

# THE FORUM

ISSUE 112

MARCH 2008

## President's Corner

By now I am sure you have heard that the new UUP Agreement for 2007-2011 has been ratified by the membership. The UUP Negotiations Team was able to secure some excellent provisions in the new contract, including a new dependent tuition program, across the board raises of 3%, 3%, 3% and 4%, with the first year being retroactive until July 1, 2007! Long term part time faculty will also see a longevity bonus, and health insurance premiums and co-pays were held to a minimum, as well as being delayed into future years of the contract.

Additional monies were also negotiated for our ever popular grant programs. From the minute the news went out about the successful ratification of the contract, my phone and email were inundated with queries about when the grant program applications would be available. As part of the process of enacting a new contract, ratification by the membership occurs first. Then the legislature needs to pass a "pay bill" to "fund" the contract. Once that occurs, monies will actually be sent to accounts to fund the grant programs. My guess is that it will take a bit longer before the programs will be up and running. Please be patient, and be reassured that we will get notifications out to the entire bargaining unit as soon as we get word.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank all of the UUP members who attended the first UAlbany Day Rally on March 18<sup>th</sup>. I have been working with administration for the past four years trying to get a UAlbany Day established, and was very pleased with the wonderful turnout! Your attendance, as well as your donation of time and spirit will be remembered by legislators once the final budget numbers are being crunched. I am hopeful that this was the first of many more, and much larger UAlbany Days in the future. When you see Interim President Philip – let him know how much you appreciate his efforts in making the first UAlbany Day a reality! It is an investment in our future here at the University at Albany!

—Candace Merbler

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## Grievance?

Do you have a grievance? Do you feel you are being treated unfairly? Call Greta Petry, Grievance Chair, for help! You can reach Greta at 437-4986.

## What motivates critical thinking?

Bill Roberson, Director, Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership

Most university professors are firmly committed to elevating the level of student thinking. And just as many of us will attest to the fact that this is a very difficult task. In our frustration we look for short-cut explanations as to why we sometimes fall short: “My students lack motivation” (even though we see that they are highly motivated by FaceBook and text messaging their friends); “My students cannot read” (even though UA students score on average close to 1200 on the SAT).

At the Institute for Teaching, Learning, and Academic Leadership, we host conversations of this type on a regular basis. *Why do our students confound us? Why don't our lectures fascinate them? What can we do to get them to prepare for class?* These probing questions, growing out of our faculty's commitment to make a difference, are the doorways to discoveries about the teaching and learning processes. These are some of the questions that have to be answered if we're going to raise the level of their thinking.

The truth is, our students are just like us: we are highly motivated and perform very well when we value the purpose of the learning activity. When we discover that we are in need of information, we are energized to explore the subject and understand it. We quickly develop a critical view of that information, based on whether it helps us or not.

And when are we *not* motivated? As experienced critical readers, we *stop* reading when we realize that a given text is not relevant or useful to us. We put it down and say we'll come back to it if we need to. Shouldn't we expect the same from our students? Take the case of textbooks. Textbooks are often used to provide information that has not been activated by authentic need (i.e. by a reason other than a grade). Students are frequently asked to read dozens of pages without knowing how or why it will eventually become useful. Doesn't this sound terribly boring? Of course it does, because it works directly against (see next page)

## GLBTQ Issues Committee Wanted or Needed at U A?

Because of some things I heard at the recent Winter DA, and some issues that arose at a Diversity Audit meeting that I attended, I would like to hear from the Membership as to whether you would like me to propose the establishment of an Ad Hoc GLBTQ Issues Committee in our Chapter. I would make the proposal at an Executive Committee meeting. As far as I know, no UUP Chapter in the State has such a Committee; we would be the first.

GLBTQ faculty at the University at Albany do not currently have an organization in which we can discuss issues of importance to us. There is a Womens Concerns Committee, a Disability Rights and Concerns Committee, committees which address affirmative action, and many other Committees which serve both Academic and Professional faculty. Isn't it time for a committee for GLBTQ faculty? If you are interested in this, please send an email to me, Carol H. Jewell, at [Cjewell@uamail.albany.edu](mailto:Cjewell@uamail.albany.edu) Thanks!

## Diversity Issues

With this issue, we launch a new column looking at all aspects of diversity. First up, some disability news.

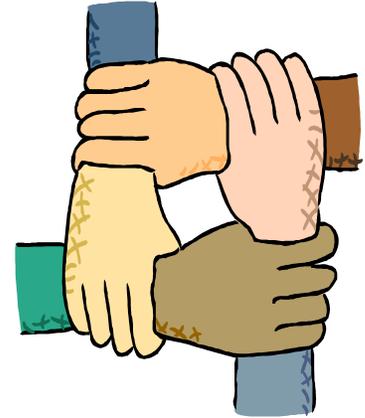
At the recent Winter Delegate Assembly in Albany, the statewide Disability Rights and Concerns Committee met. Unfortunately, neither co-chair was able to be there, and we had to have an abbreviated meeting. But one of the things discussed in the meeting is the importance of the ADA Restoration Act of 2007 (HR 3195 ih, S 1881). This act, if passed, would restore to the ADA provisions which have been severely narrowed by a variety of Supreme Court cases. The Bill is currently in the Codes Committee.

You can read the full text of the Bill in *The Congressional Record*, at:

<<http://www.gpoaccess.gov/crecord/index.html>>

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In other news, the University recently did what it called a “diversity audit.” I want to assure you that issues of accessibility were discussed, as they pertain to students, *and* to faculty and staff.



## Critical thinking, con't.

the nature of our brains.

So, what if we inverted the process in order to activate student interest and intellectual motivation? What would that look like?

*Professor:* “Students, here’s an interesting puzzle/problem that we haven’t talked about yet. Try to come up with an answer using your best judgment. If you think you need more information, here’s a chapter that might help you. Use whatever you think is relevant. You’ll be graded on how well you solve the problem.”

*Student:* “Wow, this is intense...where do we start? How much time do we have?”

*The Institute for Teaching and Learning is located in Social Science 251. TheITLAL professional staff is available to faculty for a wide range of services related to teaching. [www.albany.edu/teachingandlearning](http://www.albany.edu/teachingandlearning)*

## Spotlight on Labor Music

Following are some of the words of a traditional Solidarity song, sung to the tune of “John Brown’s Body,” and which was written in 1915 by Ralph Chaplin, a labor activist.

When the Union's inspiration  
through the workers' blood shall run,  
There can be no power greater  
anywhere beneath the sun.

Yet what force on earth is  
weaker than the feeble strength of one?  
But the Union makes us strong.

Chorus: Solidarity forever!Solidarity  
forever! Solidarity forever! For the

Union makes us strong.

Is there aught we hold in com-  
mon with the greedy parasite

Who would lash us into serf-  
dom and would crush us with his  
might?

Is there anything left to us but to organ-  
ize and fight?

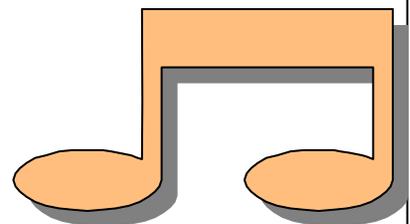
For the Union makes us strong.

[chorus]

The rest of the lyrics can be found at

<<http://www.ocap.ca/songs/solidari.html>>

At every DA, we open the  
Plenary Session by singing this song,  
and I always feel a huge rush of pride  
as we all sing together!



**Working  
to Benefit  
You!**



**nysut** Member  
Benefits  
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*A Union of Professionals*

Every program endorsed by NYSUT Member Benefits Trust is researched, designed and monitored to enhance your lifestyle.

With the group buying power represented by more than 585,000 members, we're able to offer quality products and services that are competitively priced.

**Insurance Benefits**

Term Life  
Catastrophe Major  
Medical  
Disability  
Personal Property and  
Liability (Umbrella)  
Long-Term Care  
Retiree Dental Plan  
WrapPlan® Term Life  
Insurance Coordination  
Plan  
Accidental Death &  
Dismemberment  
Vision Plan

**Financial Benefits**

Preferred Savings Plus<sup>SM</sup>  
Mortgages  
Equifax Credit Watch™  
Gold  
Consumer Credit  
Counseling Service

**Legal Services**

Legal Service Plan  
Retiree Legal Service  
Plan

**Discount Benefits**

OfficeMax Retail Connect<sup>SM</sup>  
Bose® - *New!*  
Dell Computers  
Barnes & Noble.com  
Working Advantage  
(Discount Tickets)  
Lifeline Medical Alert Service  
Car Rentals - Alamo, Avis,  
Budget & Hertz  
Six Flags  
The Buyer's Edge Buying  
Service  
Heat USA

**Other Services**

MAP - Member Assistance  
Program  
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Planning for Special Kids)  
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To request more information, please call:

**(800) 626-8101**

E-mail us at: [benefits@nysutmail.org](mailto:benefits@nysutmail.org) or visit us  
on the Web at [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org).

*Some benefits may not be available in all local associations.*

For information about these programs or about contractual expense reimbursement/endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits Trust or refer to your NYSUT Member Benefits Trust Summary Plan Description.

Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits Trust-endorsed programs.

## Did you know...?

There will be an EAP Wellness Fair on April 16, 2008. Watch your mailbox for the EAP Newsletter!

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Of 1,914 employees in the 08 Bargaining Unit at the University at Albany, 85% are signed UUP members!

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We have 18 new Departmental Representatives, and our Chapter President, Candace Merbler, will soon offer a workshop for them!

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97.5% of those casting ballots voted IN FAVOR of ratification of the contract!

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Our Chapter's website can be accessed at:

<http://www.albany.edu/uup/>

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The 2008 University Picnic will be held on June 13, 2008, at Krause's Restaurant and Picnic Grove (on the Mohawk River waterfront). Watch your mailbox for more details!

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The 2008 University Holiday Gala will be held on December 19, 2008 at the Holiday Inn Turf on Wolf Road!

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New York State employees are entitled to paid leave (up to four hours), without charge to their accruals, for screenings for breast or prostate cancer!

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Attendance at the Spring General Membership Meeting was the highest ever! We had reservations for 132 people, and 6 additional people signed up for membership at the door!

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If you experience driver-sight interference in a campus parking lot, perhaps due to a large pile of snow, you can contact Tim Reilly at 442-3450 and he will see to it that it is removed promptly. Thanks, Tim!

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Electronic mail is the official method for communicating with students.

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## SAVE NEW YORK LIBRARIES!

We all know that in tough economic times, libraries of all types are used more than ever. We need to get that message to our legislators and to Governor Paterson. New York is now facing those tough economic times. Governor Paterson has called for an \$800 million decrease in the proposed 2008-09 budget.

The Legislature and Governor are negotiating the differences in their budget proposals. We must be sure that libraries are NOT among the items that are cut. Our message to both the Governor and the Legislature must be clear. 75% of households in New York use libraries. Libraries are more valuable than ever when times are tough. Keep library funding at \$102 million -- the level in the 2007-08 budget. Do not cut library funding. You can help by writing letters to the Governor and your legislators or you can go to the NYLA website ([www.nyla.org](http://www.nyla.org)) and click on "Become a Library Advocate". Please ask other library advocates to do this also. Friends, families, colleagues -- everyone you know uses a library. Please ask them to help. Thanks!

—Kathy Miller, NYLA Legislative Chairperson

## Albany UUP Chapter Officers

President	Candace Merbler
VP Academics	Ivan Steen
VP Professionals	J. Philippe Abraham
Treasurer	James Wessman
Secretary	Carol H. Jewell
Part-Time Concerns Rep.	Jil Hanifan

UUP Albany Chapter  
University at Albany  
P.O. Box 22285  
1400 Washington Ave. , LC SB 51  
Albany, New York 12222  
Office Phone: 518-442-4951  
Fax: 518-442-3957

Email: [uupalb@albany.edu](mailto:uupalb@albany.edu) or [albany@uupmail.org](mailto:albany@uupmail.org)

Office hours: M-F 8:30 am-2:30 pm

United University Professions is Local 2190 of the American Federation of Teachers, and is affiliated with New York State United Teachers.

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### WRITE TO US!

Was this issue helpful for you ? Did you like the layout? Was it easy to read?

We'd love to hear your comments on this or any other issue of *The Forum*. Please send them to:

Carol H. Jewell      [cjewell@uamail.albany.edu](mailto:cjewell@uamail.albany.edu)

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University Libraries

University at Albany, State University of New York

1400 Washington Ave.

Albany, New York 12222

