



# The Forum



**A**t *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.

## Table of Contents:

### Officer Candidate Statements:

President	2
VP for Professionals	2
VP for Academics	2-3
Asst. VP for Professionals	3
Asst. VP for Academics	3
Secretary	4
Officer for Contingents	4
Officer for Retirees	4
Professional Delegate Candidate Statements	4-5
Academic Delegate Candidate Statements	5-7

## Welcome to the 2021 Election Edition of *The Forum*:

The Albany Chapter of UUP is pleased to present to you this opportunity to meet the candidates through their statements and encourages you to participate in this year's election.

All candidates of record who are running for officer or delegate positions were given an opportunity to submit their statements for publication.

Elected officers and delegates will serve a term beginning on June 1, 2021 and ending on May 31, 2023. You are receiving a copy of this newsletter because you are a "duly signed" member of UUP.

Any candidate running for office can call the Co-Chairs of the UUP Constitution & Governance Committee or UUP Statewide Secretary Jeri O'Bryan-Losee at 1-800-342-4206 to make an appointment to observe the counting of any election in which they are a duly nominated candidate.

### Election Information: What happens when?

March 10-12: Chapter election ballots will be mailed out to members' home addresses.

April 26th: Return ballots must be received (not postmarked) at the UUP Central Office by 5:00PM

**Your vote is important! Please make it count!**

## Officer Candidate Statements

### President

**Aaron Major**

**Associate Professor, Sociology**

If there has ever been any doubt about the need for, and power of, a strong union they have been cast away by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the early days of this crisis we have been fighting to keep our members from working in unsafe conditions and to make sure that our administrators recognize the extra burdens placed on caregivers. The financial impact of COVID-19 threatens our ability to live up to our institutional values and threatens the livelihoods of our colleagues who have given so much time and energy in the service of those values. As a union, we have raised our voices against privatization, against austerity and for a just, sustainable and accessible system of public higher education in New York State. As our Chapter President, it has been a privilege to do what I can to channel the energy, passion and commitment of my fellow UUP members into meaningful action towards this goal. The challenges wrought by the pandemic are still in front of us, and we will soon begin the work of negotiating a new contract. Through solidarity and shared commitment, these challenges can become opportunities to improve our working conditions, create secure employment for all of our members, and ensure that academic and professional faculty have a meaningful say in the direction of our campus. I appreciate all of the work that our members do in support of each other and I appreciate your support for another term to serve as your Chapter President.

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### Professional Vice President

**Patrick Romain**

**EOP**

Brothers and Sisters-My involvement with UUP came about during the George Pataki years when one of his initial priorities as a new governor was to eliminate EOP from the state budget as well as many other worthwhile programs. My call to activism started then. With the support of our UUP local and Statewide I became an active member. I learned that we had to empower, mobilize and represent our members. I was appointed for a long time to the joint labor management committee, allocating funds to both Professional and Academic Faculty and making certain that we represented new hires so that they could earn permanent appointment/tenure. I was then appointed co-chair of Affirmative Action. Then I was elected to serve as our chapter treasurer, AVPP Statewide. I have also served on the Legal Defense, Affirmative Action, Outreach, Task force on pay equity, EOP, Black Faculty Staff Association Committee and was the past chair of the Affirmative Action Committee as well as EOP. Currently, I serve on the UUP Statewide Board. If elected, I look forward to continue working for you. I have worked tirelessly for the union and hope that I have earned your support.

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### Academic Vice President

**Paul Stasi**

**Associate Professor, English**

I think it's fair to say we live in unprecedented times. The pandemic has revealed and generated multiple crises at the local, state and federal level. We have spent a great deal of energy trying to make sure that the working conditions of all of us here at the University are prioritized

as the administration responds to the COVID crisis. I have been proud to do this work and to be part of an activist union on campus, one that tries to set the tone of campus debate, that pushes back against workload creep, the erosion of faculty governance and the continued instrumentalization of education at all levels, but that also looks towards national trends and issues to build broader support for all working people. I continue to find my union work the most meaningful work I do on campus, both the time spent with individual members as well as addressing the larger issues that face us all. I would be honored to serve another term as your Academic Vice President.

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### **Assistant VP for Professionals**

**Zina Lawrence**

**Assistant Dean, School of Business**

Our name – United University Professions - tells us how critically important interconnectivity is to the success of OUR union. I am running for Asst. VP of Professionals because I understand how quickly academic and professional faculty are pitted against each other and how successful this strategy can be at disrupting our important work. As University Senate Chair, I learned that any actions or decisions made by our University's administration which have a negative impact on the academic faculty, negatively impacts the professional faculty as well... and vice versa. As Asst. VP for Professionals I will look for ways to strengthen our UNITED voice in all matters, always mindful that divisiveness serves only those who want to limit the impact of our collective action. The "divide and conquer" strategy has also been used to pit the University's organizations against one another. For this reason, I will also focus attention outward and look for opportunities to join in solidarity with other organizations – like the University Senate and Graduate Student Association – which represent shared constituents. In conclusion, if

elected Asst. VP for Professionals, I will strive to equalize the voices of our professional and academic faculty thereby strengthening UUP; and, to locate occasions to join with others in order to multiply the impact of collective actions across our campuses. I would very appreciate the opportunity to serve as UUP's Asst. VP for Professionals and humbly ask for your vote.

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### **Assistant VP for Academics**

**Meredith Weiss**

**Professor, Political Science**

This past year, and the looming likelihood of a fairly dismal near-future, make all the more clear how vitally important it is that we have a strong union, to represent and empower all of us as academics and professionals. Our situation now ain't great, but it would be a lot worse otherwise. Several core concerns motivate my enthusiasm for UUP. I would like to see greater transparency and equity on campus and consultative processes that represent meaningful shared governance rather than checking off boxes; these are core concerns for the union. In the current climate, too, I see UUP as our best bet for ensuring any financial restructuring includes a commitment to saving jobs and takes seriously both the structural and instructional implications of proposed cuts, and what they entail for workloads, morale, and burn-out across our faculty. And I value UUP's efforts to ensure we as a campus and community share not just sacrifice, but aspirations: that we institutionalize a culture of respect, pursue and value diversity, and invest in sustaining an environment that motivates and inspires our students and ourselves. I came to UAlbany in 2008, just in time for the last Big Crisis. I was relieved then to know a union had my back; I am even more so now. Having been part of the Executive Committee for the past 6 years, I would be honored now to serve as your AVP for Academics.

## Secretary

**Elizabeth Strum**

**Lecturer, Art & Art History**

I have taught at UAlbany as an adjunct lecturer of art history for fifteen years and been a UUP member for that long. A career of adjunct teaching makes me familiar with contingent faculty concerns. Two years ago, my involvement with UUP deepened when I joined the Executive Committee as a delegate. I've learned much about our robust Albany Chapter and statewide UUP in this time. The experience instantly connected with my existing activist life. UUP's legislative efforts to raise the State revenue necessary to uphold truly public higher education, support SUNY hospitals and achieve environmental sustainability have given me, and all of us, opportunities for advocacy. In our Albany Chapter, I'll be honored to broaden my involvement in another way - by serving as Secretary of the Executive Board. I'm running as a write-in candidate for this position.

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## Officer for Contingents

**Anne Woulfe**

**Lecturer, Art & Art History**

It has been my privilege to serve as the Chapter's Officer for Contingents over these past two years. Since becoming an officer and working closely with other officers and our Labor Relations Specialist, I have learned a great deal more about the University system than I had previously known. Moreover, I have had opportunities to learn from and engage with so many committed academics and professionals, all of whom have played a role in the success of our Chapter. We continue to address contingent faculty issues as a Chapter and statewide as a Union. Contractual changes, a lack of job security, pay equity, and health insurance eligibility remain issues for so many of us. In many ways, these issues have been exacerbated due to the

realities of the COVID-19 crisis. It may seem as though we have lost some ground addressing the concerns of full- and part-time contingent faculty. Furthermore, we do not know the full extent of what this crisis will leave in its wake. However, although the pace of progress may have slowed, it has not come to a halt. UAlbany is a resilient institution, and contingent faculty have played, and will continue to play, a key role in our progress as an academic entity. If re-elected, I will continue to bring pertinent, contingent-specific issues to the table and address your individual concerns. Thank you for your support.

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## Officer for Retirees

**Betty P. Shadrack, Ph.D.**

**Emeritus, Office of Graduate Education**

Service and advocacy is my passion. After providing 31 years of committed service to University at Albany students, faculty, and staff, I retired from UAlbany four years ago. Never one to embrace idleness, I have continued to provide seasoned, tempered and responsive leadership as your UUP delegate and Officer for Retirees. By being available, responsible and informed about issues impacting our Union, I seek your vote to continue to represent you with compassion and strength.

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## Professional Delegates

**Patrick Dodson**

**Staff Photographer**

I'm honored to run for a second term as a professional delegate for UUP Albany Executive Board. In 2018 I joined the Office of Communications and Marketing as a Staff Photographer, but my time at UAlbany goes back to my undergraduate career. I believe this has helped shape my strong belief in how valuable an expe

rience our students receive at UAlbany. During my first term, I was honored to attend a State-wide Convention and spent time immersing myself in the work that UUP does. While still learning the process of negotiating and organizing, I am dedicated to labor rights and wish to continue my contribution.

**Tom Hoey**  
**ITS**

Dear UUP Members, I again ask for your vote for UUP Delegate to the Delegate Assembly and also to serve on the UAlbany Chapter Executive Board. I was first elected as a delegate in 1995 and have served on various roles both Statewide and on the Chapter level. Currently I am the Statewide Membership Officer having been overwhelmingly elected to a third term in November and I also serve on the UAlbany Executive Board as well as a NYSUT and AFT Delegate. On campus, I have been active with professional issues and have also been elected to the two A-28 Committees that deal with professional appeals. I enjoy working for you all and insuring that your career here at UAlbany proves to be rewarding and successful. Thank You for trusting me with these important roles in your Union! In Solidarity, Tom Hoey

**John Leirey**  
**Senior Business Intelligence Developer**

I have been an employee of SUNY and an active member of UUP since 1998. I began my career at SUNY System Administration in their IT department and worked there until March of 2020 when I joined SUNY Albany's IT department. At System I was the VP for Professionals for 8 years, then became the Chapter President for the next 8 years. I am currently chairman of UUP's A-32 Review Committee where we are working with SUNY and GOER to redefine our SUNY Job Titles, focusing first on IT titles. I am looking forward to sharing my union experience

with our executive committee, and if elected as a delegate, I will fight for the concerns of SUNY Albany at the statewide level and make sure your voices are heard.

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**Academic Delegates**

**David A. Banks**  
**Visiting Assistant Professor**  
**Geography & Planning**

I am a visiting assistant professor in Geography and Planning and the director of our Globalization Studies program. In addition to my role as UUP department representative, I also currently serve as our chapter's representative to the Troy Area Labor Council. In that capacity I have turned out support from other unions to our public events, represented us on the Albany Med picket line, and most recently got resolutions of support for our GSEU comrades. Because of my "visiting" status I get rehired annually and am paid approximately \$20,000 less than the associate professors in my department which is usually the rank given to someone doing my job. I consider this wage theft, not just from me but our bargaining unit. This is our future if we do not fight for something better and it would be my honor to do that as your academic delegate.

**Kate Coddington,**  
**Assistant Professor, Geography and Planning**

I'm an Assistant Professor in the Department of Geography and Planning and interested to participate more fully in the work of the Albany Chapter of UUP though becoming an Academic Delegate. Before I came to Albany in 2018, I worked for a few years in the UK, where I was a member of the unionized faculty who agreed to strike in 2018 over disputes to the pension plan. Unfortunately, as a migrant to the UK, under the

regulations at the time I risked having my visa revoked if I participated in strike actions. This experience cemented for me the importance of union solidarity and over the past year I've benefited from the push towards greater transparency and continued attention towards workplace safety championed by the UUP at Albany. I would enjoy furthering this work as an Academic Delegate.

**James Collins**  
**Professor, Anthropology**

I have been active in the Albany Chapter of UUP for many years as Department Representative for Anthropology, member of the Chapter Executive Committee, Chapter President, and Academic Vice President. I recently served three years in University Senate leadership positions in order to strengthen shared governance and Union/Senate ties. Currently, I represent the chapter at the Albany County Central Federation of Labor, a clearinghouse on labor, elections, and social justice.

Believing in unions as a source of democratic working-class power, I have worked to better connect our Chapter to its members, the wider labor movement, and the wider society. We need a strong, democratic, and inclusive union as administrative decisions bear down on us during a budget crisis and pandemic that intensify workload and threaten job security. I ask for your vote as a UUP Academic Delegate.

**Alexander Dawson**  
**Professor, History**

I am a professor in the Department of History. I have been here since 2017. Before that I spent 14 years at Simon Fraser University. At SFU I spent seven years in administration. These experiences shaped my views about the role of faculty unions. Our union plays an essential role in defending the interests of our members through collective bargaining, etc. Still, because

of the nature of this sector, our union must also play other roles. We must insist on collegial governance, transparency, accountability, and inclusive decision-making processes. Decades of "business-like" thinking have undermined these values, to all our detriment. Also, given that one of the critical challenges we have faced over decades is the loss of state funding, I believe that effective public advocacy, not just for our members, but for higher ed as a whole, is critical to our future needs.

**Mark Kuniholm**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Epidemiology & Biostatistics**

I am seeking my first term as a UUP academic delegate. My goal as an academic delegate is to convey to UUP the views and interests of UAlbany School of Public Health (SPH) faculty and staff members. These views and interests are likely to be heterogeneous, but I speculate that most SPH faculty and staff members have experienced some changes in workplace schedules, norms and/or expectations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. I believe these changes, as well as long-standing sources of tension in the employer-employee relationship, warrant consideration from the perspective of the employee.

**Deborah LaFond**  
**Social Sciences Subject Librarian**

We have witnessed threats to democratic futures, resilience in standing strong, unconscionable violent acts and resistance as well as overwhelming loss. The CALL FOR DIGNITY and EQUITY could not be louder. From this we can work with a deeper awareness of our inextricable interconnectedness while we learn to create models of inclusive leadership for our future leaders /citizens. Supporting public education is critical to this goal. In the past year, I have worked to create stronger UUP committee

engagement, advocated at chapter and Statewide levels to support constitutional equity for all (ERA), co-created programs/events addressing ant-racism, prison reform and poor people's campaign goals. As Senator and UUP Delegate, I have utilized leadership to create collaborative space for voices, initiatives and inclusive spaces for dialogue on shared governance. As a member of the Chapter Peace and Justice Committee, Statewide Women's Rights and Concerns Committee, Solidarity Committee, the UAlbany Fair Trade Task Force and as Senate Council Chair for the University Life Council, I have been fortunate to learn from and collaborate with active participants to grow vision for dignity for workers at UAlbany as well as beyond the campus

**Samantha Rider**  
**Instructor/Graduate Student, English**

I'm running as a write-in candidate for delegate. I am a part-time contingent instructor and PhD candidate in the English department and have served on the UUP executive committee for the past year. In that time, I've acted as an informal liaison between the Graduate Student Employees Union and the chapter and contributed two op-eds on grad worker issues to *The Forum*. I look forward to the opportunity to continue working with the E.C. in the coming year.

**Laura Tetreault**  
**Assistant Professor, English**

I am running as a union delegate because I am committed to social justice activism on and off campus, and I hope to become more actively involved in advocacy. As an assistant professor of English and a scholar of rhetoric, I focus on racial and gender justice, and I hope to apply this lens to union organizing. I enthusiastically joined UUP when I started my current position in 2018 and since then have been impressed by the strength of the union and the commitment of its leadership. As a delegate, I hope to work toward justice and equity on campus, especially for those made most vulnerable by threats of austerity.

**Marco Varisco**  
**Associate Professor**  
**Mathematics & Statistics**

Since 2017 I have been an academic delegate, a member of our Chapter's Executive Committee and the UUP representative in my Department (Mathematics & Statistics). I am proud of the work that our Chapter has been doing in the last few years, and in particular of our contributions to the discussions about the pandemic response and the budget crisis. I believe that unions have an essential role to play in shared governance, especially in these crazy times, and I am proud of our never-ending efforts to strengthen shared governance throughout campus. I ask for your vote again to continue serving our Union as academic delegate.

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**Editorial Policy:** The opinions expressed in *The Forum* are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of United University Professions.



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