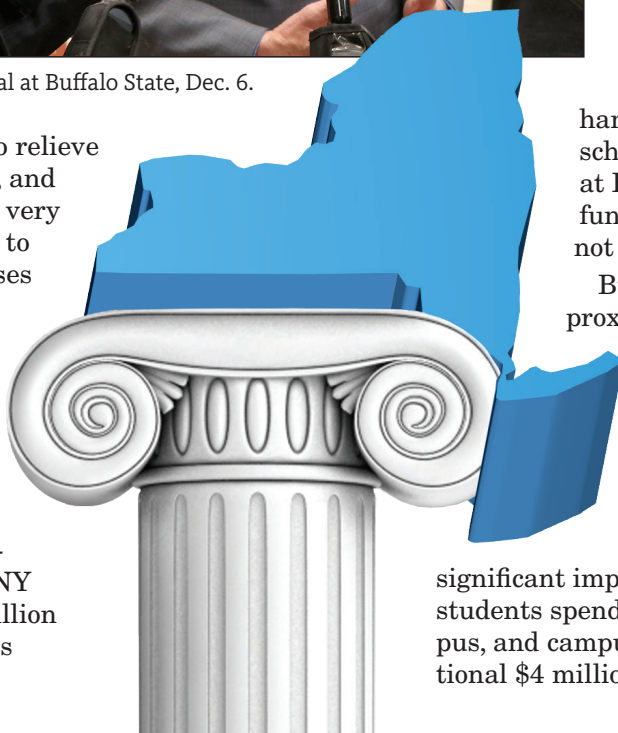
“New York state should lead the way by funding affordable public higher education,” said Wallace, who earned her undergraduate degree at Binghamton University and her law school degree at the University at Buffalo. “And that means funding every SUNY school, not just a handful of flagships.

Buffalo State contributes approximately \$680 million to the local economy, helping more than 14,000 businesses invest more than \$131 million by creating or saving approximately 8,000 jobs.

SUNY Fredonia has a significant impact on the local economy; students spend nearly \$50 million off-campus, and campus visitors spend an additional \$4 million.



Kowal at Buffalo State, Dec. 6.



Read press releases  
from and stories about  
the press conferences at  
<https://bit.ly/UUPinfo>







## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Each year, hundreds of UUP members publish books and articles, and are recognized for accomplishments on campus and in their communities.

### A bittersweet but amazing year

*Anatomy professor, anthropologist Samuel Márquez reflects on joy, loss*

**F**or Samuel Márquez, 2022 was year of joy and sorrow.

Joy, because a professional accomplishment three years in the making had just come to fruition. Sorrow, because that milestone closely followed the death of his mother—an immigrant from Colombia whom he credits for his work ethic. Just a week later came his brother's untimely death from cancer.

As Márquez faced these losses, he marked a major accomplishment in his original field of study of physical anthropology—a field he still follows as a writer and researcher with a special interest in fossil humans, including the extinct Neanderthals. Márquez and a

former student, Anthony Pagano, were guest editors for a special issue of *The Anatomical Record*,

a pre-eminent peer-reviewed journal by the American Association for Anatomy.

The topic: the Nasopharynx, the region between the nasal cavity and skull base, which plays an important role

« Samuel Márquez







in respiration and swallowing and has long fascinated anthropologists.

And then in October, SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University noted the journal's publication as it honored Márquez during Hispanic Heritage Month.

Quite a year, indeed.

### Out of loss, remembering early lessons

Márquez said that bringing the journal to completion at such a tough time kept him focused, as he and Pagano edited manuscripts from renowned experts.

"I just tried to immerse myself in work," he said in a recent interview. "I couldn't feel the ground under me. I remember my mom saying, 'Never give up and always finish what you started.'"

Márquez, a UUP chapter and statewide leader, started teaching anatomy in graduate school. At Downstate, he is the co-discipline director of anatomy at the medical school, and director of anatomy at the School of Health Professions. He is also director of the anatomical donor program, a role in which he never forgets that families have

given up their loved one's body so that others can learn to heal.

And he is a UUP delegate, statewide Executive Board member and chapter VPA.

**“I REMEMBER MY MOM SAYING, ‘NEVER GIVE UP AND ALWAYS FINISH WHAT YOU STARTED.’”**

Redetha Abrahams-Nichols, the Downstate Chapter president, relied on his institutional memory as she stepped into her leadership role last year.

"What Sam does is so important to the minority community here," Abrahams-Nichols said, noting that underserved students respond to a professor of color in such a distinguished role. "It's good to see people who look like you in the health care system."

Márquez knows this is true, and he doesn't mind being that kind of example. He draws on lessons from his mother when he sees overwhelmed students questioning if they can meet the challenge.

"I tell them, 'Look, you deserve to be here, so there's no question you belong,'" he said.





# CONTINGENTS



*During Campus Equity Week, UUP chapters highlight the contributions and concerns of contingent faculty.*

## Keeping the momentum moving

*Contingent faculty assess gains, look ahead in Campus Equity Week*

**U**UP contingent faculty always go into a contract negotiations period with hope, but this time, they really feel optimistic—an attitude that came through loud and clear in this year's spirited Campus Equity Week in October.

UUP marked the Oct. 24-28 observation of Campus Equity Week—during which UUP chapters highlight the contributions and concerns of contingent faculty—with workshops, social get-togethers and tabling events. UUP President Fred Kowal greeted members at Geneseo's kick-off event for the week, with Geneseo one of the campuses that had at least one, and sometimes more than one, campus equity event each day from Monday through Friday.

Also threaded through the week: discussion of what contingents hope to gain in the next contract, said Anne Fearman of the UUP Fredonia Chapter, who chairs the statewide Contingent Employment Committee.

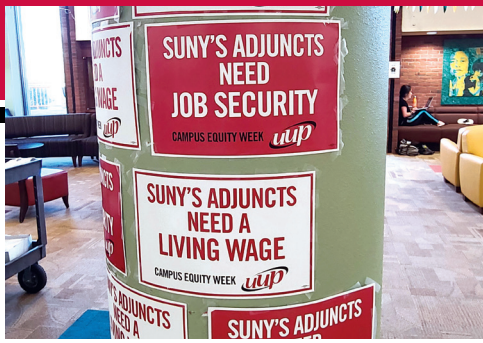
"We are so thankful that Bret is the chief negotiator, because he is really invested in it, and that investment is so important," said Fearman, referring to UUP Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin of the Albany Chapter. "That is so important, that he is forefronting contingent issues."

### **Hoping to build on gains**

The last UUP contract with the state, which technically expired in 2022 but remains in place during ne-

**Top:** Geneseo Chapter members at a lunch that kicked off their Campus Equity Week, during which UUP President Fred Kowal and Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin addressed the members about the ongoing contract negotiations.





**Above left:** Job security and a living wage are top contingent issues in this blitz of signs at Brockport. **Above center:** Solidarity for contingents at Old Westbury from, left, Annessa Babic, chapter officer for contingents; Peter Ikeler, chapter VPA, and Ryan Baker, a delegate for professionals. **Above right:** Anne Fearman of Fredonia, statewide chair of the UUP Contingent Employment Committee, says contingents hope to build on gains from the last contract during negotiations.

gotiations, achieved something that contingents had sought for years: minimum salaries for three-credit courses taught by contingent faculty. The minimums ranged over the length of the contract from \$2,500 to \$3,750 per course.

For the next contract, contingents are aiming for greater job security and the ability for long-term contingents to attain longer term appointments and full-time positions.

Key to highlighting concerns: making the most of Campus Equity Week in an efficient way, said Alan Witt, the Geneseo Chapter president. He coordinated with student groups and faculty members by asking if they would like to include a Campus Equity theme in events such as lectures or panel discussions which they were either already planning or were thinking of organizing. Kowal's great welcome message to members set the

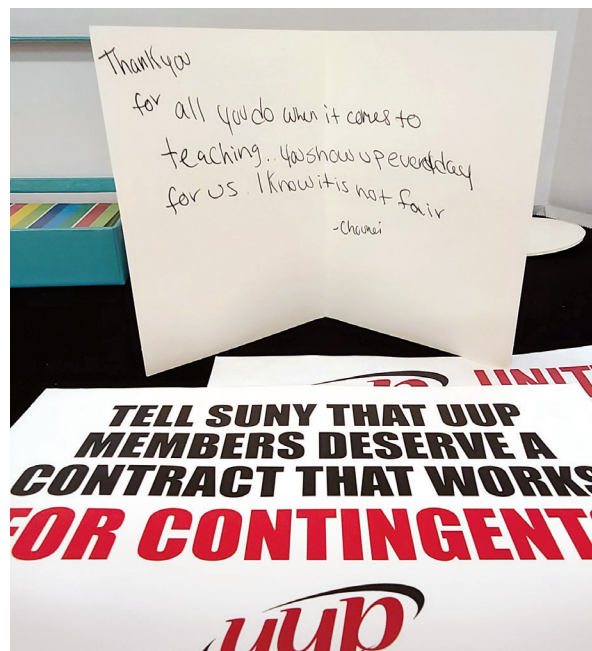
tone for a week in which one event after another kept contingent faculty very much on the collective mind of the campus.

"Even for people who couldn't attend the events,

**“ Even for people who couldn't attend the events, people looked at the public [campus] calendars and were blown away by the number of events. ”**

people looked at the public [campus] calendars and were blown away by the number of events,” Witt said.

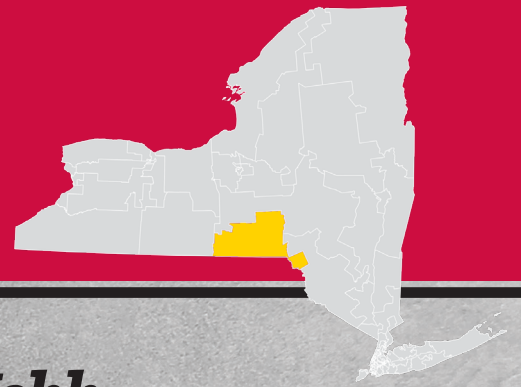
Witt's advice for other chapters that are short on time and long on enthusiasm for Campus Equity Week? Start planning early, work with existing student groups or regularly planned faculty events—and learn to delegate.



**Left:** A student's thanks to Brockport contingents. **Right:** Contingent and full-time faculty often join forces to highlight contingent issues. Here, contingent instructor Lindsay Weise, left, is joined by Jie Zhang, a full-time professor, center, and Brockport Chapter President Susan Orr, right.



# UUP MEMBER ELECTED



## Binghamton Chapter's Lea Webb heads to state Senate

**L**EA WEBB, A MEMBER OF THE BINGHAMTON UUP CHAPTER, HAS ADDED ANOTHER “FIRST” to her list of accomplishments: She won her first bid for statewide office in the Nov. 8 general election, and she will represent New York’s 52nd Senate District come January.

The district’s center is Binghamton, and the district includes more than two dozen small communities in the Southern Tier.

Webb, a Democrat, defeated a Republican challenger for the open seat. This is not her first elected public office; she was a member of the Binghamton City Council for eight years and was the first Black member of the council.

“We look forward to working with Lea Webb in the Senate,” UUP President Fred Kowal said after her victory. “She’s a strong supporter of the labor movement, she’s been an activist UUP member and she has a proven record of working for social justice. It’s exciting to see her take this next step.”

A lifelong Southern Tier resident and a first-generation college graduate, Webb holds degrees from SUNY Broome Community College and Binghamton University. She works at Binghamton University, where she develops diversity and inclusion training and programs for students, faculty and staff.

Outside of her educational career, Webb has worked to advance the political power of women and people of color.

She is a national trainer with the organization VoteRunLead, which encourages women—and especially women from underrepresented communities—to run for public office.

Webb is also a co-chair and co-founder of the Black Millennial Political Convention, which helps young Black progressives hone their political skills. And she is a founding board member of Local Progress, a national organization which now has chapters in several states and which seeks to empower local progressive activists in the political process.

» Lea Webb





## Pro-labor candidates prevail

### *UUP members, coalition partners, help claim victory in state, federal races*

**T**he general election on Nov. 8 may have been the most highly anticipated mid-term election in memory. The good news: Many of the anticipated problems at polling places did not materialize, and there were very few claims of voting irregularities or “stolen elections.”

And more good news: Many candidates who support UUP’s concerns and legislative agenda won their elections, including a number of lawmakers at both the state and federal level who were reelected and who have a proven record of support for public higher education.

“Voters across the nation made their voices heard on Election Night,” UUP President Fred Kowal wrote in a message to members, in which he thanked those who did text and phone banking, and who also traveled around New York and out of state in support of pro-labor, pro-public education candidates.

“We are grateful to all of our members who put in the time and effort during this crucial point in our democracy,” Kowal added.

### Election results roundup

#### **U.S. Senate:**

UUP members traveled to Pennsylvania to support Democrat **John Fetterman** in his successful Senate bid over Republican Mehmet Oz.

Democrats will retain their majority, with 51 seats in the Democratic Conference. The Senate seat in Georgia was decided for Democratic incumbent **Raphael Warnock**, following the closely watched Dec. 6 runoff.

The Senate victories ensure that UUP can continue to work closely with Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer, a strong ally of UUP.

#### **U.S. House of Representatives:**

The Republicans will have a narrow majority in the House. New York’s congressional districts 3, 4, 17, 19 and 22 went to Republican challengers. Democrat **Pat Ryan** defeated Republican Assembly member Colin Schmitt in the 18th District, with strong support from UUP New Paltz Chapter members in the general election and in Ryan’s special election in August.

UUP Cortland Chapter members worked hard on

behalf of **Josh Riley**, the Democratic candidate who narrowly lost his bid in the 19th District.

**Statewide races:** The Democratic gubernatorial ticket of **Gov. Kathy Hochul** and **Lt. Gov. Antonio Delgado** defeated Republican challengers Lee Zeldin and Alison Esposito. Many UUP members, including statewide Membership Development Officer Tom Hoey and statewide UUP Executive Board Member Patrick Romain campaigned for the Hochul-Delgado ticket. UUP’s new political action committee, the Higher Education Action Fund (HEAF), made a large donation toward the governor’s reelection. UUP members in the New York City metropolitan area helped with get-out-the-vote efforts in Brooklyn, which had the largest voter turnout in the state for the governor.

“Governor Hochul has been a friend to UUP during her first year in office, and there has been a noticeable change in support for SUNY during her tenure,” Kowal told members. “She delivered a historic level of funding to our system last year, while also working with us on several issues of great importance to our members. We look forward to working with her again next year and expanding upon what we accomplished in last year’s budget.”

**IN OTHER MAJOR STATE RACES,** Comptroller **Tom DiNapoli** and Attorney General **Letitia James** won reelection. Both have been allies of the labor movement.

#### **New York State Senate:**

The UUP Higher Education Action Fund made a sizeable donation to the Democratic Senate Campaign Committee, which helped Democrats across the state get reelected, and which also provided crucial support to senators who have shown their commitment to higher education and UUP’s membership. Democrats will maintain a comfortable governing majority.

UUP-supported Senate winners: Toby Ann Stavisky, 11th District; Iwen Chu, 17th District; Zellnor Myrie, 20th District; Michelle Hinchey, 41st District; Rachel May, 48th District; Samra Brouk, 55th District; Jeremy



**Pat Ryan**  
18th Congressional District



Cooney, 56th District; Sean Ryan, 61st District; Tim Kennedy, 63rd District; and John Mannion, the Democratic incumbent in the 50th District, whose victory secured the Senate supermajority.

## New York State Assembly

The Democratic supermajority will hold in the Assembly.

UUPers from the Buffalo area made more than 5,000 calls in support of the Assembly's Western New York Delegation, including UUP member **Monica**

“Many candidates who support UUP’s concerns and legislative agenda won their elections, including a number of lawmakers who have a proven record of support for public higher education.”

**Wallace**, who won reelection to the 143rd District.

In the Hudson Valley, the UUP New Paltz chapter was very supportive of newcomer **Sarahana Shrestha**, knocking on more than 1,200 doors in support of her successful bid for the 103rd District.

The UUP Higher Ed Action Fund donated to the Democratic Assembly Campaign Committee, which supported a number of candidates across the state who were in tight races. The UUP Higher Ed Action

Fund also made donations to key Assemblymembers who have been staunch allies to UUP. Thanks in part to the support of UUP, the Central New York, Western New York and Capital Region delegations were all re-elected.

Assemblymember **Patricia Fahy** was reelected in the 109th District, and has been named chair of the Assembly's Higher Education Committee.

Assemblymember **Gina Sillitti** won reelection in the 16th District.

In Queens, Assemblymembers **Stacy Pheffer Amato** and **Ron Kim** won reelection.

Central New York UUP members also worked hard for Democrat **Francis Conole**, who narrowly lost his bid for the 22nd Congressional District and conceded Nov. 16 to his Republican opponent.

## Ballot initiatives

UUP supported Proposition 1, the Clean Water, Clean Air and Green Jobs Environmental Bond Act. The proposition overwhelmingly passed. The bond act will provide more than \$500 million for zero-emission school buses and infrastructure, and more than \$400 million for green buildings, energy efficiency initiatives and renewable energy projects at state-owned properties, including SUNY four-year and community college campuses.



**Toby Ann Stavisky**  
11th Senate District



**Iwen Chu**  
17th Senate District



**Zellnor Myrie**  
20th Senate District



**Michelle Hinchey**  
41st Senate District



**Rachel May**  
48th Senate District



**John Mannion**  
50th Senate District



**Lea Webb**  
52nd Senate District

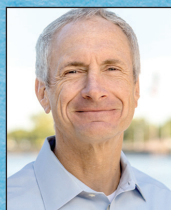


**Samra Brouk**  
55th Senate District



**Jeremy Cooney**  
56th Senate District

**NEW YORK SENATE & ASSEMBLY WINNERS SUPPORTED BY UUP**



**Sean Ryan**  
61st Senate District



**Gina Sillitti**  
16th Assembly District



**Ron Kim**  
40th Assembly District



**Kimberly Jean-Pierre**  
11th Assembly District



**Sarahana Shrestha**  
103rd District



**Patricia Fahy**  
109th Assembly District



**Monica Wallace**  
143rd Assembly District



Did you know that all UUP members qualify for

# PUBLIC SERVICE LOAN FORGIVENESS?



UUP MEMBERS  
HAVE ALREADY  
HAD MORE THAN  
**\$5 MILLION**  
IN FORGIVENESS!

## Virtual PSLF clinics held every payday.

Presented by your Statewide Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O'Bryan-Losee, [jobryan@uupinfo.org](mailto:jobryan@uupinfo.org)

Open to all UUP members, these 1.5-hour workshops talk you through the Income-Driven Repayment Plans AND Public Service Loan Forgiveness:

### Upcoming UUP Virtual Student Debt Clinic Webinar Dates:

February 1, 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM

February 15, 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM



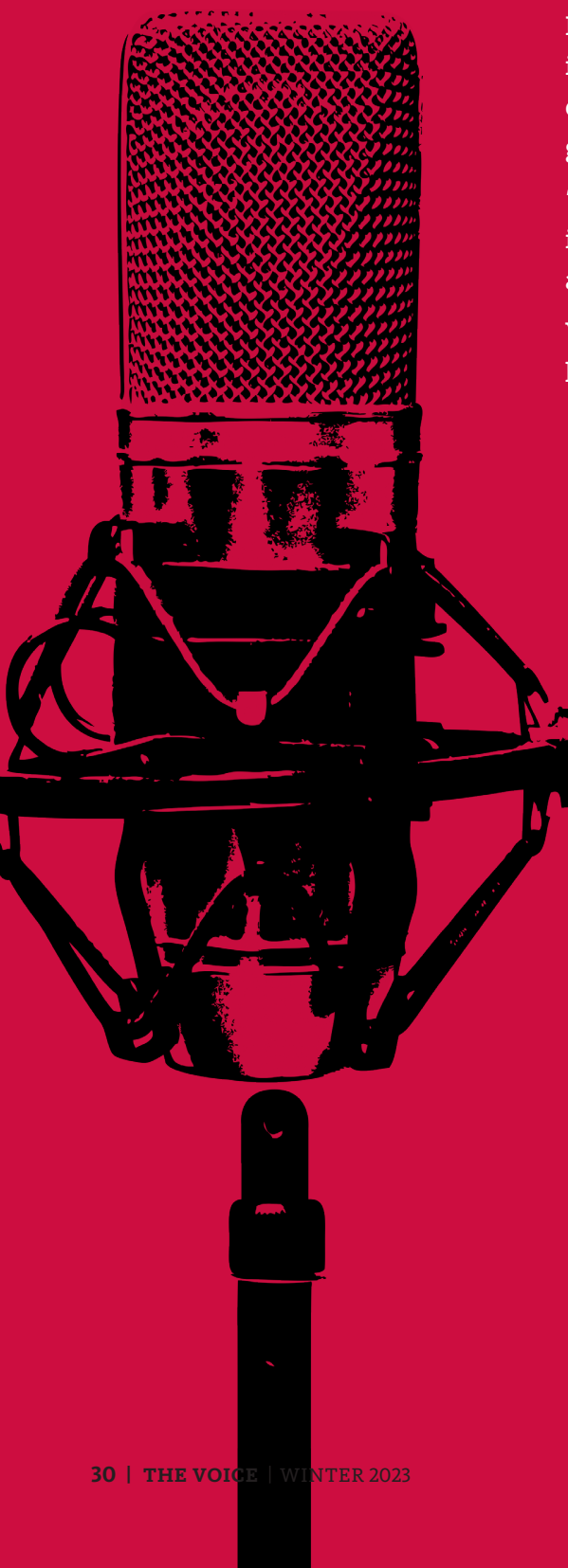
Register through the UUP Events Calendar

[UUPINFO.ORG/CALENDAR/](http://UUPINFO.ORG/CALENDAR/)



# 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, Google Podcasts, Spotify.com and Audible.com.

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

## EPISODE 1:

### UUP President Nuala Drescher

Drescher talks about her time in office (1981-1987) as the union's first—and only—woman president, her thoughts on former governor Mario Cuomo and her view on the future of unionism. A Distinguished Service Professor Emerita at the State University of New York College at Buffalo, Drescher oversaw the overwhelming ratification of two three-year contracts with the state.

## EPISODE 2:

### Systemic racism in Buffalo

Fred Kowal speaks with three leaders of Buffalo's Black community about systemic racism in Buffalo and the impact of the racially motivated May 14 mass shooting in Buffalo.

Guests include: Janique Curry, vice president of the Buffalo chapter of the National Action Network; Dr. Henry-Louis Taylor Jr., founding director of the Center for Urban Studies at the University at Buffalo and a professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the UB School of Architecture and Planning; and Pastor James Giles, co-founder of Back-to-Basic Outreach Ministries in Buffalo and leader of the Buffalo Peacemakers.

## EPISODE 3

### A conversation with AFT President Randi Weingarten

From gun safety reform and protecting students and teachers in the classroom to women's reproductive rights, public health care and the environment, American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten speaks truth to power.

On this episode, Weingarten offers some pointed opinions as she shares her thoughts on the U.S. Supreme Court's recent ruling that struck down *Roe v. Wade* and nullified the constitutional right that provided access to a safe abortion in the U.S. She also discusses gun violence and the need for more gun safety laws, President Biden's low poll numbers and the impact of recent Supreme Court decisions.



#### EPISODE 4:

### Addressing abortion rights in a post-Roe world

Guests are state Sen. Cordell Cleare, state Assemblymember Jessica González-Rojas and UUP statewide Vice President for Academics Alissa Karl. Cleare and Gonzalez-Rojas are prime sponsors of the Reproductive Freedom and Equity Program. If approved, the bill would set aside \$50 million to fund grants to help women access safe abortion services—including women traveling to New York from states where abortions are illegal. Cleare is also sponsoring a bill that would require SUNY to offer abortion services at all of its campuses.

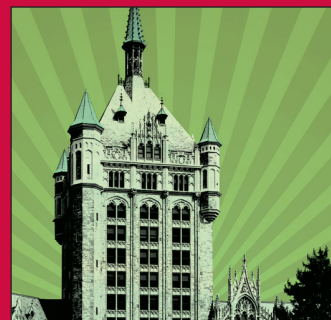
Kowal also speaks with VPA Karl (left), who is also the liaison to UUP's Women's Rights and Concerns Committee.

#### EPISODE 5:

### Environmental justice, electric cars and a greener SUNY

From finding new homes for desks and other surplus items at SUNY to electric cars, New York's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and the federal Inflation Reduction Act, this episode is fully focused on the environment.

Environmental Advocates NY Executive Director Peter Iwanowicz and Sue Fassler, director of sustainable operations at SUNY ESF, discuss the positive impacts both measures can have on the environment and how they advance environmental justice for low-income areas, communities of color and Tribal communities. Fassler is a UUP member who co-chairs UUP's statewide Environmental Issues and Advocacy Committee.



#### EPISODE 6

### Get your student loans forgiven under PSLF

Under the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program, borrowers who work in nonprofit or governmental jobs for 10 years or more and meet other program requirements can get their remaining student loans forgiven.

Sound simple? Navigating the PSLF program has been anything but easy.

In this episode, UUP statewide Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O'Bryan-Losee talks about the PSLF waiver. O'Bryan-Losee runs UUP's virtual student debt clinics, which have helped thousands of our members get more than \$5 million in student debt forgiven through PSLF. O'Bryan-Losee has had \$74,000 in student loans forgiven under PSLF.

#### EPISODE 7

### Union trailblazer Kate Mullany and the ALSC

Guests are American Labor Studies Center Executive Director Paul Cole and Jolene DiBrango, the chair of the ALSC Board of Directors and executive vice president of NYSUT. They talk about the nonprofit ALSC and its connection to female union trailblazer Kate Mullany.

The ALSC owns the Kate Mullany House in Troy, N.Y., which is a National Historic Landmark and a National Historic Site. Then 24 years old, Mullany, an Irish immigrant, organized 200 women in February 1864 and became the president of the Troy Collar Laundry Workers Union. Days after forming the union, the collar workers went on strike, demanding a 25 percent increase in wages and safer working conditions—which they won. In 1868, she became assistant secretary of the National Labor Union. She died in 1906.



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## » MEMBER BENEFITS

### Members to see gains in 2023 Flexible Spending Accounts

**U**UP-represented employees stand to gain in three significant ways with the 2023 Flexible Spending Account, a negotiated benefit which provides eligible employees with a way to pay for certain expenses using pre-tax dollars.

All three improvements address issues that can help members with work-life balance in the areas of health care, adoption, child care, elder care and the care of disabled dependents.

"These are important enhancements to the FSA programs that we, and other state unions, have long advocated for," UUP President Fred Kowal said in a message to members during the open enrollment period for the New York State Flexible Spending Account for 2023, which ran until Dec. 12, 2022. "I am happy to announce we have made progress on this."

#### » Health Care Spending Account carryover

The Health Care Spending Account lets employees set aside any amount from \$100 up to \$3,050 to pay for eligible health care expenses which are not paid for by health benefits coverage.

Under the new carryover policy, unused contributions will carry over to the next plan year so that enrollees can use these contributions. During the plan

year runout period, from Jan. 1 to March 31, plan year 2022 funds can still be used for 2022 expenses. At the end of that runout period, after March 31, any remaining 2022 funds up to the current Internal Revenue Service limit of \$610 will carry over into the 2023 account balance and can be used to cover 2023 expenses.

#### » Increased employer contribution to DCAA

The employer contribution has increased for 2023 by \$200. Under this program, an employer contribution is made to individual Dependent Care Advantage Accounts to help pay for child care, elder care or the care of disabled dependents. Employer contributions vary according to salary range.

SALARY	DCAA EMPLOYER CONTRIBUTION
Under \$30,000 .....	\$1,000
\$30,001 - \$40,000 .....	\$900
\$40,001 - \$50,000 .....	\$800
\$50,001 - \$60,000 .....	\$700
\$60,001 - \$70,000 .....	\$600
Over \$70,000 .....	\$500

#### » DCAA and Adoption Grace Period

The grace period allows represented employees an additional 2 ½ months to incur dependent care or adoption-related expenses. Enrollees may use any funds remaining in their accounts at the end of 2022 to pay for expenses incurred between Jan. 1 and March 15, 2023. Enrollees must submit claims by March 31.

**For more information on any negotiated benefits administered by the UUP Benefit Trust Fund, call 800-887-3863.**