The Forum

At The Forum we write about the pressing issues our members face on campus. We do so from the perspective of labor, connecting our local concerns to those of the state-wide agenda of UUP, the national crisis facing public higher education and the issues of working people in the US and beyond.

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Inflection Point
Aaron Major, Chapter President

Let's hope that this time, finally, for real, is the end of austerity budgeting for SUNY. The newly passed state budget is by no means perfect, but it is a dramatic improvement over the Cuomo-era austerity that all SUNY campuses have struggled under for over a decade. Between the nearly $50 million to fund the immediate closing of the "TAP Gap," $13 million to support the Excelsior Scholarship program, $53 million to hire new, full-time faculty and $60 million in new operating aid our campus is in line to see significant state financial support restored to its balance sheet.

But we know that there is a big difference between having the money and spending it in ways that supports students and esnures our long term strength as an institution. I am sure that no one needs to be reminded of the deep cuts that we were all forced to absorb due to concerns of the COVID-19 pandemic's potential financial impacts. Those cuts to resources and—even more critically—to personnel have been made all the worse by the loss of many of our colleagues who have either retired or taken employment elsewhere. If this new commitment of state resources to its institutions of public higher education is going to be something that we can build on, if it is going to be that inflection point that restores our colleges and universities to their rightful role as vital pieces of our social infrastructure, then we need to once and for all throw aside the faulty logic and false assumptions that formed the ideological justification for austerity budgeting.

On our campus, as it has been across the SUNY system and colleges and universities throughout the country, financial austerity has been justified by a growth-through-enrollment model of campus financing. In essence, that model tells us that you can build a great university simply by attracting more students. More students bring more tuition dollars, those tuition dollars support more programs and services, which in turn attract more students. This magical, "virtuous cycle" thinking always appears whenever political elites decide that they just don't want to support some public institution anymore, and it always fails to deliver on its promises. What it has delivered has been disastrous for students and their families, who have picked up the tab for cuts to public higher education, for campuses which have had to cut or under-resource programs and services, and for the idea of higher education itself, which has gone

Course Modality

It's hard to believe it's been two years since the pandemic began. In some ways, we navigated it well. Transmission on campus has been quite limited. Faculty pivoted to online education in the middle of a semester and then conducted a full-year of successful online teaching. But we all know the burden and the strain this took on an already bare bones campus, pushed to the breaking point by years of austerity, underfunding and a refusal to hire replacements for tenure-line and contingent faculty who retire or leave for other jobs. Nearly every department or unit we talk to reports the difficulty they have in maintaining their most basic day-to-day functions. But, shockingly, the budgetary news is, at least at the state level, good this year. We look forward to seeing how our administration will use the new money injected into SUNY to begin to repair the profound damage the last ten years of austerity have created.

Navigating the pandemic has also exposed some fissures in shared governance. Many will have heard us talk about course modality. The University's position on this has been strikingly inconsistent. In-person teaching is now considered an essential job duty, when manifestly it is not, since we taught online for a year and a half. At the same time as we are being told that all courses must return to their "pre-COVID modalities," we are also being required to register 50% of our courses with SUNY Central as able to be offered online. This requirement is billed as a precautionary measure, an opportunity for departments to take advantage of should they choose. Even assuming that is the reason for this push, the fact remains that how departments structure their curriculums, and the extent to which they want, or are able, to teach their courses on-line, is a matter for the faculty to decide through their departments and, ultimately, Senate. We believe that faculty control over the curriculum, includes how courses are taught and extends to semester-by-semester decisions about specific courses.

Unfortunately, we at UUP know of multiple cases where members with serious and well-documented medical difficulties were told they had to teach in person. Some did so, at great risk to their mental and physical well-being. Others took medical leave, requiring departments to cancel courses out from under their students. Others retired. UUP fully agrees with the administration that we are an in-person campus. But this must not mean that we leave our most vulnerable members behind. Nor should it mean that departments' traditional ability to manage their curricula—to decide that a few of their courses might work online in order to protect and, in some cases, retain a valuable instructor—should be taken away from them. Even more frustrating, the dictate that all courses must be taught in pre-COVID modalities is demonstrably false. In the pre-pandemic Fall of 2019, CAS taught 43 courses online. In the Fall of 2021, the first semester back in person, CAS taught 166 courses online! What this suggests is that in person teaching is not, in fact, essential for everyone; that online teaching was authorized, but in strikingly unequal ways. And this all occurred despite the CAS Faculty council overwhelmingly approving a resolution at its April 8th, 2020 meeting, affirming, among other things, "the principles articulated in the College of Arts and Sciences By-Laws, namely that responsibility for the planning and conduct of the College's academic programs are vested in the hands of its faculty" and that "no CAS faculty member shall be directed to teach in-person if they believe their course can be responsibly delivered in an alternative format, and if they elect to teach remotely out of concerns for their own health and the health of their students and colleagues." We reaffirm these principles here.

By the Numbers:

21.4% Amount that K-12 teachers' weekly wages were lower than their similarly educated peers in 2018 in the U.S.

12% Amount of the same pay disparity in NY State

59 Percentage of teachers who report taking on extra work to pay their bills

4.7% Decline in public school employment nation-wide (including teachers, bus drivers and custodians) between February 2020 and December 2021

5.3% Inflation rate December 2021

4.7% Average hourly wage increase in December 2021

2.81 Trillions of dollars in 2021 pretax corporate profits

25% Increase of corporate profits from 2020 to 2021

70 Years ago that corporate profits were as high as in 2021

137% Increase in Chipotle CEO pay from 2020 to 2021

38 Millions dollars: salary of Chipotle CEO pay in 2021

50 Cents: Average 2021 wage increase for Chipotle workers

2.6% Effective Corporate tax rate levied by state and local governments in 2017

43 Billions of dollars in lost revenue to these same governments

Statistics from: https://popular.info/p/inflation-profiteering?s=w and https://www.epi.org/

Job Security for Contingents
David Banks, Officer for Contingents

I have this vivid memory of April, 2020. It was clear that we were not going to come back to campus, and I had to go to my office to pick up my dying plants. Our union siblings in CSEA had diligently taped the doors to monitor which rooms to clean. I removed the tape from my door and entered. I gathered up everything I needed to do my job from home, leaving only some old books, office supplies, and my rickety campus-issued computer. I had just started as a full-time professor, and it was already time to say goodbye to my first office.

Nearly two years later I spend much more time in my office, but I haven't brought anything back. The walls are still bare, and my plants remain at home. That's because I don't know how much longer I'll be able to keep that office--not because of Covid but because of a different disaster: the state of our Lecturer contracts. Like an increasingly large number of my colleagues, I don't know if I will have a job in the Fall. The contracts get shorter as the lists of responsibilities gets longer.

In the last thirty years our campuses have changed dramatically. In 1995 30.7% of UAlbany faculty were non-tenure track. Today its 54.7%. Across the SUNY system half of all academic faculty are contingent, meaning they have no pathway to permanency. We are all stuck in limbo, wondering if we will have a job at the end of the summer. Whether we should bring our plants home. That is no way to treat dedicated workers and it certainly is not a way to run a university.

This university gives teaching awards for community engagement because they know that the best educators and researchers are woven into the fabric of the surrounding neighborhoods. Transformative research and inspirational teaching takes time and commitment. All that we ask is that the University care about us as much as we care about our jobs and our students. Nothing more.

How many times have you had a student or a colleague ask a question about the next school year and you can't answer it? Either because you can't guarantee you'll be there or because you simply don't exist that far into the future in the dozens of systems we use to keep track of everything. How many times have you put off replacing your dying car or planning a vacation because you don't know if you'll have a job come September? How often do you think about your health insurance? Why does our university also operate a food pantry for its faculty, staff, and students? Where is the money going?

At the start of this pandemic management told us to brace for an anticipated $59 million budget shortfall. That never happened, and now we may even have more money coming our way as federal relief funds flow into state coffers. But ask yourself: why do we get firm numbers when the numbers are bad but never any clear guidance on what to expect when things look good? I remember getting lots of emails about what was being taken away and how we would have to do more with less. But now, when things are not so bleak, there's silence.

That's because they know we have a shopping list. Your union has fought hard to get longer terms, higher pay, more benefits-eligible part-timers, and pathways to permanency. We believe part-time contingents should be paid more for the classes they teach. The university must create a real, predictable promotional ladder for that rewards seniority and dedication with longer terms and higher pay. We also want more benefits to go to a wider swath of the faculty so that when our own graduate students start teaching, they don't get a pay cut.

Our current contract ends this year and your UUP negotiating committee has already held dozens of meetings and workshops to gather the information they need to get an even better contract next year. But negotiations don't begin and end in a board room. They happen on campuses and in the streets. SUNY management needs to feel the pressure from within and without. They need to know all eyes are on them and they won't hear the end of it until we get a contract that respects the care and hard work we put into our jobs. We need to ask our own campus for concrete gains for our contingent employees. Contingent academics teach the majority of general education classes at the University, but we also teach across the entire curriculum. We are essential

to the University's day-to-day operations and yet this is still not recognized across campus. At a minimum we need to ask for:

1)   **Increased pay** for courses. $4,000 is not a fair wage for the work required.
2)   **Increased appointment terms.** As soon as the pandemic hit the University immediately reduced the standard terms of appointment for its contingent faculty. We are told this wasn't policy but was done to preserve flexibility. But what management calls "flexibility" actually just means "people losing jobs." And even if there wasn't a universal policy, we have heard of enough individual cases of 1 year contracts reduced to semesters, of three year contracts—even for contingents who have worked here for decades—reduced to one. This is unacceptable. Gains in job security are not meaningful if they are rescinded at the first sign of crisis.
3)   **Pathways to Permanency.** Long-time academic contingents should be able to have the same kind of job security as tenure-track faculty. If someone has been good enough to teach in a department for twenty years, then why not offer them permanency?
4)   **Conversion pathways** from part-time to full-time. A large number of our contingent academics are part-timers, teaching two classes a semester. The University must find ways to provide these employees with full-time positions and a living wage.

But none of these demands will happen automatically. They will only be the result of concerted effort on our part. Even if you teach just one class for UAlbany, as I did for three years, I hope to see you out at the rallies fighting for a better future for your union siblings. When we put on the red, we get the green. In our pockets and maybe even in our offices.

Shared Governance at SUNY Albany
Paul Stasi, VP for Academics

I was a member of the University Senate's Ad-hoc Committee on Shared Governance in the AY 2020-2021. The Committee issued a [report] with a set of recommendations, many of which I agree with. I wholeheartedly endorse the Report's suggestion

that faculty need to take up the mantle of governance themselves, particularly through increased communication from the Senate and fora like the one held on April 11th. I also agree that, in general, our University has relied on ad-hoc committees to make decisions about curricula rather than working through existing governance structures. I also added a few recommendations of my own in an appendix which I will reproduce here, prefaced by a few general remarks.

As the Committee report notes, the literature on shared governance is vast, though it is fair to say it comes to some clear general conclusions. Faculty, generally, feel themselves shut out of increasingly corporatized universities, and the efficacy of shared governance often comes down to university culture. This latter point arises from an essential ambiguity— one that is enshrined in Albany's own documents on the matter. If governance is "shared" it is difficult to know exactly where one party's authority ends and the other begins. Faculty are meant to have discretion over matters of curricula. But clearly budgetary decisions—as our own "budget metrics" exercise illustrates—are, definitionally, about curricula. There is often no clear line between curricular decisions and management decisions.

We are told at Albany, often by the faculty themselves, that we are only "consultative" and that final authority for decisions rests with the administration. Perhaps. But given the essential, indeed constitutive, ambiguity inherent in the idea of shared governance, faculty do themselves a grave disservice by continually asserting the inefficacy of our consultative role. Arguing for your own powerlessness is a bad start to any negotiation and, perhaps, partly explains the difficulty in getting people to participate in governance structures. What we must, instead do, is assert our fundamental right to have a say in the structure of the university and then act upon this assertion.

There are structural changes that, in my view, will help. These include removing administrators from Senate committees and creating a regular review of the administration by faculty (both addressed below), which will give people a sense that their opinions matter and are heard. We have been told

that we are not allowed to review administrators. This is false. Supervisors review other administrators as part of the performance review program that all professionals go through. There is nothing in any of our founding documents that prevents the University Senate from undertaking a regular review of the administration to get a sense of the faculty's confidence in campus leadership. Moreover, changes to Senate leadership structures and changes to make Senate a more responsive, representative body would, in my opinion, help provide a stable basis from which faculty could more effectively assert their role in the shared governance of the University.

At the same time, it is worth acknowledging why so many faculty feel cynical about their consultative role. The huge committees involved in strategic planning, for instance, might seem inclusive on their face, but their very size tended to diffuse the input of any individual member and, in any case, were always then controlled and managed by steering committees largely drawn from management. Similarly, the budget metrics exercise seemed, to many faculty, flawed from the beginning. "Feedback" was frequently solicited, but only ever adopted in the most superficial ways. More important, decisions about which departments to fund should not be made through a market-based model that pits departments against one another in a competition for students and resources. The university is not a software company. Instead, we should have a rational planning process that thinks about the University as what it is: an enterprise that has intellectual achievement at its core.

Consultation, simply put, should be part of the basic procedures of the University. On matters of curricula—which is to say the large majority of decisions that occur at the University—the faculty should be asked to weigh in at crucial stages in the formation of plans, rather than to rubber-stamp it at the end or to offer "suggestions" to relatively formed documents. And then if presented with plans that have already been developed, faculty should weigh in, using the procedures of the Senate to offer official positions on the administration's plans. Indeed this is the Senate's role even under the most diluted notion of consultation, which means, at a minimum, that the faculty, as a whole, offers its opinion on

any significant curricular or structural change to the University. If faculty needs to take up the mantle of shared governance, then, so must the administration.

My original appendix

1) **Faculty review of Administrators.** In my view, the Academic and Professional Faculty must be given the ability to review the performance of the Administrators on a regular basis. What exists now is an MC (Management-Confidential) version of the performance programs all UUP employees undergo annually. But administrators being reviewed by their supervisors is fundamentally different from regular review of administrator effectiveness by faculty. Instituting such reviews, which would be anonymized and made public, would be a very easy step to increasing the effectiveness of shared governance. The result would be an increase in the faculty's sense that they have a say in the workings of the campus. And if a large enough percentage of the faculty took part in the exercise, it would produce an increased sense of accountability in the administration.

2) **The place of Administration on Senate Committees.** A few years ago, the administrators who sit on the Faculty Senate became ex officio non-voting members. This was an important step but, in my view, it is not enough. The administration should not sit on committees of the University Senate. It makes little sense for the administration to be part of a body whose primary role is to advise the administration. The one argument consistently made in favor of the current arrangement is that it facilitates communication between Senate leadership and the Administration. Clearly this is beneficial, but it would be easy enough to build in regular meetings of governance leaders while also allowing the Senate the autonomy to debate the plans of the administration without the potentially silencing presence—real or imagined—of the very administrators proposing these plans. I will use an analogy from UUP. It would be impossible for our Executive Committee to openly discuss the issues we address with the freedom we address them if members of the administration were present. It would be equally impossible for our union to function without regular L/M (Labor/Management) meetings. The meetings of CGL (Campus

Governance Leadership) could be conceived as a governance version of L/M. This change would, in my view, help solidify the Senate's autonomy from the administration.

3) **Senate Communication.** Simply put, the Senate needs to do a much better job of communicating the work that it does. Regular email communication to the campus community should be instituted, including summaries of each meeting and of any resolutions or actions items passed. These need not be exhaustive. They should also be posted on the Senate's website. But blast emails will enhance people's awareness of what Senate is up to and encourage them to imagine themselves as constituents of what is, after all, a representative body doing work on their behalf. At the same time, the Senate should consider running more public forums to promote debate and discussion among the faculty about pressing campus issues. It is striking, for instance, that the Senate never addressed the turn to remote teaching during the pandemic in any public way. Engaging the campus community in active dialogue would help facilitate, and indeed amplify, the faculty's role in the running of the university.

4) **Department/Unit Election of Senators.** Relatedly, it seems that we should try to promote the idea that Senators represent the interests of the bodies in whose name they ostensibly serve. This seems to me a two-way street. The election of Senators from departments/units—rather than, as is now common practice, the appointment of these Senators—might encourage both the units and the Senators to see themselves as representatives. This would then facilitate more regular reporting from Senators to their constituents and, similarly, help constituents to see the Senators as people to whom they can appeal when important issues arise.

5) **Change in the Senate Leadership Structure.** This last is likely the most controversial and I don't have an obvious or clear solution to what I perceive to be a substantive problem. Currently the Senate Leadership is structured as three-year commitment: incoming, current and past chair. The result of this structure is that an individual is only the chair of the Senate for one year. As with most new positions, this one seems to have a considerable learning curve. Anecdotal conversations with people who have served in these roles suggest that you are just getting used to the role when you enter a new one. The tri-partite structure is obviously designed to help mitigate this problem, allowing the immediate past chair to advise the current chair while easing the incoming chair into the role. But it seems to me it would be better if the chair was chair for two years, with the possibility of renewing the role once. This would allow that individual to grow into the role with the immediate result that the Senate would likely be able to conduct its business more efficaciously, since the chair would not be constantly learning the ropes on the job. Of course, these positions are difficult to fill. Increasing the time commitment would make that harder. But then some change in the structure would also be required, since it might not make sense for someone to be incoming chair for two years. Or perhaps we could eliminate the role of "immediate past chair" and have an incoming chair for two years and a chair for two years. Or the "incoming chair" could perhaps be something more like a "vice" or "assistant" chair without the automatic assumption that that individual would immediately become chair. Regardless, something that would create greater continuity in the leadership role would, in my view, strengthen the Senate immeasurably.

**Questions, Comments, Concerns?
Write to the Editor at
pstasi27@gmail.com**

The following document has been endorsed by the UUP Albany Chapter Executive and will guide our advocacy around improving telecommuting and remote work options for our members. It is based on the input of the some ninety Chapter professionals who participated in our February open forum on telecommuting and was drafted by an ad hoc committee of UUP members—Karen Chico Hurst, Amanda Cosgriff, Nicole DeSorbo, Leslie Hayner, Alison Hosier, Damira Pon, and Penny Stroebeck—chaired by Janna Harton. A big "thank you" to all of the committee members for their thoughtfulness and time in putting a document together that captures our members' concerns with the current implementation of telecommuting and remote work on our campus and hopes for improving this program.

Principles to Guide a Revised UAlbany Telecommuting Policy, March 31, 2022

Initially compelled by the COVID-19 pandemic, many organizations are now recognizing the benefits of remote work to their employees as well as their organizations and are making telecommuting a normalized and permanent part of their operations. While the University at Albany also followed the pandemic telecommuting trend, UAlbany has not yet fully embraced the benefits that remote work offers, including those related to recruitment and retention of employees, facilitating employee work-life balance, and maximizing the efficiency of campus operations. A recent study[1] show that "toxic" corporate culture is a predictor of attrition and that remote work options boost retention. Remote work is not new and employees working remotely are often just as, or more productive, than traditional employees. Research indicates employees are more productive and engaged when they have the freedom to work remotely.[2]

UAlbany's current telecommuting guidelines only reference benefits to campus operations and do not incorporate elements of SUNY's telecommuting guidance which recognize the role that well-crafted telecommuting policies can play in recruiting and <u>retaining happier</u> and more productive employees.

1 https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/toxic-culture-is-driving-the-great-resignation/
2 David Burkus, Leading from Anywhere: The Essential Guide to Managing Remote Teams, 2021.

They also make no reference to the role that telecommuting can play in achieving goals of accessibility, diversity, inclusion and equity.

UAlbany professionals want telecommuting options. Over 400 professionals responded to a recent UUP survey and more than 90% said that they want telecommuting and remote work opportunities, but only a third have been approved to telecommute. 30% reported being discouraged from applying by someone in their supervisory chain and 33% reported feeling discouraged by the tone set by campus messaging around telecommuting and so never applied.

These findings point to the need for a **revised, clear, uniform and flexible telecommuting and remote work policy that meets both unit and employee needs and that is supported at all levels of administration and broadly implemented across UAlbany's operations.** That policy should be built around the following principles.

1.   **Flexibility, trust and respect are essential** to an effective telecommuting policy and improved campus climate. The campus' Telecommuting Policy must begin from the assumption that professionals are committed to the University and its mission.

2.   **Supporting work-life balance, which is top of mind for employees and essential to recruitment and retention.** Employees need to know employers value their time and health and that employers recognize this is important for all, and not just a matter for those with special situations (e.g., younger children).

3.   **Remote and flexible work options (including telecommuting, compressed workweek scheduling, and flextime) support campus operations** by expanding our services and reach by prioritizing highly effective and advanced delivery of our mission and allowing more students, faculty, staff, alumni and external constituents to access support and resources where and when it is best for them. Even prior to the pandemic student demand was increasing for modern virtual and accessible services that fit better with students' school, work, and life schedules. UAlbany must address these needs to effectively compete with other institutions.

4. **No single model fits all.** Each unit and individual has different needs and policies and procedures must be sufficiently flexible to allow all facets of campus operations to benefit from remote work and telecommuting.

These core principles suggest that the following, specific elements should be incorporated to a revised telecommuting and remote work policy consistent with current SUNY guidelines.

1. **Immediate supervisors should be given primary responsibility for remote work decisions** as they best know their unit's needs and parameters. Overly complex approval processes and additional levels of redundant approval reduce the institution's agility and efficiency in meeting day to day demands. Employees and supervisors should work together to review/revise work plans.

2. **There should be a clear appeal process for employees** who believe supervisors are not appropriately implementing the telecommuting policy. It is incumbent on unit management to explain why in-person work is required (beyond a generic "operational need"), with an opportunity for employees to respond, and, should there remain disagreement, a reasonable process for resolution. If denied, there should be a clear process for reapplying.

3. **Employees should have flexible use of telecommuting within the 50% time standard.** Wherever possible, employees should be approved a percentage of telecommuting time and given discretion to use this as fits their professional obligation. Unnecessarily rigid scheduling of telecommuting days/times is operationally inefficient and does not respect the professional campus community. Not all employees in a unit may be required concurrently in-person and some employees may prefer different work hours. This may allow units to spread available office hours and increase access without increasing total work hours. **Units requiring fixed in-person schedules should distribute work broadly across the unit,** maximizing use of telecommuting time equitably across all employees.

4. **Liberal allowance of alternate work locations for summer/winter sessions, inclement weather** and other appropriate instances when students are not on campus should be implemented. Re-

mote work should also be used in situations where in-person work is hazardous or where work locations are difficult to access (e.g., inclement weather/hazardous travel conditions), or individual cases where employees have health and safety concerns.

5. **Documentation of telecommuting work should mirror that of in-person work,** without adding to workload, being as simple and minimal as possible to maintain compliance with state requirements. Like in-person work, professionals' telecommuting work should be supervised consistent with the professional obligations articulated in performance programs.

6. **Encouraging hybrid meetings should be part of our telecommuting guidelines.** Hybrid meetings contribute to equity and productivity. Making meetings more equitable is not just a social good, it is an imperative. Online meetings have extended our reach and work with more people and can facilitate breaking down silos often found in large institutions. Hybrid meetings not only allow telecommuters to participate in discussions, they enable those with disabilities, health accommodations, unanticipated needs for flexibility, tight schedules, or work locations other than the main campus (e.g., East Campus, ETEC, traveling) to more easily participate in conversations and decision-making.

7. **Supervisor training is needed** to ensure appropriate, uniform and equitable telecommuting and to reinforce models of trust and success. Supervisors should understand, for example, that:
● units should not perpetuate old operating models when telecommuting will better serve the institution and employees;
● telecommuting requests should not be denied based on job title/unit or an individual's health situation (e.g., recovery from a surgery that doesn't impact successful job completion);
● telecommuting is not intended as a substitute for child or elder care; and
● telecommuting should not negatively impact performance evaluations or promotions.
● remote work should be done in an appropriate alternate space to ensure compliance with state mandates, risk management measures, etc.

Supervisor and employee support groups may be helpful in developing and encouraging best practices and for advice on improving plans and for creating a more consistent campus culture around telecommuting and remote work. In alignment with UUP and the university's shared commitment to collaboration and consultation, we look forward to working with a committee of university professionals and appropriate administrators to develop an updated telecommuting policy and process.

Patrick Romaine,
VP for Professionals Report:

I have been focused on a range of issues as your Vice President for Professionals.

• We have had great success at New Employee Orientations getting members to sign their Membership cards.
• We have been hearing reports that professional faculty are leaving the University because they are unable to work 100% remotely. Often, they leave because the pay is higher as well. These departures are causing workload increases: those of us who remain are forced to do more work to make up for our departing colleagues.
• We are also hearing reports that ITS, in particular, is having difficulty retaining employees because of limited telecommuting arrangements. Jobs are being advertised but they are not being filled.
• We are planning to hold workshops on Permanent Appointment, Performance Programs and Evaluations. Stay tuned for details about whether these will be in-person or on Zoom.
• I've been hearing from members concerned about the salary compression remediation process. UUP statewide has a link for members to share concerns, thoughts and questions regarding salary compression: https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/UUPSalaryCompression

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Faculty Workload,
The Issue that Never Goes Away
Paul Stasi, VP for Academics

The administration has recently shared with both Senate and UUP leadership a draft framework for the evaluation of faculty productivity. This effort once again raises concerns that such a framework will be used to increase teaching loads. To this end, we reprint in modified form an article we've run many times now on academic workload.

To begin at the beginning: workload is a mandatory subject of negotiation. Management has the right to review our workload and adjust the elements of our professional obligation: teaching, research and service. But they cannot unilaterally raise the total amount of work we do without promotion or compensation. What this means is that an increase in one area of our professional obligation requires a concomitant reduction in another area. If, for instance, a Dean directs a faculty member to teach additional classes, the university must reduce that faculty member's research or service obligations. Importantly, what determines workload is past practice, on the one hand, and departmental/unit norms on the other.

This is why it is surprising to us to hear from academic faculty and administrators, who reference a 3-3 teaching load as if this was some universal standard across the disparate departments that make up the university. This idea comes from a 1989 document called the "O'Leary Memo" written by then-President Vincent O'Leary. Since it was not negotiated, it is non-binding, merely a statement of management's view rather than settled policy. The O'Leary memo states that the normal teaching load for faculty across the university is a 3-3, with reductions for graduate teaching and research, allowing faculty to teach a 2-2. In other words, the O'Leary memo itself contradicts the notion that workload is unit dependent, asserting, instead, a university-wide policy that ignores the case law emphasizing past practice and historic norms. Furthermore, the O'Leary memo, bizarrely, imagines a full professional obligation to consist entirely of teaching, with release for the "additional" activities of research and graduate teaching (service is conspicuously absent

from the document). Most academic faculty on campus would be shocked to learn that research is not part of their usual professional obligation.

The irony, of course, is that research is at the heart of the desire to police faculty productivity. It is literally the only thing "productivity" refers to. Administration review of faculty work is aimed almost entirely at academic faculty deemed to be unproductive. That this ignores the ebb and flow of academic life is clear enough. Service burdens are heavy at some moments, lighter at others; graduate students come and go; research leads to break-throughs and dead-ends. But the core problem goes further: The idea of a review of faculty productivity is built on the mythical notion that the university is replete with deadwood faculty who have managed to shirk work only because of a lack of proper ad-ministrative oversight—a shibboleth of both cam-pus administrators and the far-right.

As we have pointed out, time and again, if faculty are unproductive this is largely because they are not given the structural and institutional support to be productive. There are precious few dollars for faculty travel—recently, in the College of Arts and Sciences, none. Sabbaticals, though welcome, come only every seven years. And with fewer and fewer faculty on campus the service burden falls on a smaller and smaller pool of available workers. When we talk to our colleagues on campus—re-gardless of department or unit—they all report the same thing: everyone is stretched as far as they can possibly go. At a recent academic workload meeting the notion that we work 37.5 hours a week was met with open derision. Everyone works more than that. And everyone on campus, including the administra-tion, knows this.

But the only remedy for an unproductive faculty member is the one thing in the professional obliga-tion of academic faculty that the administration can directly control: teaching load. This is problematic in many respects. First, it treats teaching as a punish-ment, hardly a solution that is likely to best serve our students. Moreover, it decreases the ability of the faculty member to correct the perceived problem. Indeed, we have argued that for any such effort to be effective it must, first, alert the faculty member of a problem and, secondly, provide a pro-bationary period for the problem to be corrected. If the University administration wishes to increase academic faculty productivity, it needs to promote policies that help us do our research. Directing academic faculty who are having difficulty with their research to spend significantly more time teaching can only hamper our ability to conduct research.

At the same time the University continues to artic-ulate the importance of our status as a Research 1 institution. This, we suspect, is behind the de-sire to ramp up the review of faculty productivity. And the fact of the matter is that even if academic faculty are forced to teach more, they will continue to produce research if they wish to remain part of the profession to which they have dedicated their entire working lives. Everyone also knows this. This means it is virtually impossible to imagine such a plan operating, as it must, within the confines of management's contractual obligation not to increase the overall workload of its faculty. The same can be said for the recently floated idea that faculty are somehow required to teach at least one course per semester. Surely the administration knows that most prestigious research grants—almost the only form of research the University seems to recognize—would require its awardee to not teach for the period of the award. This is precisely how they allow faculty to do their research: by relieving them of other duties. The fact that the administration feels the need to enforce a teaching requirement is a tacit admission that its years of cuts have pushed departments to the breaking point, unable to meet their basic re-quirements if a faculty member is awarded a presti-gious grant or fellowship. We encounter an obvious contradiction: the administration cannot simultane-ously increase our research and our teaching. Blood from stones.

What most faculty feel, then, is that they are in-creasingly unable to conduct the research that they actually want to do because of diminished support from the university and because they are overbur-dened by other kinds of labor—assessment, advise-ment, recruitment, retention, committees, increased numbers of graduate students, various forms of reporting demanded by management and picking up the slack for retired and departing colleagues. This has never been more true than now, in the after-math of the pandemic.

Furthermore efforts to increase teaching are often put forward in the name of equity, which would be comical if it wasn't so pernicious. For we all know that service burdens fall unequally in departments. Well-document gender and racial disparities exist. In a University with few faculty of color, these faculty are consistently called upon to serve on committees as diversity representatives. Research consistently shows women Associate Professors do more service than their male counterparts with predictably longer gaps between tenure and promotion to full.[1]

Likewise, a growing body of research has shown how the pandemic disproportionately disrupted the research of women, who often had to pick up additional childcare and other duties at home.[2] How is punishing them for such deep-seated social problems going to promote equity?

What, then, is to be done? For good and ill, the labor of oversight will largely fall on departments. On the one hand, this adds another administrative task to an already overburdened faculty. But the good news, here, is that if the oversight of faculty productivity operates at the department level, we will be able to manage it in disciplinarily-specific ways. Departments should strive to take into account the full breadth of academic work, the necessary ebb and flow of insight and discovery that accompanies actual research, and value the labor that goes on outside of page production and grant dollars. We need not believe in the need for annual review, a time frame that rarely corresponds to the time of research; in fact, I imagine most of us find the notion distasteful if not outright insulting. If a process is foisted upon us, we can take control of it so that it reflects, to the best of our abilities, our disciplinarily distinct priorities and values. But this must take place at the department level. The union cannot—and will not—participate in any effort to increase the workload of our members.

1 https://www.aaup.org/article/ivory-ceiling-service-work#.YkC6rbgpBE5 and more recently: https://www.insidehighered.com/advice/2018/05/10/ensuring-equity-service-work-opinion
2 https://sr.ithaka.org/publications/the-disproportionate-impact-of-the-pandemic-on-women-and-caregivers-in-academia/

Finally, if you feel you are being penalized for a perceived lack of work in any area of your obligation, come talk to us. We are here to help and to ensure that academics are respected for the work they do rather than penalized for the imaginary labor they are supposed to accomplish under conditions that make it more and more difficult to do so.

Inflection Point (cont. from pg. 1)

from being a public good to a commercial enterprise.

Here at UAlbany, stubborn adherence to the growth-through-enrollment model has gone from sad and dispiriting to the absurd. Year after year our enrollments have remained basically flat despite rebranding efforts, modern marketing campaigns, the launching of several new high-profile programs and the drafting of just about every employee on campus into our recruitment and retention efforts. It's high time that we admit not that we lost this game, but that we were playing a game where losing was the only outcome.

Up until a month ago the immediate response to this argument—arguments that we have made over and over again—was: what else are we supposed to do? The new state budget gives us the answer. Through a combination of relentless advocacy and the bravery of women speaking out against their own workplace abuse the political winds turned and the thing that once seemed impossible—that our elected leaders would take responsibility for the public institutions that they are charged to steward—now seems not only possible but totally plausible.

Political pressure and follow through from our elected leaders has, as the logicians say, created a necessary condition for turning away from austerity, but money, by itself, is not sufficient. To truly end austerity requires that we stop treating our students like entries in the revenue column and the employees that make this campus work like entries in the deficit column. It requires that we stop treating our campus like a multidivisional firm with profitable and disposable pieces and start recognizing that all of the work that we do is mission critical if we

understand our mission to be giving as many young people from as many backgrounds as we can the opportunity to go where their curiosity takes them. This shift will take some time even if we are committed to making it. A decade plus of austerity has infused its corrupt logic and hollow morals into the deepest recesses of our institution. It has infected the way we talk to each other, the way we understand our own work and value to the instutition, and the way that we judge those whom we serve and work with as colleagues.

Whether or not we, as a campus community, are committed to bending the curve to a new, humane and public-serving trajectory will become clear in the budget decisions that are made in the weeks and months to come.

First and foremost, we need to fully restore the funds cut from units and programs across campus as part of the pandemic emergency. Between the federal relief funds that came during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this new state budget, the financial emergency that drove austerity decision-making is now over. We bore the cuts of the last two years because they were necessary to avoid greater suffering but they were still painful. We can't bring back the colleagues that we lost to retirement or career moves, but we can immediately begin the process of hiring new colleagues.

Second, we need to listen to employees and students and take seriously what they have to say. In one of the most striking disconnects that I have seen in the five years that I have served as Chapter President, senior administration has embarked on an on-going series of "listening tours'' across the campus and yet more members than ever are telling us how unheard and unlistened to, they feel. Perhaps this is because management's commitment to the growth-through-enrollment model made it impossible for them to fully absorb the nearly campus-wide frustration about overwork and the lack of the most basic resources needed to do one's job. Perhaps it is because the complexities of our roles and the various contributions that we all make to our campus mission cannot be reduced to a set of simplified metrics.

Third, we need to give individual departments and

units the autonomy and flexibility to act on their professional judgment by decentralizing the allocation of campus resources. Centralization of authority is another byproduct of austerity because it offers the promise of being able to maximize the efficient use of scarce resources. But it is also exclusionary and demoralizing. Giving the campus a set of clear priorities around which to focus our work and measure our success is helpful; making a fetish of those priorities effectively excludes vital pieces of our institutions from meaningfully participating in our shared mission unless they try to awkwardly force themselves into a new configuration. Making everyone jump through the hoops of cumbersome and ultimately futile funding contests and hiring requests just creates unnecessary work and unnecessary division. Who can honestly look back over our experience with Compact Planning, StAR Awards and Workforce Management and say that they have moved our institution forward? Austerity may have made them necessary evils, but now that necessity is gone.

These are just some of the ways—and based on the conversations that I have had with UUP members across our campus for the last year they are crucial—that we can make this a true inflection point and turn the corner from austerity.

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