

THE FORUM

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Your UUP Albany Chapter Newsletter

Issue 123



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CUNY Queensborough Prez Dismisses Faculty Governance
<http://free-cuny.net/article/letter-to-the-community>

Hurricane Sandy: A personal report

Tom Hoey, Datacommunications, VP Professionals

I had planned a relaxing fall vacation, but that all changed Saturday, October 27th, when I saw the satellite photos of Hurricane Sandy. "This is not going to be good," I told my wife. We did some prep work around the outside of the house, putting away the patio chairs and anything else that could become airborne in high winds. We also went and filled up the cars and some gas cans, and made sure our wood bin was fully stocked. The weather reports were ominous and getting worse as Sandy crept closer to the US coastline. Newspapers were referring to it as Franken-Storm. I looked up the tide table in The Farmer's Almanac and saw that we would have a full moon *and* high tide when the storm hit.

By Monday morning October 29th, it became apparent that it was going to make landfall somewhere between Boston and New Jersey. I had called my brother in Rockaway Beach several times over the weekend, and when we talked on Monday morning he said that, although he was preparing for Sandy, he was hoping it was all hype. I also called my sister in Floral Park, Nassau County. Being so far inland, she was confident they could ride out the storm.

When I called my brother again at 8:00 pm, I could hear the fear in his voice as he watched the ocean waves surge down his street. He told me the water had washed a huge section of boardwalk into his neighborhood. I hung up the phone without telling him he had another hour before high tide. I tried calling my sister but couldn't get through. I texted her cell and was able to verify that her family was okay.

I was watching CNBC and their reporter in Rockaway was showing parts of the boardwalk floating away just like my brother had said. When I called him at 10:30 pm, the water was no longer rising but the winds had started. We hung up just as they started ripping shingles off his roof. By 11:00 pm I was no longer able to get through on the phone to either my brother or sister for the rest of the night.

Waking early Tuesday, I saw a double rainbow in the southern sky, but the scenes of devastation on the morning news belied nature's beauty. I spent the morning trying to reach my brother and sister, but it was late afternoon when I finally got a call from my brother on his cell. His family was safe; they had about foot of water downstairs and no electric or phones. He still had gas service so they were able to cook and run the gas fireplace. I told him to bring in some of his garden solar lights when it got dark as they work quite well in an emergency. I also told him I would try to get him a generator and gasoline to provide some power and light. Later I heard from my sister in Floral Park. She texted that they lost part of their roof shingles and had no phone or power, but could cook and had hot water.

I spent Wednesday picking up food and supplies for them and was able to buy a generator. There were no five gallon gas cans to be found anywhere in Albany. I was finally convinced after driving to ten stores that were all sold out. I went to my other sister's house in Westerlo to borrow a generator and See [Sandy](#), page 11.

President's Corner

“What is the greatest current threat to academic freedom?”

Jim Collins

Acting President,

Anthropology Department

This question came at the end of the 7th Kermit Hall Memorial Lecture, held to honor the former UA President on September 20th at St. Rose College. The guest lecturer, Yeshiva Professor of History, Ellen Shrecker, author of books on McCarthyism as well as faculty autonomy in the contemporary university, gave a simple response to the question of what most threatened academic freedom: 75% of faculty in U.S. higher education are working without tenure or the possibility of tenure (that is, as contingent ‘contract’ or ‘term’ employees).

For faculty, such as myself, who habitually think of academic freedom as a political right to inquire, speak, publish, and teach without social or political coercion that threatens our livelihood, Schrecker’s reply is a reminder of something elementary. Such rights are hollow if the majority of faculty have only provisional job security, if, for any impertinence concerning administrative wishes or unpopular stances taken on public issues, the offending employee can simply be non-renewed – without any reasons required – at the end of their term of employment, whether a semester, a year, or multiple years.

I raise the issue of hollow rights to remind us all that we are in a time of uncertainty about the future of our university and higher education more generally. For all the sunny talk of strategic plans and building on success, we must remain alert to a pervasive administrative strategy: to replace secure employment with ‘flexible,’ temporary jobs, whether called Lecturers, Visiting Assistant Professors, Adjuncts, or some other variety of intellectual contract workers. As we wrote in the previous issue of this newsletter (*The Other UUP*, *The Forum*, Sept-Oct 2012, <http://www.albany.edu/uup/>): “[This trend is] one manifestation of a larger systemic process: The destruction of secure employment with adequate pay and benefits. We must educate both the broader public and ourselves about it, so that we can act to improve the working conditions for all of us.” The task remains before us.

Facing up to this decades-long ‘threat to academic freedom’ will require a union that is strong and democratic. I and many other chapter leaders and activists have been working for that in various ways, including:

Regularly publishing this newsletter as a means of communication with members about the state of our union and university and their place in the wider society;

Re-constituting Chapter committees that had grown inactive, such as Contingent Concerns, Health & Safety, and Parking – the latter two are now active and engaged in great work (e.g., see **Parking**, page 11), and Contingent Concerns is being organized and will be active in the Spring term;

Using Labor-Management meetings to press the administration on problems raised, e.g., about parking, health and safety concerns, or contingent employment (Minutes of LM Meetings are posted on the chapter website at http://www.albany.edu/uup/Meeting_Minutes.htm/);

Having more General Membership meetings, with formats that encourage discussion and debate among members (such as our recent meeting on October 23, debating and voting on changes to our Chapter’s By-Laws);

Rebuilding our Department Representative structure, recruiting new Departmental Reps, and holding regular meetings so that they may communicate among themselves and with other chapter leaders.

Lastly, let me alert you to some upcoming events and activities:

A General Membership Meeting on November 28, Campus Center Ballroom, 12:00-2:00 pm, at which, among other business, we will hear from UUP’s Senior Contract Negotiator about the status of negotiations. There will be microphones on the floor to take members’ questions and comments.

A Department Representatives Meeting on December 3, Campus Center 375, for an open discussion among representatives, officers, and exec committee members about member issues, such as workload creep, renewal and evaluation problems, and bullying at work.

Elections: Our chapter elects its officers and Executive Committee every two years and will do this Spring 2013.

Information will be sent out about nominations process in early January; nominations due by **February 6**; ballots will be sent out **February 22**; and ballots due by **March 20, 2013**.

Advocacy: We engage in advocacy for UA and SUNY with the New York State legislature throughout the budget cycle, beginning in late January and continuing through April. This work is crucial in the struggle for better state funding of public education. We will post the schedule in this newsletter and send out calls for volunteers.

VP Academics Report

Transitions, Disruptions, and Opportunities

Bret Benjamin, English

The national elections now behind us, it appears that the roughly \$6 billion spent has produced a political landscape effectively identical to the one we have occupied for the past two years. “Brave new world!” as one colleague joked on election night.

Here at UAlbany, the state of our union—at least of our campus chapter of UUP—appears to be in a more dynamic period of transition. Jim Collins has taken over as Acting President, Tom Hoey has stepped into the position of Vice President for professionals, Deborah Lafond has taken over as Secretary, and I find myself trying to fill Jim’s shoes as the Acting VP for Academics. Our Chapter recently revised its bylaws, creating, among other things, two new Assistant Vice Presidents positions to be filled in our spring elections.

Such changes are not particularly important in and of themselves. But transitions, almost by definition, open new lines of possibility. Routines, expectations, and procedures are disrupted, for better and worse. On the one hand, a lack of experience means that some things will need to be re-learned. I can attest to the disorientation of inheriting the new responsibilities of the VP position. Historical memory and structural continuity are among the reasons we rely on institutions such as unions. Energy poured into the invention of new wheels and better mousetraps might be better spent elsewhere. One necessary response to a transition of the sort our chapter faces, then, is to re-ground ourselves in the valuable work done by past unionists and to lean upon the structures already in place.

On the other hand, transition affords the possibility to look with fresh eyes on the particular problems of the current moment. This positive characteristic of transitional instability affords us an opportunity to reconsider the role that an active, critical, mobilizing UUP chapter can play on campus.

Such a reevaluation and reinvigoration of our chapter comes at an opportune moment, as our university (perhaps *the* university?) faces a series of profound challenges that threaten to radically transform its historical mission and structure. Undoubtedly the most engaging part of my new VP role has been the opportunity to talk with colleagues from across campus, many of whom I am meeting for the first time despite my dozen years at Albany. My

discussions have brought to light a broadly shared concern about the direction of the university, and a litany of more specific pressures felt in individuals’ work-lives. Again and again colleagues raise concerns about workload increases (see [Overcrowding & Academic Integrity](#), by George Robinson, page 5); the over-reliance on contingent faculty (see [The Other UUP](#), by Stasi and Collins, *The Forum*, Sept.-Oct 2012); the chronic cuts in state funding and its corollary, the ruinous effects of increased privatization at all levels of the university; the apparent disregard for educational standards that seems to accompany every new appeal to “excellence” and “efficiency”; the abandonment of a comprehensive disciplinary breadth historically associated with the public research university; the paired problems of reduced student diversity and skyrocketing student debt, as tuition hikes restrict access to higher education; the erosion of shared faculty governance in the face of increasingly unchecked administrative authority; and a pervasive lack of institutional transparency, evident most recently in a black-box presidential search. Indeed, such a list could go on for pages, each point calling out for extended analysis.

I am too new to this position to have put much in place to address these issues. I am certain, however, that the academic faculty on this campus must (in concert with professional staff, students, and retirees) collectively educate ourselves about the institution where we work and insist upon our role in shaping the decisions that affect our lives as well as the lives of our colleagues and students. As our chapter transitions, I trust that it will take a renewed role in this project. To do so, however, will require substantive membership participation. Specifically, I ask you to consider taking one or more of the following three steps: 1) Contact me with any workplace concerns; no issue is too small or big. When warranted, we can pursue grievances; more broadly, however, there is value in cataloging and publicizing the pressures that faculty and departments face to build a more complete picture of academic work on this campus. 2) Consider joining our Albany UUP Executive Committee by running as a delegate in the upcoming elections. Now more than ever it is imperative that we bring knowledgeable, committed people into the organizing core of the chapter. See [VP Report](#), page 5.

Guest Letter from GSEU Brothers and Sisters

James Searle and Angelica Clarke, CWA 1140

Editor's Note: This is the second in a series of guest columns by representatives of other unionized employees at the University at Albany.

After working under an expired contract for over four years, the Graduate Students Employees Union (GSEU)/CWA 1104 is preparing to enter contract negotiations with New York State in the coming months. With a new set of union officials in office who are inspired by a national surge in the graduate student labor movement this year, the leadership of GSEU is attempting to mobilize rank and file graduate students on SUNY campuses across the state. For years, New York State has prevented collective efforts by graduate students to achieve better wages and workplace conditions on campus. With our current governor Andrew Cuomo's rather harsh treatment of public sector unions, we are going to be in for a fight as he tries to drive costs down by any means.

Here at SUNY Albany, the union has put forward an ambitious mobilization plan to address local concerns that fall outside of the parameters of the contract. At the top of the list is the massive pay inequities between Graduate and Teaching Assistants working on our campus. New York State pays a 'base' annual wage of \$8,586 which is then subsidized by SUNY at the campus level. After consulting with members of the union, we have started gathering information on the real costs of bringing equity into these pay subsidies because they do not correlate in any clear way with the amount or intensity of teaching, research, or service our members are performing.

The state pays our members on an hourly basis and treats all GAs and TAs as equals regardless of campus affiliation. We see no reason why SUNY should insist on departmental and disciplinary distinctions. The *average* salary for Graduate and Teaching Assistants at SUNY Albany is \$13,193. Our proposals bring those wages up to a level that would bring us on par with the highest average in the SUNY system, but still remains under the living wage for Albany County, which is \$19,766. We feel that by applying pressure locally on pay equity, an issue that falls outside the contract, our members will not only be more likely to complete their degrees on time, but

will feel both empowered and compelled to participate in the contract struggle.

Along with increased subsidies from SUNY on the campus level for TA/GA salaries, we need to take a serious look at how neo-liberal austerity is affecting the availability of those assistantship lines to begin with. Many departments are accepting more and more undergraduate students each year while the assistantship offerings are tenuous, limited, or completely unavailable. Our members are expected to take on larger class sizes, grade and provide support for over 100 students in a given class, and adapt to new teaching strategies and technologies to accommodate the changing environment in classrooms on our campuses. As a result, we are looking to develop a systemic approach for sustaining existing lines, and expanding the number of paid lines per department to prevent overwork on our members, who are supposed to work 20 hours per week part-time, while continuing their studies full-time.

As a union, the GSEU is seeking to address the immediate concerns of our members without losing sight of the transformation that is happening in our universities through increasing adjunctification, and the new priorities and models that emerge when public universities engage in broad partnerships with private corporations. The union hopes to build broad coalitions to gain acknowledgment and respect for the valuable work we do, and that this will ultimately lead to improved working conditions and living wages for our members.

Albany UUP Chapter Elections

Every two years our UUP Albany Chapter elects its Officers and Delegates, who also serve as the Chapter Executive Committee. Elections will be held this spring. Those who wish to stand in the election must submit a petition by **Feb. 6, 2013**. Ballots will then be mailed out on **Feb. 22** with all ballots due by **March 20**. Additional information on petitions will be sent out as the dates get closer. Delegates attend monthly Executive Committee meetings as well as the Statewide UUP Delegate Assembly held three times a year, typically at the Desmond Hotel in Albany. Delegates are also eligible to serve on statewide and local chapter committees. We encourage all members to consider standing and to email uupalb@albany.edu if they have any questions about the process.

Overcrowding & Academic Integrity

George Robinson
Biology

This semester, I did something I had never before contemplated – I filed a workplace complaint.

Regardless of the outcome, my intent was to defend what I considered fundamental rights of faculty and students. Here is our story:

General Biology (Bio 120) enrollments have been increasing each fall and for several years it has been taught in two back-to-back sections in our largest Lecture Center classroom. Two tenured faculty rotate as instructors, and I take the first half of the semester. Prior to the start of classes, I was informed that we had reached capacity and that I should not pass out additional permission numbers. Then I learned that a large population of transfer students had been admitted a few days before classes began, the presumed candidates for the seats I was told to hold. I later learned that pressures had been brought to bear on our department, and on the first day of classes, not only was the classroom at capacity, but overflow students were shunted to an adjacent classroom, where my lecture slides and voice were piped in. This situation continued through two midterm examinations.

All of this was done *without my consent*. I have been a member of the UAlbany teaching faculty for 19 years, and have never had enrollment control stripped away like this. Of greater consequence, I have never heard of a lecture getting transmitted outside the classroom without the instructor's consent. So far, everyone I've spoken to has expressed surprise and dismay, including colleagues here and at many other institutions, students at all levels, and even textbook publisher's representatives. Uninformed skeptics might believe that adding more students to large classes has no significant consequences. Those with experience recognize that this is a myth, and my complaint exposes the effects on workload in some detail; but I want to focus here on the unfair treatment of students.

When students are herded like sheep into overcrowded classrooms, several problems result. First, faculty are forced to devote increasing time to course management, rather than instruction. Second, the instructor becomes a remote entity. It is virtually impossible to establish meaningful, individual

teacher-student relationships. Students quickly recognize this. Eventually, even the better ones are so discouraged they stop attending lectures. This becomes a vicious cycle, familiar to many of us. Cynics might use this situation to argue in favor of course over-enrollment, but that type of thinking seems unethical, and shows contempt for both students and faculty. Third, even basic access to necessary resources becomes a challenge for students, especially the latecomers. In my case, our bookstore and the publisher were both unprepared, and many students were unable to get copies of the textbook and the necessary codes for our on-line assignments until 3-4 weeks into the semester. Also, I had many complaints that tutoring resources seemed inadequate. With all of this, learning necessarily suffers.

Above all, I believe that trust was violated. Higher education is fundamentally based on trust among students and faculty, and we earn that trust through preparation and by developing our awareness of student needs, including their need for dignified treatment.

How did we get to this state? In my case, I am not interested in developing a detailed chronicle with finger-pointing, but some general trends can be identified. One of those is a growing imbalance between enrollment objectives and resource distributions. I estimate that the course in question generates at least \$.5 million in tuition revenue for the semester. The additional resources granted this semester consisted of a three-hour-per week commitment on the part of a Teaching Assistant to manage the AV console in the overflow classroom.

I hope to press the case at other levels, but I believe that my first recourse is to appeal to the solidarity of our union. As I told our UUP officers, a formal apology would be a good start, in this case to all 972 of us, students included. But there is more to the story, and it seems clear that larger issues will need to be addressed with respect to UAlbany's educational mission.

VP Report, from page 3.

If not on the Executive Committee, consider serving as a Departmental Representative or on one of the standing committees (see **Parking**, pg. 11). 3) Submit an article to The Forum, or propose a topic for a public workshop or event. The chapter is eager to find ways of sponsoring member-driven events. With these or other issues, I encourage you to contact me at bbenjamin@albany.edu.

Intellectual Property, Copyright, & Electronic Course Materials

Martin Manjak, Professional Delegate

Recently an article discussing MOOCs appeared in the Chronicle of Higher Education¹. In case you haven't heard, MOOCs—Massive Open On-line Courses—refers to a growing phenomena in higher ed: free, open registration, electronic classes featuring full-time faculty from accredited colleges and universities. In fact, some of the biggest names in higher ed are looking to market their courses, while some faculty are looking to market themselves. The format raises a number of serious questions, but the ones that I would like to draw your attention to concern copyright, intellectual property, and support for creating on-line content.

While MOOCs have not yet made an appearance within the SUNY system, faculty are increasingly encouraged to embrace on-line learning technologies. When course materials are committed to digital media, whether text or audiovisual components, they can be delivered independently from the instructor's presence or participation. The question then becomes: who owns and controls the course material?

On October 15, David Lavalley, SUNY Executive Vice Chancellor and Provost, issued a letter to all campus presidents and academic officers regarding "some of the most commonly asked questions regarding faculty ownership of instructional content that are created by faculty in the course of their employment with SUNY."

The letter contains a link² to a SUNY web page entitled Faculty Ownership of Instructional Content. The document states:

With respect to faculty materials used on the web for instruction, under the current SUNY policy, copyright ownership is treated no differently than faculty materials produced for the classroom. That is, faculty own the copyright under the academic work-for-hire exception embedded in SUNY's copyright policy. Alternatively, SUNY and faculty may enter into work-for-hire written agreements relating to materials produced for on-line use in which the parties may agree to vest copyright in either SUNY or the faculty and to provide for related licenses.

This is an important statement of policy for all faculty, but particularly those creating content for electronic courses. It is important to take note of the fact that faculty, by signing separate agreements for course content, can enter into a work-for-hire relationship with SUNY. In these cases, depending on the terms of the agreement, copyright ownership may reside with SUNY rather than the faculty member. Therefore, it is especially important that faculty fully understand the terms of their employment if asked to sign separate agreements for the development or creation of course content, particularly as it relates to the question of copyright.

It is worth noting that the SUNY web page references two UUP documents at the top of the Related Resources list following the policy statement.

1. UUP Copyright FAQ³
2. UUP Contract MOU⁴

The best summary of the Copyright FAQ is contained in the document, i.e., "You own what you produce unless you have knowingly given up your rights to the product."

Regarding production, anyone who has worked in an on-line format knows that it requires a specific skill set to design and produce digital content, and deliver instruction electronically. Unfortunately, not all administrators and faculty understand this. For this reason, UUP has developed a best practices document intended to advise instructional staff on how best to prepare for on-line courses, and identify the minimum levels and areas of support that faculty will require from the institution to produce and deliver electronic courses successfully. If you are committed to teaching an electronic course, or are interested in moving your course on-line, please consult this best practices document which can be found on the UUP State website at www.uupinfo.org/reports/reportpdf/BestPracticesOnlineLearning.pdf

1<http://chronicle.com/article/What-You-Need-to-Know-About/133475/>

2http://www.suny.edu/provost/academic_affairs/FacultyOwnership.cfm

3<http://wiki.sln.suny.edu/download/attachments/9898346/uup+copyright+faq.pdf>

4<http://wiki.sln.suny.edu/download/attachments/9898346/UUP+MOU+-+page+84+expires+july+2011.pdf>

Printemps Erable, Quebec's Student Uprising

Eloise Briere, LLC, French

In French *Printemps Erable* (Maple Spring) sounds a lot like *Printemps Arabe* (Arab Spring). Unlike the Arab countries that dislodged long-term dictators during the Arab Spring in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere, Quebec's *Printemps Erable* describes the series of student strikes that started on February 13: the largest in the Province's history, mobilizing tens of thousands of students, starting at Laval University in Quebec City and spreading to Montreal and other areas in the Province. After fourteen weeks of daily student demonstrations which, by then, included other sectors of society, these manifestations were declared illegal by a special law (Bill #78) resulting in clashes with police and hundreds of arrests. The province's Secretary of Education resigned, stating that she "could no longer be part of the solution." Despite the threat of arrest, thousands of Montrealers joined in the noisy, nightly, spontaneous *Manifs Casseroles* (banging of pots and pans), reflecting the general unhappiness with the Liberal Government.

Prime Minister Charest's Liberal Party Government voted to increase tuition which had been frozen since 1994, to \$325 per year over a 5-year period or a 75% increase. (Not unlike the tuition increase of \$300 a year for five years approved by the SUNY Board of Trustees on June 30 of this year.)

Student associations joined together to demonstrate, calling such a steep increase unacceptable, but the Government maintained its position. In August, Premier Charest called for Provincial elections, assuming the general population would repudiate the student tuition demands. But by then, convinced they stood for social justice and human rights in the face of a government all too willing to sell out their future, student demands had widened to include the environment, jobs, and democratic reforms. On Sept. 4, after an unbroken 10-year-rule, the Liberal Party lost the general election to the Parti Quebecois (social-democrats), headed for the first time by a woman. Student protests continued until September 7 when the new Prime Minister, Pauline Marois, revoked the previous government's tuition increase.

While many point out that the success of student movement did not solve all of Quebec's education problems, their inclusiveness and resolve seem to have inspired a wide swath of society, as

expressed in a letter to the editor of *Le Devoir*: "Now people greet and talk. Now local meetings, discussions, and vigils start up casually among neighbors on the steps and balconies of Montreal. Now the neighborhood no longer seems alien to its inhabitants. This is a true political victory!" (Letter to the Editor, Jaber Lutfi - Le 23 mai 2012 - 24 mai 2012).

Chicago Teachers' Strike: A Middle-class Uprising

Paul Stasi, English

On September 9th, the Chicago Teacher's Union (CTU) – one of the nation's first teacher's unions which today boasts over 30,000 members – voted overwhelmingly to strike. The strike lasted seven days until the school district gave in to some of the union's demands, notably an annual pay raise and an increased ability to influence state mandated teacher evaluations. Classes resumed on September 23rd and the new contract was ratified on October 3rd.

The news media has tended to focus strictly on contract issues. But the story of the strike is more complex than that. It begins with Illinois Senate Bill 7. Signed into law on June 2011, the measure drew praise from U.S. Secretary for Education Arne Duncan as a model for education reform. It included several provisions designed to make it difficult for teachers to strike, allowed the Chicago School System to unilaterally implement a longer school day, and built on previous legislation that tied teacher compensation to an evaluation system based on standardized tests.¹ In short, the Bill represented an increase in workload, without a clear mechanism for compensation, as well the erosion of teacher autonomy and the intrusion of an evaluation system ill-designed for the dynamic and intuitive art of education.

Meanwhile, Chicago schools are clearly struggling. Over 80% of public school children in Chicago qualify for free meals based on low family incomes. And their schools are predictably crumbling. Over 160 of the 600 schools lack libraries. Others have leaky roofs. Social Workers are shared between schools so that they might be available only one or two times a week, and class sizes for elementary schools are around 25, rather than the 15 generally agreed to be appropriate for kindergarten to third grade.²

See **Strike**, page 10.

Letter to the Editor

Dear Forum:

I think it is disingenuous for the administration to exclude teaching assistants and graduate assistants from the number of part-time faculty. As a union, we need to include TAs and GAs in calculations, even though they are represented by a different union. As the funding is increasingly tightened, more and more departments use TAs in lieu of part-time faculty. In addition, the number of TAs is often dependent upon the number of research projects a department has. When research projects are no longer available to a department (i.e., funding runs out or a faculty member leaves the university along with research funds), or when a new project is granted, the part-time, long-term faculty are directly impacted, either by losing a teaching assignment or gaining one at the last minute. This has severe impacts on insurance eligibility, access to free courses, and access to research funding through the school due to the 2 course per semester requirement. **[Editor's Note: Non tenure track faculty need to teach two courses per semester in order to maintain their health insurance and qualify for other benefits at the university.]**

In addition, many of the adjunct faculty are Ph.D. students in their dissertation phase. This is because they can use the course credit to pay for their load bearing credits and are not required to take courses. (A requirement for most TA/GA positions is 9 credit hours of classes.) We need to start coordinating with the GSEU, ensuring that TAs and GAs are transitioned into UUP without having the two unions pitted against one another.

One way to start is to recognize that TAs are part-time faculty. All part-time faculty throughout the university need to be assured that they will have access to the same resources and support that tenure track faculty have, including: assistants for classes over 40 students, access to office space to meet with students, access to classrooms that meet the needs of the class they are teaching, access to research funding including seed money, and basic office supplies such as white board markers, computers, copying, paper, etc..

In addition, there needs to be some mechanism that will ensure more predictability for benefits for part-time faculty. For example, part-time UUP faculty are eligible for benefits based on the number of courses taught over the year or averaged over a

certain time period, so long term part-timers do not lose eligibility as quickly.

Virginia Yonkers
Adjunct, Communication Dept.

Contributions, Letters to the Editor

Members are encouraged to submit articles and letters for publication. Submissions must be in electronic format & sent to uupforum@gmail.com.

University in the City Events Continue

Building on last year's considerable success, the *University in the City* public lecture series has resumed this fall. Organized by the Capital District Progressive Faculty Caucus (CDPFC), which includes faculty from UAlbany, Sienna, St. Rose, RPI, Union, and Russell Sage, the *University in the City* series aims to stimulate dialogue between academics and community members about issues that affect our lives. Faculty have expertise to offer on a range of issues of public concern; likewise, our research and teaching benefit enormously from engaged dialogue with community members and activists who also bring rich expertise and experience to bear on issues.

Our next event, to be held on **Dec. 2 from 5-7pm** in the Social Justice Center (33 Central Avenue in Albany), takes up the pressing topic of prison justice. Panelists will include Naomi Jaffe, New York State Prisoner Justice Network, Lafonso Bonner, a re-entry mentor for inmates, and Anne Rody-Wright, Siena faculty and Legal Director for the Center for the Law and Justice. Speakers will address both specific aspects of prison conditions including solitary confinement, juvenile detention, prisoner health, and re-entry problems, as well as the larger political and social implications of the U.S. carceral system, including the effects of and on race, class, gender, citizenship and more.

In October, panelists Beverly Thompson from Sienna and Steve Pampinella from UAlbany examined the spiraling problem of student debt, an issue UA students face more acutely in the wake of the tuition hikes of NYSUNY2020.

More events are planned for the spring, but the CDPFC needs your help. Members interested in being alerted to future events, or, better still, in speaking or organizing panels around particular issues should send email to info@capitalregionfaculty.org.

Peace Proclamation

Albany County Legislature Calls for a Shift in National Priorities

Larry Wittner, Emeritus

On October 9, responding to a campaign by Albany UUP and dozens of other community organizations, Albany County legislators approved a proclamation urging Congress to withdraw U.S. troops from Afghanistan, reduce the U.S. military budget, and use the savings to fund vital public programs at home. These programs included public education.

By passing this proclamation, the Albany County legislature joined the U.S. Conference of Mayors and numerous cities and towns across the United States that had approved similar statements calling for a reordering of national priorities.

The public campaign for the Albany proclamation began this past summer, when volunteers from Upper Hudson Peace Action, joined by others from the Solidarity Committee of the Capital District and Women Against War, met with Albany County legislator Doug Bullock and agreed on the wording of the measure. Subsequently, Bullock secured six additional co-sponsors of the proclamation.

Meanwhile the volunteers began lining up endorsements by local organizations of what was now dubbed the Peace Dividend Proclamation. Ultimately, 29 local groups endorsed it. In addition to Albany UUP and the originating organizations, they included the Albany County Central Federation of Labor (AFL-CIO), the Albany Friends Meeting, Bethlehem Neighbors for Peace, the Capital District chapter of the Working Families Party, Citizen Action of the Capital District, the Citizens' Environmental Coalition, the Commission on Peace and Justice of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Albany, the Hudson-Mohawk Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Interfaith Alliance of New York State, the Labor-Religion Coalition of New York State, the New York Capital Region MoveOn Council, Occupy Albany, the RFK Democratic Club, Save Our SUNY, United Tenants of Albany, and Veterans for Peace.

By this fall, the public campaign for the proclamation had acquired considerable momentum. Individuals and representatives of some of these groups – including Jim Collins, Acting

President of Albany UUP – testified in favor of the proclamation at county legislature meetings on September 10 and October 9. Constituents emailed or phoned their legislators, pressing them to sign the proclamation. Key organizations sent letters of support to legislators, urging them to sign. With 20 signatures – a majority of the 39 county legislators – necessary to make the proclamation official, the campaign had 19 of them in place by the official deadline of October 9.

In a last-ditch effort to put the measure over the top, a press conference and rally had been scheduled in front of the Albany County Courthouse, the legislature's meeting place, just before the October 9 legislative session convened. But that same afternoon, a 20th legislator stepped forward and signed the proclamation. Therefore, the event was turned into a victory celebration, after which supporters trooped into the legislative session, spoke once again in favor of the proclamation, and picked up another two signers, giving the proclamation a solid majority – 22 out of 39 legislators. All were Democrats.

Under the provisions of the proclamation, the county clerk has mailed copies of this Peace Dividend Proclamation to the President of the United States, the entire New York Congressional delegation, the Governor of New York, the New York State Legislature, and all government departments in Albany County.

Further material on the campaign (including the text of the proclamation and lists of endorsing organizations and legislative signers) can be found online at: <http://peaceact.net/albany-county-proclamation/>.

Negotiations Update

The long and difficult process of trying to reach an acceptable agreement with the governor's negotiators continues. While progress has been made toward reaching a fair and equitable contract, a few significant issues remain unresolved. UUP is pursuing all available opportunities to engage the state in productive discussions on these issues and we remain focused on reaching an agreement that our members will ratify. The Negotiations Team is pursuing all options and appreciates the supportive comments we continue to receive from members.

Strike, from page 7.

Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel's solution has been to push school reform, in the form of merit pay and standardized evaluations, along with an increase in charter schools. But charter schools typically receive about 70% of the per pupil operating expenses that regular school districts get and yet must pay for facilities upkeep out of their own budgets. The result is a gap between the actual cost of the school and the funding allocated, a gap that leaves the poorest children behind.

The worst thing about all these reforms, however, is that there is no proof that they work. The Chicago Sun-Times, for instance, reported that Chicago charter schools produce "wildly uneven results," while an open letter from sixteen professors and researchers throughout the Chicago metropolitan area denounced the new evaluation system as based on "misconceptions about student growth."³ Furthermore, the National Research Council released a report in May 2011 stating that "test-based incentives have not consistently generated positive effects on student achievement."⁴ On the one hand, failing schools and a series of reforms that, as research has shown, fail to address the problem. On the other, a top down management style that seeks to implement changes without consultation while simultaneously scapegoating teachers as obstacles to reform and a taxpayer burden. None of these issues are alien to those of us who work in another embattled public school system: the State University of New York.

What all of this ultimately represents is another manifestation of the assault on the middle class. Emanuel's education reform agenda is a combination of corporate thinking and old fashioned union busting, and as we all know, unions, even in their currently embattled state, are still the best way to secure a stable middle class life; studies show time and again that wage growth stagnates in industries without unions.⁵ Education, too, is a crucial tool for class mobility. If the poor kids of Chicago receive an adequate education today they might become the middle-class unionized teachers of tomorrow.

The strike was not, then, just about contracts, but about the stability of the middle class both now and for the future. Rather than work without a contract, the teachers chose to strike because they care about their own livelihood, but just as importantly because they care about their profession and about serving the students who need them. Clearly they must have input in how their

performance is evaluated. After all who knows more about how to teach than teachers?

If the Chicago Teacher's Strike represents part of the war on the middle class, the recent strikes at Wal-Mart represent another. For here we find precisely the kind of low-wage, no-union, no benefit jobs corporate America excels at creating, jobs which await those of us who fall out of the middle class in America's new gilded age. At least one hundred workers at over twenty-eight stores in twelve cities struck, representing a tiny fraction of the nearly 1.3 million workers the retail giant employs in the United States. Nevertheless, the strikes are the first labor unrest in the company's fifty year history and activists say this is only the beginning. Combined with the Chicago Teacher's Strike and recent activity in a number of California grocery stores both big and small, it seems that a labor movement left for dead might be slowly waking up.⁶ Stay tuned. The future of the American middle class will depend on it.

¹<http://progressillinois.com/posts/content/2012/09/13/union-cannot-strike-chicago-sb7-and-teachers-strike>

²<http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/16/opinion/sunday/can-great-teaching-overcome-the-effects-of-poverty.html>

³http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/the-real-problem-with-rahms-school-reforms-in-chicago/2012/09/11/c77c3cc4-fba4-11e1-8adc-499661afe377_blog.html

⁴<http://www8.nationalacademies.org/onpinews/newsite.aspx?RecordID=12521>

⁵<http://economy.money.cnn.com/2012/08/30/union-s-income-inequality/>

⁶http://www.mercurynews.com/business/ci_21941184/labor-unrest-trickles-down-small-grocers-raleys-strike-safeway

By-Laws Amendments Adopted

At a special, general member meeting on Tuesday, Oct. 23, 2012, members voted to adopt the changes proposed by the by-laws committee. The final tally, with 53 members in attendance, was 39 in favor, 12 opposed, and 2 abstaining. The required number for adoption was 2/3rds of those attending (i.e., 35).

Some key changes include:

- Term limits of 3 terms for chapter officers
- Creation of an Officer for Contingent Faculty
- Creation of the positions of Assistant VPs for professionals and academics.

Sandy, from page 1.

a couple of gas cans for our sister in Floral Park. Thursday morning I packed it all up in the pickup truck and headed out with my son to the gas station to fill up the truck and gas cans. Then we picked up some last minute supplies and finally got on the Thruway at 11:00 am. The ride down to Long Island was smooth until we got on the Cross Island Parkway. That's where Sandy's damage became apparent. There were trees broken in half and others uprooted on both sides of the highway. When I exited on to Jericho Turnpike, I hit a wall of traffic that was at a standstill with no traffic lights working. After thirty minutes of stop and go traffic I realized I was on a gas line that was over a mile long. I was able to maneuver away and drive to my sister's house. We unloaded the generator and gas and set it up, finally getting her refrigerator running after days without power. A couple of hours later, we continued on to my brother's house.

I drove into the Rockaways over the Marine Parkway Bridge. From the bridge I could see the town of Breezy Point with over a hundred houses reduced to cinders and ash. As I slowly made my way down the boulevard, passing mounds of water-damaged possessions and storm debris in front of homes, the destructive power of the storm became apparent. Some of the beach blocks, fearing looters, were barricaded and had signs saying "Residents Only."

When I reached my brother's block it was covered with over a foot of sand so I had to switch to 4-wheel drive to get up the street. My brother and his 15-year-old twin boys were shoveling the deep sand from around the house and were happy to see us arrive. We set up the generator and ran extension cords to get the refrigerator running and some lights on. When the sun set at 6:00 pm, the darkness was total. My brother told me he felt like their town was forgotten. He had no access to news reports, and there was no sign of the Red Cross, or FEMA, or any city agencies. After assuring him that help was on its way, we left at 8:00 pm. It was much harder driving out with the debris in the road and no lights. It felt like we were in a war zone. It was a long ride ahead and I was anxious about the journey, but we arrived home safely around midnight and I was able to sleep soundly for the first time in days.

Lessons learned:

- Have a plan.
- Always fill your gas tanks, including portable cans, when threatened with a storm.

- Stock up on non-perishable food ahead of time.
- Own a generator, even a small one.
- Keep a landline phone; unlike cordless phones, they work even in power outages.
- Get in touch with family and friends and come up with a checkup schedule.
- Have at least a portable radio to keep abreast of the news.
- Know your neighbors as sometimes government may not be there to help you.

Committee Reports

Parking

Eric Warnke, Chair

Our goal as a committee is to understand the parking situation, be a secondary conduit for issues that members may have with parking management, and to advocate for access to parking that is compliant with our contractual obligations.

From my own investigations and the feedback of others, I know that parking this semester has been contentious. This is a result of a number of factors: large numbers of contractors, displacement of special permit spaces due to construction and the master plan, and the use of lots for guests. It all adds up to not enough spots for the number of vehicles permitted to park in those spots. We have brought these concerns to Parking Management as part of an ongoing discussion.

I am happy to report that we have had an impact. The website will finally be updated to reflect the current parking maps, purple lots will no longer be used for visitor and guest parking during business hours, and, assuming the administration's approval, there will be some significant changes to where contractors can park. The committee hopes that these changes will reduce contention for spaces in the purple lots so that faculty and staff can come to work without wasting time and fuel driving from lot to lot looking for a place to park.

Our committee would like to hear from you, too. Are you unable to park in your designated lots? Do you believe a change in parking policy is negatively affecting your commute and your ability to work? If you are reporting that faculty/staff lots are full, please include the date, time, and location. Email ericew+uup@gmail.com.

Reminder—there is a 20% discount on sticker fees if you drive an energy efficient vehicle (35 mpg or more).

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