

THE FORUM

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Your UUP Albany Chapter Newsletter

Issue 121



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Open Letter to Presidential Search Committee

Sent to the Albany Presidential Search Committee members, April 3

Dear Presidential Search Committee Members,

We are writing to you as members and officers of the Executive Committee of the Albany Chapter of United University Professions. We wish to express our concerns and desires regarding the selection of the next President of the University at Albany/SUNY. We list below six issues that we urge the search committee to be mindful of as it conducts its important business.

First, given the program deactivation process that has unfolded on this campus in the last fifteen months and its effects on tenured faculty in Theatre, Language, Classics, and Project Renaissance programs, it is important to ask what the candidates' views are regarding tenure. We need a President who supports the principle of tenure/continuing appointment.

Second, given the evidence that the program deactivation process that occurred has by-passed, if not violated, the faculty by-laws of this institution, it is important to ask about candidates' views regarding faculty governance. Specifically, if chosen, would the candidate follow SUNY requirements by consulting with faculty governance (the Faculty Senate) prior to deactivating any academic programs in the future? We need a President who respects faculty governance and principles of academic freedom. We need a President who understands how these support critical thinking in our students and simultaneously support the future of a democratically literate electorate.

Third, given that highly-regarded Humanities programs and departments were down-sized in 2010-2011 under cloudy claims of financial exigency, and, given further, that the University's financial outlook appears to be improving, it is important to ask candidates about their vision of an accessible university education. Such an education requires full-time faculty and an understanding that necessary contingent faculty are paid a living wage. We need a President who is committed to an affordable, high-quality liberal arts education as the center of the University's mission. We also need a President who understands the unique mission of the State University of New York, someone who will be a champion for public higher education and who will advocate to restore the massive funding cuts UAlbany has sustained in recent years.

Fourth, we are a unionized campus, with a faculty and professional union as well as a number of other unions. We need a President who respects the Labor-Management negotiation process on this campus.

Fifth, we need a President who understands, and is committed to, the role of the University in nurturing diversity, inclusion, and overall societal human rights, as part of the advancement of humanities, arts, scientific, and technical knowledge in society.

See Presidential Search, page 6.

President's Corner

Be Proactive in Communicating with the Albany Chapter Office!

Candace Merbler,
President, Albany Chapter, UUP
University Libraries

The exchange of important chapter membership information between management and labor continues to be unsatisfactory. As such, there are many notifications that I no longer receive, and it is making things difficult to manage in terms of servicing the UUP membership. So I find myself asking you all for a help as we move forward.

- If you hire a new employee, please get their name and campus address to the Chapter Office as soon as possible.
- If you move to another campus address, change your home address, are planning on leaving the campus—please let the Chapter Office know so that we can make the appropriate changes to local and statewide records.
- If you are planning on retiring—please contact the Chapter Office with your expected retirement date. If you are a signed member of UUP on the date you retire, you are eligible to sign on for retiree membership which offers dental and vision coverage which will help in retirement. We wouldn't want you to miss out on this opportunity!

The Chapter Office is located at LC SB 51 and can be contacted at uupalb@albany.edu or by dialing 442-4951. Many thanks in advance for your willingness to keep the lines of communication open!

Suspension of UUP Benefit Trust Fund Scholarships

Those of you who have children attending a SUNY school should have received the following letter from UUP Statewide recently:

Dear UUP Member:

As you know, the UUP contract expired on July 1, 2011. The monies funding the Benefit Trust Fund Scholarship Program ended with the expiration of our contract. While the Benefit Trust Fund Trustees hoped the adjustment for the grade point average requirement would solve the problems of funding the scholarship, that is not the case. After review of the fund's financial status, the Trustees agreed the UUP Benefit Trust Fund will suspend its Scholarship Program at the conclusion of the Spring 2012 academic semester.

It is our hope that we are able to reinstate the program, should State monies become available in the future.

If you have any questions, please contact the UUP Benefit Trust Fund at 800-887-3863."

Class War: By the Numbers

\$25bn The personal fortunes of each of the Koch brothers.

\$200m What the Koch brothers are planning on spending to defeat Pres. Obama in 2012.

\$50m What the Koch brothers have spent since 1998 to fund think tanks that deny climate change.

\$6m The amount spent to-date by Americans for Prosperity attacking renewable energy projects.

62 Number of new Republican congressmen, out of a total of 87, elected in 2010 with Koch brothers support.

\$16.5m Amount donated by casino magnate, Sheldon Anderson, to Newt Gingrich's super PAC.

\$17m What NYC spent in police overtime during the Occupy Wall Street protests.

\$635bn Amount spent in the US to militarize local police departments since 2001.

\$2bn Cost of domestic surveillance facility constructed by the NSA in Bluffdale, UT.

\$174.5m Total public subsidies received by owners of Zuccotti Park to rebuild in aftermath of 9/11.

93% Percentage of income gains that went to 1% in first year of recovery after the 2007-2008 recession.

11.6% Rate of income growth for 1% in recovery years.

0.2% Rate of income growth for 99%.

20% Rate of income growth for 99% from 1993-2000.

6.7% Rate of income growth for 99% during Bush presidency, immediately preceding recession.

Letter from the Editor

The Clear and Present Danger of the Koch Brothers

Martin Manjak, Professional Delegate

Dear Members:

Marcus Licinius Crassus (115 BCE – 53 BCE) is considered one of the wealthiest individuals in history. He, along with Pompey and Julius Caesar, formed the first triumvirate in Rome, i.e., the rule of three men. This political arrangement proved to be the transitional phase between the end of the Roman Republic and the emergence of a persistent, hereditary dictatorship.

Crassus enjoyed military successes, but his fortunes really took off when he started buying Roman real estate. Fires were frequent in ancient Rome and no one beat Crassus and his agents to the scene of a conflagration. (It was rumored that not all these fires were accidental.) Crassus would offer to buy the burning property on the spot. It was the quintessential buyer's market. Once he'd obtained ownership, he would demolish the existing structures and rebuild, constructing tenements that would generate revenues many times the purchase price of the property.

Crassus' money bought him political influence that elevated him to a position of immense power. He used that power to liquidate those whose fortunes he coveted, and in such fashion augmented his considerable wealth. That wealth led to increased power, all concentrated in his person and exercised through a network of clients or dependents, the classic example of gangster rule.

Charles and David Koch are worth close to \$25 billion each, making them the fourth richest Americans. Combined, their fortune makes them the third wealthiest people on the planet. They, too, exercise considerable influence on politics.

In 2010, the Kochs spent at least \$40m on congressional elections, swinging the balance of power in the house firmly into the laps of Tea Party Republicans who have pressed a radical agenda designed to disenfranchise minority voters, roll back environmental protections, weaken unions, privatize Social Security and Medicare, and implement a regressive tax policy that shifts even more of the nation's wealth into the hands of the financial elite.

The Koch brothers exercise their influence through a network of organizations operating at the state and federal levels. Founded and funded by the Kochs, Americans for Prosperity has 35 state chapters and claims to have about 2 million individual members.

Its Wisconsin operation contributed \$500,000 to Gov. Walker's efforts to cut social spending and revoke the bargaining rights of the state's public employees. Similar efforts are underway in Ohio and Indiana.

These attempts to weaken unions dovetail nicely with efforts to elect radical Republicans at the state level, and move those states into the red column for presidential races.

Like Crassus, the Kochs are fond of heat. They vigorously oppose any attempts to address climate change. According to Kent Davies, the director of research for Greenpeace, the Kochs have spent more than \$50m since 1998 on "various front groups and think tanks who...oppose the consensus view that climate change is real, urgent, and that we have to do something about it."

The Koch brothers strategy resembles Crassus'. They use personal wealth to build a network of dependents, electing politicians beholden to them who then pass legislation that weakens unions, minorities, environmentalists, advocates of progressive tax codes, etc..

Simultaneously, they oppose or thwart efforts to limit the influence of money on the political process, advocate for tax policies that favor the wealthy at the expense of the majority of Americans, and resist any attempts to develop energy policies that would negatively impact Koch Industries—the second largest, *privately-held* company in the US and a source of \$100bn annually derived from oil refining, chemical products, and financial services.

Crassus' ambition ultimately led to his death while invading Parthia. It is said that the Parthians poured molten gold into the mouth of his corpse. The Koch brothers are spending whatever it takes to own our political process. If unchecked, the corpse on the floor will belong to the American Republic.

Academic Vice President's Report Practicing Union Democracy, Taking Collective Action

James Collins, Professor, Anthropology

Greetings:

This is our fourth newsletter since September and last of the academic year, so it seems appropriate to take stock. Among lessons I've learned this year, as part of an ongoing effort to build a more democratic, inclusive union, are the importance of listening to members, the need to take a collective stance, and the value of working with other organizations. In this report, I'll discuss some of the collective actions we have undertaken, reporting in the Fall on the other lessons.

This year, and especially since January, we have debated, discussed, and initiated actions focused on the University at Albany as well as continued activities concerning SUNY and higher education in New York State. The actions at the University have had as their goal the strengthening of faculty governance processes. As unionists, we believe that governance is improved by supporting the principles of transparency and accountability in institutional conduct.

The Presidential Search Process: As individual faculty and staff we have been involved in the 'feedback' process regarding the Presidential Search. In addition, as a union chapter we have submitted a formal letter to the search committee, asking for maximum transparency and accountability as well as articulating other union values and concerns (see page 1, **Presidential Search Letter**).

Faculty Governance Bodies: Given the importance of faculty governance to the operation of a public university, we join, as teaching and professional faculty, in calls to the UA Senate for investigation of the de-activation process that closed five programs and departments in the humanities, and for measures to improve administrative compliance with Faculty By-Laws and consultation processes. (Acting as an individual Councilor, I recently joined others in the CAS Faculty Council in calls for clarity about decision-making in the Facilities Master Plan, a process that lies behind

much current and anticipated construction on the campus). Both the Presidential search and governance efforts will be discussed at an upcoming Chapter Forum on **May 7 in CC375 at 4:15-6:15 pm**. We will address these issues and others as part of a general discussion of economic uncertainty and the struggle for a better university.

Chapter By-Laws: Within the UUP Albany Chapter, we have begun a process of revising our Chapter By-Laws, with the intent of making our organization more open and accessible. The Executive Committee has discussed and voted to support the proposed changes, but there is ongoing debate. Final approval will be subject to membership discussion and a vote which will occur at a special Chapter Meeting to be held early in the fall semester (The By-Laws changes will be published on our website later this spring and distributed in a special newsletter over the summer.)

Advocacy for SUNY the New York State Legislature: UUP statewide holds regular Advocacy Days on Tuesdays throughout the winter and spring, at which faculty and staff meet with individual legislators to argue the case for public support for SUNY. The Albany Chapter always sends a delegation. Among other actions, many of us joined with the New York Public Interest Group and faculty and students from the City University of New York for a joint "Higher Education Advocacy Day" on March 14. As members, we encourage you to join us for these activities, or to send e-letters, so that we can educate the Legislature about our achievements and our needs.

Of course, none of these collective actions brings immediate results. As unionists we act in support of principles— for example, that openness (transparency) and responsibility (accountability) are crucial in public institutions in a democratic society. We also advocate social values and goals, e.g., that education, along with health and social security, are public values that should be adequately supported by public funds. These principles, values and goals are not current realities, but we believe that it is important to act vigorously in their defense and, further, that only by acting together can we be successful. As always, we invite you to join us!

Progressive Faculty Caucus in Capital District

Bret Benjamin, Associate Prof., English

This semester saw the emergence of an exciting new initiative: The Capital District Progressive Faculty Caucus (CDPFC). This group addresses two perceived needs articulated by faculty: 1) a forum in which UAlbany faculty can discuss and work to shape the direction of our University, most immediately around questions of faculty governance, the Presidential search, and the NYSUNY2020 plan; and 2) a mechanism to convene progressive faculty from higher education institutions across the Capital District to engage in public intellectual work around issues that affect our community.

From this second need, the CDPFC launched a public lecture series, *University in the City*, with great success this semester. A collaboration among faculty from UAlbany, Sienna, St. Rose, RPI, Union, and Russell Sage (and we hope more institutions in the future), this lecture series is an effort to stimulate a dialogue among progressive faculty across and beyond our institutions 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.

Two events have been held so far. The first, a panel discussion entitled *Understanding Occupy*, took place on March 4. Panelists included Shanna Goldman from Occupy Albany, Jackie Hayes from New York Students Rising, and UUPers Janell Hobson, Meredith Weiss, and Bret Benjamin. Addressing a standing-room-only crowd at the Women's Building, the panel discussed the Occupy movement, its recent history and future directions, its relation to other Left social movements both present and past, the economic context from which it emerged, and its efforts to address the historically sedimented racial divisions within the US.

Our second event on April 1, *The Flaming Faucet: Fracking, Alternative Fuels, and Future Directions*, took up the issue of hydrofracking, offering a broad-ranging analysis that, we hope, contributed positively to the broader community

debate of this issue, leading to the April 16 passage of a hydrofracking ban by the Albany Common Council. This panel paired academics David Lewis from UAlbany's Geography and Planning Department, Abby Kinchy, a Sociologist from RPI, and Danae McCleod, a Philosopher from Stony Brook, with food and environmental journalist Amy Halloran, and Bill Reinhardt, formerly from the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority and current member of the Capital Region Energy forum. Audience members commented positively on the panel's range—which took up not only the hydrofracking process itself, but also alternative fuel sources, the social justice implications of food and agriculture, and the profound social effects on rural communities.

The final University in the City event will be held on **April 29 from 5-7pm, also in the Women's Building**. The topic "Economics and the Election: Taxes, Spending, and Who Gets What?" will be addressed by panelists that include Holly Jarman from UAlbany's Political Science Department, Christine Nealon from the Unity House of Troy and Instructor at Russell Sage, Christine Parsons, the Director of ASPIRE, City Mission of Schenectady, Aaron Pacitti, from the Department of Economics at Siena, and Bill Ritchie the President of the Albany County Central Federation of Labor.

There is much more to be said about the need to organize progressive faculty to address campus concerns here at Albany, but that will have to wait for another issue. For the moment, we invite everyone to come to our final event on April 29. Further, we welcome any questions, suggestions, or volunteers. If you would like to join the group, receive announcements about events, or contribute suggestions for future University in the City panels (we plan to continue this in the fall) please contact Bret Benjamin (bbenjamin@albany.edu). More information can be found on the web: <http://www.capitalregionfaculty.org/>, and on our facebook page: <http://www.facebook.com/CDPFC>.

Contributions, Letters to the Editor

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

Presidential Search

From page 1

Lastly, it is important that the search be as transparent as possible, including informing the University faculty and staff about the decision-making hierarchy. While confidentiality may be a part of the search process, the Presidential Search Committee also has a responsibility to the University Community to be as transparent as possible in the selection process. Without this, it makes the decisions seem arbitrary; not, we believe, an outcome that the committee desires. We need as much communication as is possible in the selection process. The ongoing Presidential Search at the University of Massachusetts/Amherst offers a useful model of such transparency.

Thank you in advance for considering these points and for all the work that you and the members of the committee are putting into the search for a new University at Albany President. By working together and having dialogue, we can make a better University.

Albany Chapter Executive Committee
United University Professions

Albany's Abraham Wins Statewide Re-Election

UAlbany's own Philippe Abraham won re-election to the statewide position of Vice President for Professionals by acclamation at the recent Delegates' Assembly on Saturday, April 21. Abraham ran unopposed for his first full term after being elected to fill out the term of the previous VPP, John Marino, who moved to NYSUT. Abraham is currently working in several areas that impact SUNY professional employees, including issues surrounding continuing appointment.

Forum Wins UUP Journalism Award

The Albany chapter newsletter, The Forum, was awarded first prize in the Best Editorial/Column category for the "Letter from the Editor" column written by Martin Manjak in the February-March issue. The column was entitled: *Higher Ed and Economic Development: Is that all there is?*

Contract Negotiations Continue

The UUP Negotiations Team spent April 12 and 13 in intensive discussions with state negotiators. On April 12, UUP received the state's response to the comprehensive counter-proposal it presented March 22.

Over the course of the two-day negotiations session, mutual understandings were reached on many non-monetary items on the table. As the proposal/counter-proposal process continues, UUP will continue to press for a fair and equitable compensation package. An acceptable agreement has not been reached on major monetary items.

The next negotiations sessions are scheduled for May 3 and 4. Over the next two weeks, UUP and state negotiators will work on details and potential contract language to clarify items on which mutual understandings have been reached.

All contract items will be finalized in the context of an overall agreement.

As negotiations proceed, UUP members will be kept informed through regular website postings, mailings from President Phil Smith, and articles in The Voice. Periodic updates and other information will be sent to chapter presidents for distribution via chapter websites, newsletters, fliers, and meetings.

Members are encouraged to periodically check the UUP website (www.uupinfo.org) for postings at the "2011 Negotiations Information" link under Latest Information on the right hand side of the home page. Feel free to contact UUP Chief Negotiator Jamie Dangler at contract@uupmail.org for further information or to submit questions or comments.

Save the Dates!

April 29: University in the City: Economics and the Election, Women's Building, 373 Central Ave., 5:00-7:00 pm

May 7: Chapter Forum on Presidential Search and faculty governance, CC 375, 4:15-6:15 pm. Light refreshments will be served

UUP Statewide Resolution: Shared Services

Passed at the April 20 Session

The following resolution was passed unanimously at the spring Delegates' Assembly in an effort to get the Chancellor to clarify the anticipated impact of the proposed "Shared Services" initiative on professional members and individual unit's IT operations.

Whereas the Chancellor has pledged to shift 5% of current units' administrative costs to academics and student services; and

Whereas the Chancellor has proposed the development of "Regional Administrative Centers" that will assume certain administrative functions currently performed by individual campuses; and

Whereas the Chancellor has characterized Information Technology Services as the "greatest opportunity" for realizing the savings and efficiencies that will allow for the transfer of 5% of current administrative costs to academics and student services; and

Whereas regional consolidations, adoption of common standards, and migrations and conversions from existing technologies will have a significant impact on UUP professional employees, including the possible loss of positions, re-locations, and re-training requirements; and

Whereas UUP members currently performing these functions possess considerable and indispensable experience and insight into the operational and technical complexities and dependencies of existing technologies, as well as the business logic behind them; and

Whereas the UUP members are greatly concerned about potential interruption and disruption of IT services, including academic and student services; therefore be it

Resolved, that UUP Statewide requests immediate clarification from the Chancellor on the anticipated impact on UUP employees of the Chancellor's plans for consolidations and increased IT efficiencies; and be it further

Resolved, that UUP Statewide requests UUP representation, of those possessing expertise in both IT and local business practices, on any work groups convened by the Chancellor to plan for the drafting and implementation of the proposed consolidations.

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EDITORIAL POLICY: The opinions expressed in *The Forum* are those of the writers and members of the University at Albany Chapter of UUP, and do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of United University Professions.



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