



Welcome!

To the first issue of the 2013-2014 academic year. This "Forum" intends to be just that, a place where members can learn about their union, and contribute to the larger debate about unions and their role in a working democracy. Join us in these important discussions!

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Additional articles on the web:

UUP Honors Larry Wittner

Disability Rights Resources

(<http://www.albany.edu/uup/oct2013forumaddenda.pdf>)

Death of an Adjunct

By Daniel Kovalik, senior associate general counsel of the United Steelworkers Union

On Sept. 1, Margaret Mary Vojtko, an adjunct professor who had taught French at Duquesne University for 25 years, passed away at the age of 83. She died as the result of a massive heart attack suffered two weeks before. As it turned out, I may have been the last person she talked to.

On Aug. 16, I received a call from a very upset Margaret Mary. She told me that she was under an incredible amount of stress. She was receiving radiation therapy for the cancer that had just returned to her, she was living nearly homeless because she could not afford the upkeep on her home, and now, she explained, she had received another indignity -- a letter from Adult Protective Services telling her that someone had referred her case to them saying that she needed assistance taking care of herself.

For a proud professional like Margaret Mary, this was the last straw; she was mortified. She begged me to call Adult Protective Services and tell them to leave her alone, that she could take care of herself and did not need their help. I agreed. Sadly, a few hours later, she had the heart attack. She never regained consciousness.

Meanwhile, I called Adult Protective Services and explained the situation. I said that she had just been let go from her job as a professor at Duquesne, that she was given no severance or retirement benefits, and that the reason she was having trouble taking care of herself was because she was living in extreme poverty. The caseworker paused and asked with incredulity, "She was a professor?" I said yes. The caseworker was shocked; this was not the usual type of person for whom she was called in to help.

Of course, what the caseworker didn't understand was that Margaret Mary was an adjunct professor, meaning that, unlike a well-paid tenured professor, she worked on a contract basis from semester to semester, with no job security, no benefits and a salary of between \$3,000 and just over \$3,500 per three-credit course.

While adjuncts at Duquesne overwhelmingly voted to join the United Steelworkers union a year ago, Duquesne has claimed that the unionization of adjuncts like Margaret Mary would interfere with its mission to inculcate Catholic values among its students. This would be news to Georgetown University which just recognized its adjunct professors' union, citing the Church's social justice teachings, which favor labor unions.

As amazing as it sounds, Margaret Mary, a 25-year professor, was not making ends meet. Even during the best of times, when she was teaching three classes a semester and two during the summer, she was not even clearing \$25,000 a year, and she received absolutely no health care. Compare this with the salary of Duquesne's president, who makes more

See: **Adjunct**, page 4

Editor's Column

This is not a public university

Paul Stasi, Editor

In the coming year, *The Forum* will focus on the corporatization of the public university. Corporatization takes many forms. On the one hand, there is Start Up New York, Governor Cuomo's plan to make all of SUNY's upstate campuses tax-free zones for new businesses (see article on page 8). This gift to corporate New York, one that comes directly from taxpayers' coffers, has been praised by Chancellor Zimpher as a way to channel the "massive human capital of SUNY's half a million students" into industry, thus positioning SUNY "as the state's economic engine." Now students will "have greater opportunities to earn a degree directly influenced by the needs of today's job market." (See <http://tinyurl.com/nqu923r>). This is a far cry from the original mission statement of SUNY, which promised to "provide to the people of New York educational services of the highest quality, with the broadest possible access, fully representative of all segments of the population in a complete range of academic, professional and vocational postsecondary programs including such additional activities in pursuit of these objectives as are necessary or customary." (See http://www.suny.edu/about_suny/mission.cfm). All of us at the university should take note of this striking change in rhetoric – one that has been preceded by years of neoliberal thinking which understands the free market as the only possible way to organize all aspects of society. All is for the best in this the best of all possible worlds.

The problem begins with dwindling state resources. If only 10% of our budget comes from the State, then, in a very real sense we are no longer a public university. The response to the loss of state resources can not be to accept the language of the market as the only way to articulate our role in the University. Public/private partnerships, for instance, might sound great, but, as the relationship between SUNY Albany and CSNE demonstrates, they rarely end up benefiting the public side of the equation: the prestige associated with Nanotech has not translated into increased revenue for the rest of the university's academic services. Rather, as the article "Letting Go" in this issue clearly shows, CNSE has reaped considerable operational benefits from its association with the University.

Examples of the acceptance of market-speak across campus are easy to come by. At a recent Provost's retreat on undergraduate education, speaker after speaker discussed student enrollment in terms of market share and then suggested that we alter our curriculum to better appeal to our student/consumers. And recent data on hiring at the College of Arts & Sciences suggests that approximately 2/3 of all hires in the last two years have been under the auspices of SUNY 2020 – meaning that campus hiring priorities are being determined not by the departments and faculty doing the hiring, but by criteria generated by the state, criteria that, unsurprisingly, focus almost entirely on revenue generation. Increasingly the university is being run like a private corporation with its characteristic emphasis on short-term gain, the bottom line and unquestioned acceptance of the positive benefits of growth. It should be clear that all of these ideas contradict the mission statement quoted above.

We here at The Forum believe that the tax-paying citizens of New York state deserve better. They deserve the broad, comprehensive public education that SUNY has proudly provided for the last sixty-five years. And our students need to be understood not simply as human capital, but as the educated, engaged citizenry necessary for a democratic state to flourish.

Throughout the year we will look at how corporatization affects all of us at the University. What will be the impact of Start Up New York on our jobs, on our workplace, on academic freedom? What does the split between CSNE and SUNY Albany mean for the various parts of the campus that are integrated? How can we

Corporatization: By the Numbers

- 10** Percentage of SUNY Albany 2011-12 All Funds Budget that comes from State Sources
- \$17,700** Median debt of 2008 bachelors degree holders at public four-year institutions
- \$22,380** Median debt at private nonprofit institutions
- \$32,650** Median debt at for-profit institutions
- 24** Percentage of 2008 bachelor's degree graduates at for-profit schools who borrowed more than \$40,000
- 5** Percentage at not-for profit schools
- 5** Percentage of students at University of Phoenix online campus who graduate within six years
- 95** Percentage of University of Phoenix faculty who are adjuncts
- 100** Percentage of 15 for-profit colleges investigated by the Government Accountability Office in 2010 found to have engaged in fraud and questionable marketing practices
- 60** Percentage of dropout rate increase for online courses compared to face-to-face courses according to a 2013 Columbia University study
- \$15,080** Annual salary of an employee making the federal minimum wage of \$7.25/hour
- \$15,130** Federal poverty line for a family of two
- \$10.74** What the minimum wage would be if it had kept pace with the last 40 years of inflation
- 3.6M** 2012 workers making wages at or below the federal minimum wage
- 51.4** Percentage of 2009 minimum wage workers age 25 or over
- \$2,800** Average per course salary for an adjunct at SUNY Albany

Transformation from Below

Bret Benjamin, Chapter President

Let me be bold for a moment: Missing from this campus for many years has been an institutional site from which to pursue a focused analysis and critique of the University, and its place within society. Missing, too, has been the political commitment and/or muscle to make such a vision (if it existed) concrete—to pursue a set of programmatic initiatives that would transform the University to better align with the vision of a public research university that we might imagine.

I would like the Albany Chapter of UUP to assume this role. The union, in my estimation, is the institution on campus best suited to provide the structure, resources and direction required for such a transformative project. This is true principally because the union speaks and acts from a position both within and outside the university. It is comprised of individuals who work within the university, but it never speaks or acts in the interests of the university. That is the role of management, and the various university committees and governance bodies that issue from and report to management. The union, by contrast, speaks and acts from the perspective of labor; it speaks and acts with the collective wisdom, dedication, skill, and experience of the people who do the work to make the university run.

Let us be clear about the stakes of our work. Contemporary public higher education, I fear, sits perched upon the brink. The principles that have historically formed its core mission—universal access, comprehensive teaching and research expertise, a commitment to social progress through education—have, over the past few decades, come under direct siege. My suggestions above are bold not because they sketch an ambitious undertaking; they are bold because they do so from a historical context in which those of us defending the social value of education must swim against powerful currents that threaten to dismantle public universities under the guise of “education reform.” I am, by nature, suspicious of apocalyptic prophecies and predictions of impending crisis. In this case, however, I grudgingly give credence to the alarmists

among us. I honestly worry that my daughter, who is now three years old, will face a radically different and profoundly diminished public educational landscape by the time she applies to colleges.

Faced with such a dire scenario, two options present themselves: a) immerse ourselves in our own work or life, and hope that a better budget, or a better Democrat, or a better union, or a better campus administration will deliver us from the crisis (that is, if you’re among the few of us who are lucky enough to have the security of tenure or a relatively comfortable salary); or b) wade into the fray and work to build a university that operates in line with your principles. Myself, I’ll choose the latter, and throw my lot in with those of you willing to fight for the values in which you believe.

I recognize, of course, that the determining forces shaping the struggle over public higher education have their origins outside the university. We, on campus, do not act in a bubble and changes here will not magically change the society in which the university exists. UUP must certainly engage in a far broader economic and social project that attends to the class struggles of our day. However, one way to better understand and address abstractions such as “the economy” or “politics” is to begin with the concrete problems that characterize our working lives. To that end our Chapter has identified the following priorities to guide our work in the coming year:

- ever-escalating workloads
- online education/Open SUNY/Seamless Transfer
- envisioning a post-CNSE campus
- gender inequities across campus
- the concerns of contingent employees
- recruiting, retaining, and valuing a diverse faculty and staff
- political and community outreach
- protecting the health and safety of our members
- combatting the pressures of privatization, exemplified by StartUp NY, NYSUNY2020, online education and more.
- improved communication through our department representatives, newsletter, website and other means

For too long we have found ourselves reacting to this or that flawed initiative from above; it is time for us to begin developing progressive initiatives from below. I intend to make UUP an active participant in campus life: initiating discussions, gathering and analyzing data, advancing policy initiatives, advocating for the membership, and articulating an affirmative vision of what a public research university can be.

This ambitious project is possible only with the participation and engagement of the membership. We need your ideas, energy, and labor. Right now, I ask for your participation in three specific ways.

1) Please volunteer to serve on a chapter committee (listed on page 12). The public and political work of the Chapter takes place through its committees; they are the mechanism through which we will pursue the priorities listed above. Committees will shape our agenda, host public events and propose policy changes that our Chapter can pursue. If, for instance, you would like to address problems of gender inequity or adjunct labor, please volunteer for our Women's Concerns or Contingent Concerns Committees. If you have expertise about disability, join our Disability Concerns Committee. Each of these committees has a strong core of unionists in place, but we need members from across the campus if we are going to have the kind of impact that we envision.

2) Later this semester the Chapter will circulate a survey to all members, asking you to identify the key pressures and concerns that affect your work-lives. We will be asking, further, for concrete suggestions and proposals about how to make the university more intellectually dynamic, more equitable, more humane, and more effective in its goals. We want every member to fill out this survey; please take a few minutes to communicate with us about the things that matter most to you. Your ideas will drive our work.

3) Our Chapter will be organizing a series of workshops, lectures, focus groups, meetings, and political actions throughout the year. Please take time to attend these events. The more people who attend and participate, the richer our analysis of the University can become, and the stronger our voice will be when we press for changes.

I know everyone is busy. I know that our lives are over-filled with obligations. But this work is essential. If we do not commit our collective energies to developing an affirmative vision of what a public research university ought to be—and if we do not undertake this project right now—then I fear we may see the demise of one of the great social institutions of this or any age.

Adjunct

from page 1

than \$700,000 per year with full benefits.

Meanwhile, in the past year, her teaching load had been reduced by the university to one class a semester, which meant she was making well below \$10,000 a year. With huge out-of-pocket medical bills, Margaret Mary was left in abject penury. She could no longer keep her electricity on in her home, which became uninhabitable during the winter. She therefore took to working at an Eat'n Park at night and trying to catch some sleep during the day at her office at Duquesne. When this was discovered, the university called the police in to eject her from her office. Still, despite her cancer and her poverty, she never missed a day of class.

Finally, in the spring, she was let go by the university, which told her she was no longer effective as an instructor, despite many glowing evaluations from students. Duquesne knew all about Margaret Mary's plight, for I apprised them of it in two letters. I never received a reply, and Margaret Mary was forced to die penniless and on the verge of being turned over to Orphan's Court.

Her nephew, who contacted me about her passing, implored me to make sure that she didn't die in vain. He said that while there was nothing that could be done for Margaret Mary, we had to help the other adjuncts at Duquesne and other universities who were being treated just as she was, and who could end up as she did. I believe that writing this story is the first step in doing just that.

Milestones

Professional Vice President's Report

Thomas Hoey

Currently I am sitting in Chicago's Midway airport, waiting for my connecting flight to Los Angeles to attend the national AFL-CIO convention. This large gathering of the leaders of the U.S. labor movement will set organized labor's agenda for the coming years. As many of you may know, air travel allows plenty of time to reflect on one's personal situation and life in general, and I used the flight from Albany to Chicago to think about what I wanted to say to you in this article. There are lots of union issues to talk about and a lot of changes to deal with as the semester begins at UAlbany. We have physical changes on the campus with the opening of Service Building A, the School of Business, the new Stadium, and the rebuilt fountain. We also have administration changes: the inauguration of Dr. Robert Jones as President of the University and the spinning off of the College of Nanoscale Science.

Our union has also seen some major changes both on the statewide level and the chapter level. In June, Fred Kowal took the helm as statewide president and Bret Benjamin became Albany's chapter president. At a recent meeting of Presidents and Vice Presidents, Fred totally inspired and re-invigorated me about what our union can and needs to do to move forward. Our chapter President, Bret, hit the ground running and has asked us to come up with surveys and other ways to better serve our membership. It is an exciting time to be a UUP member and under our new leadership I have no doubt that "Better days are coming." Of course, the big change is that, after two years of waiting through very tough negotiations, we now have a new contract that is starting to be implemented while the fine print continues to be worked out. Our last pay check reflects the increases in healthcare costs and soon will reflect the governor-mandated furlough days, and with these changes many of us will be forced to tighten our financial belts and to cut personal spending.

The University also has been cutting costs, having its employees do more with less and holding

back on hiring in a timely manner when we lose colleagues. As public servants of the State of New York, we have the responsibility to insure that our institution operates in a safe, reliable manner and to keep our supervisors informed of any conditions that could affect its operation. With staffing so dangerously low in many departments, it is important for us to get the word out that workload creep must be challenged for the sake of both the institution and its employees. At a recent Labor-Management meeting, we were told that even Human Resources was very understaffed, and that making minor changes to employee attendance programs like PeopleSoft would be impossible.

Yes, things can seem dismal at times, but the human spirit is strong and we have a great group of people in our union working to make things better. Of course we need your help and support, as having leaders without supporters is a recipe for disaster. We need to know your concerns, and we will be putting together surveys that can easily be filled out using the web. It would also be nice to know what you like about what we are doing, which will assist us to continue doing the things that help you and others.

Good morale is critical for any organization to survive, and your union will work with you, using all available tools to try to encourage positive feelings about your career here at UAlbany. We will start by having a recognition memo sent out by the campus President, thanking employees who have spent decades building and maintaining the University. The idea for this arose thanks to Wayne Skala (Accelerator Lab), who stopped me in the tunnels and asked me why the University no longer celebrates years of service. We hosted a welcome back BBQ September 17, behind the Science Library. We will also be hosting a tailgate party at the new stadium for homecoming weekend thanks to Albany UUP Contingent Officer Roberto Vives' suggestion that we become more active in the University community. We will be planning and developing professional development programs that can help our members in various aspects of their jobs. Statewide Vice President for Professionals Philippe Abraham has reached out to me and my counterparts at other campuses about having a

gathering of all professionals to go over issues and discuss how the new contract will affect us. It would be nice to have a good turnout as the conference will be held in Albany and all professionals will be invited.

There is an old axiom that the union is you, and that is a tough concept for many of us to get our minds around. We live in an individualist, consumer society that makes working for the common good an idea that is hard to understand and even harder to live by. Somehow, though, the quest for knowledge and sharing that knowledge through the university can bring out the better part of our nature. I will never forget being told 25 years ago that the University is not a bank. Those words ring so true today, and we must be on guard to protect what we know is the better part of our lives. We are like a family, nurturing and educating our young and building a better world for tomorrow!

Academic Concerns

Academic Vice President's Report
Barry Trachtenberg

The Academic Concerns committee has an ambitious agenda for the coming year, thanks in large part to SUNY Central for two related initiatives taken by Chancellor Zimpher.

- As you might have heard, SUNY announced in late May a major partnership with Coursera "to develop a common platform for the delivery of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)." Presented to the public in the name of "increas[ing] educational access, instructional quality and exposure, and degree completion," this new arrangement was seemingly enacted with little or no input from faculty at the various campuses. It was also enacted with no discussion with UUP in spite of the many potential ramifications for our academic and professional members. As someone who teaches online classes during the summer and winter sessions, I believe that there can be a supplementary role for online education (to help motivated students get ahead and struggling

students to catch up with their requirements), but believe even more so that it is no replacement for face to face teaching. The courses must be pedagogically sound and offered for reasons beyond their ability to raise money for the campuses that host them. Credit-bearing MOOCs are of even greater concern, as they eliminate entirely the relationship between faculty and students and studies have shown that they are rarely effective in achieving their stated pedagogical goals. Over the next several months, I'll be working closely with our Technology Concerns committee to investigate this new proposal and its implications for our members and for the integrity of our students' education. (See the full press release at <http://tinyurl.com/phovuz7>).

- While the Chancellor's new Seamless Transfer initiative looks straightforward and promises to help students move more efficiently throughout the SUNY system (it was even recently touted by the White House, see: <http://tinyurl.com/krmn38y>), it is a threat to academic integrity and freedom. We've already experienced this sort of "streamlining" of academic programs on the local level, as with the revisions to the UAlbany General Education curriculum that occurred in 2012, and whose impact can now be viewed in reduced enrollments in many programs in the Humanities and the watering down of the Diversity/Pluralism requirement. With Seamless Transfer students will be able to transfer from SUNY campuses that offer A.A. and A.S. degrees to SUNY baccalaureate programs via a newly-mandated system-wide General Education program. As good as this might sound, a new document prepared by UUP's Statewide Officers shows that:

the Seamless Transfer process has restrained faculty oversight of curriculum. It has developed in the context of a narrow focus on more rapid degree completion, without acknowledging the full set of factors that affect student completion patterns. It is connected to a broader agenda to streamline, increasingly privatize, and drain substantive content from public higher education programs. (see the document "Canned Curriculum:

Seamless Transfer/Core Curriculum Impact on Higher Education" prepared by UUP statewide and available at <http://uupinfo.org>)

By standardizing Gen Ed programs across the SUNY system, Seamless Transfer could deny individual faculty the ability to determine the full content of their courses and block Departments from having full control over their degree programs. Even more insidious:

Many aspects of Seamless Transfer are aligned with the educational reform agenda funded by private interests, including the Lumina and Gates foundations. This agenda is supported by corporations such as Pearson and Coursera, which have positioned themselves to take over functions that are the purview of public educators and public-service providers. "College completion" has been emphasized as the measure of an academic institution's success, with little concern for quality education or the need to prepare students for an economy and society that demand flexibility and broadly defined career readiness.

We'll be working closely with UUP Statewide to demand an open review of the plans for Seamless Transfer and their possible consequences. If you are interested in getting involved in either of these issues, please contact me at barryct@me.com.

- **To tenure-track and tenured faculty:** As you know, the tenure process at UAlbany is a long one. It can take eighteen months or more from the initial submission of one's file to the final letter from the Chancellor. Even in the most straightforward of cases, it can be nerve-racking and stressful to undergo such a vigorous examination of one's research, teaching, and service. Whether you are in a pre-tenure review prior to contract renewal, in the tenure/promotion process, or applying for promotion to full Professor, Albany UUP can help ensure that your process is a fair one that adheres to the guidelines stated in Article 33 of the contract between UUP and the State of New York.

Although we wish for everyone to have smooth sailing as they move from stage to stage of their careers, there are occasions when procedures aren't always followed correctly. If you have concerns that your case isn't progressing properly or fairly at any point, please contact us immediately. As members of the bargaining unit represented by UUP, you have the right to talk to us about your case and to have us advise and assist you in working through any problems that might arise. We will meet with you in private and confidentially, and will never take any actions on your behalf without your permission. It is important, however, to contact us as soon as you are concerned that something may be amiss as our ability to act on your behalf may be subject to contractual time constraints.

Letting Go

Marty Manjak

The announcement this summer that the College of Nanoscale Science and Engineering (CNSE) and the University at Albany are going their separate ways has raised a host of important questions about how this will be accomplished, and how the separation will impact both entities. This article will attempt to highlight some of the areas in which UA and CNSE are tightly bound, and the offices and employees who currently perform work on behalf of both institutions.

Environmental Health and Safety: 5 Quad Ambulance Service, the University Police Department, University Health Services, and the Dept. of Environmental Health and Safety all provide essential services to faculty, students, and staff. Will CNSE replicate all these services, or will it continue to send students to the UAlbany Counselling and Health Centers, rely on UPD officers for law enforcement, and the volunteer student ambulance service for emergency medical services?

Registrar's Office: Course and classroom scheduling, grade reporting and archiving, and transcript services are all under the purview of the Registrar's Office. Given the focus of CNSE, the expectation is that the college will enter into some

kind of cross registration relationship with UAlbany to cover GenEd requirements for its students.

Human Resources and Institutional Services: The college already has its own personnel and purchasing offices. Since much of the college's funding is Research Foundation-based, and state payroll is administered centrally by NYS, these areas may be the easiest in which to implement separation. But the underlying identity management of CNSE employees (which is key to using any on-line services) is still handled by UA staff (see ITS and Information Security below).

Library Services: Will CNSE students have borrowing privileges and access to periodical databases within UAlbany libraries?

ITS and Information Security: Perhaps nowhere else is CNSE so tightly bound to UAlbany than in the areas of information services and security. These services span a wide range of administrative and academic operations. NetIDs for students and staff are issued and managed by ITS. Students enroll and manage their schedules via PeopleSoft. Faculty and students make extensive use of the BlackBoard course management system. CNSE workstations are centrally managed via Active Directory Group Policy. IP addresses are assigned centrally. The college's internet traffic flows through UAlbany's bandwidth, routers, and Internet Service Providers contracted by UA. All enterprise authentication and authorization events are processed by ITS, as well as all the Information Security services (intrusion detection, incident notification and management, and anti-virus protections).

Accreditation: CNSE will have to qualify for accreditation with the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools. This process could take as long as five years. Until CNSE is accredited, it cannot issue recognized degrees. On a more mundane level, the college cannot register its own domain (e.g., cnse.edu) until it receives accreditation. This means that CNSE cannot disconnect from the albany.edu domain for some time, unless it wants to use a domain name in one of the other TLDs (e.g., .org, .com, .biz)

Governance and Bargaining Unit Autonomy: Will CNSE form its own Faculty Senate? Will the college have its own UUP chapter and officers, sending

delegates to delegate assemblies? Or will they continue to be part of the UAlbany chapter? What about those offices that use existing UAlbany services and infrastructure, but whose employees work for CNSE? This is not an issue under the current relationship, but could become one in any future arrangements.

It's clear that CNSE will either have to replicate these existing services, or continue to depend to some degree or other on UAlbany to provide them. If that's the case, what form of compensation will CNSE provide for those hosted services? The great majority of those services are provided by professional employees in positions that are covered by the agreement between SUNY/GOER and UUP. What implications will the divestiture have for union members and their continued representation by UUP, both for existing employees who may be shifted to CNSE, and future hires at the college?

Because UUP members are intimately involved in the daily operations of UAlbany and CNSE, and the decisions on the ultimate form of the relationship between UA and CNSE will have a significant impact on members, UUP has a legitimate stake in the outcome of these discussions, and therefore should be an active participant in them.

Start Up New York

Paul Stasi

In June of 2012, the Fiscal Policy Institute (FPI) – an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit research institute “committed to improving public policies and private practices to better the economic and social conditions of all New Yorkers” – issued a report voicing its concerns about what was then called “Tax Free New York,” Governor Cuomo's plan to provide corporate subsidies to New York businesses operating on publicly owned, SUNY land. The report was subsequently revised as the plan morphed into “Start Up New York.” We summarize some of its key findings here.

The report opens by noting that the plan “is inconsistent with the two long-established pillars of tax fairness” – horizontal equity, requiring those with similar ability to pay to be treated equally, and vertical equity, requiring those with greater ability to pay, to pay more. At the same time, it notes that the failure of similar initiatives in the past “should raise huge red flags regarding the efficacy of the proposal as an economic development strategy.” In other words, the proposal is bad tax policy *and* bad economic development policy.

The main issue concerns the various ways in which Start Up New York will decrease an already shrinking tax base – something of concern for a radically under-funded public institution such as ours, as well as local governments who depend on this revenue. It does this in numerous obvious ways – most clearly by providing property tax free land for businesses in and around college campuses. Some of this land is already tax free, but the proposal allows for the creation of new areas currently taxed that would become tax free.

At the same time, the bill creates a special class of taxpayers who would be entirely exempt from income tax for five years and then exempt from tax on the first \$200,000 of their wages for an additional five years. This status would be granted to workers in businesses granted Start Up New York status who work on a location designated a tax-free space. The state would thus have a new group of taxpayers treated entirely differently from all other taxpayers in the state. In addition to the monetary issue, then, there is also an issue of fairness.

More damaging, the reports demolish the basic claim of Start Up New York’s proponents: namely, that it would draw new businesses, and thus new revenue and jobs, to the state:

1) First of all it, there is no way to assume that these businesses would not be in New York already. Indeed, CSNE, often touted as an example of the kinds of businesses we might draw, began without such a tax incentive structure and was drawn to the university largely for benefits intrinsic to universities themselves: hundreds of millions of dollars of state supported research and the facilities to conduct such research.

2) The requirement that only “new” businesses be offered the Tax-Free benefits does not ensure that these new businesses are, in fact, creating new jobs, since many employees will simply leave other jobs to join the new companies. This will, in turn, cause existing businesses that are not so lucky to get these tax breaks to under-perform, leading to lost revenues, taxes and, ultimately, jobs. FPI finds the final bill’s provision to prevent such competition to be inadequate. The net effect, then, will be to shift employment opportunities around while diminishing the state’s tax base.

3) History suggests that existing businesses will lobby hard – and succeed – in getting themselves these tax incentives which would, of course, entirely negate the proposal’s stated intent.

This is, of course, only a summary of FPI’s findings and we encourage you to read the reports in detail.¹ But even this summary exposes the fundamental fallacies that underlie the rationale for the Governor’s initiative. Start Up New York needs to be closely monitored to hold its proponents accountable for its promises and its failings.

Public University

from page 2

respond to the push to move a large number of our courses on-line, a push that is accompanied by a rhetoric of access that only barely disguises a more obvious financial imperative? What are we to make of an administration that understands its role not as part of the public good but as an economic engine for the business community? How are these changes in the ideology of management reflected in the workplace and, in particular, to the increase in workload felt across nearly all units on campus? We welcome your input on these issues and look forward to exploring them in some detail.

¹ The initial report can be found here: <http://tinyurl.com/ke2jjpl> . And the revision: <http://tinyurl.com/kc74nly>

Follow the Money

Marty Manjak

People of a certain age will readily identify the reference in the title of this article. It was Deep Throat's mantra to Woodward and Bernstein, the two Washington Post reporters investigating the break-in at the Watergate Hotel, an investigation that ultimately resulted in the impeachment and resignation of a sitting president.

In this case, the reader is urged to follow the money trail when considering the very lucrative relationship between Federal and state standardized testing requirements, and the companies that promote those standards and produce and evaluate the tests. Valuable information about these high stakes tests at the elementary and secondary levels can be found at Fairtest.org and AlterNet.¹ Both sites identify the key players: Pearson, CTB/McGraw-Hill, Education Testing Services, and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. Pearson, the leading education corporation and book publisher in the world, reports earnings of more than \$9 billion annually.

The primary drivers for all this revenue are former president Bush's No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, and president Obama's competitive grant program, Race to the Top. In both cases, Federal aid and awards are keyed to the implementation of standardized testing at the state level, and then to the results of those tests.

As you might imagine, there are many opportunities for abuse. If corporations benefit from standardized testing requirements, they will promote those requirements: by lobbying state and federal legislators and policy makers, by funding "think tanks" that produce policy papers promoting standardized testing, by pushing "newer, better" standards to force states to invest in a new set of testing tools, and by expanding the scope of testing to include evaluations of teachers and student teachers². In addition to influencing the writing of standards (e.g. Common Core), they also publish and sell the textbooks that teach the targeted,

tested subject matter. (Every monopolist has understood the value of vertical integration.)

This cozy arrangement is not unlike the one that characterizes the relationship between defense contractors, the military, and Congress, or, the finance industry and its supposed congressional regulators: that is, an incestuous one that rewards its players with a constant stream of money, power, and privilege at the expense of the nation and the great majority of its citizens.

Why is this of concern to the academy? Aside from a natural interest in the state of the nation's public education system, recent developments, in the form of SUNY's partnership with MOOC provider, Coursera³, and the promotion of Open SUNY⁴, strongly suggest some form of standardization across the SUNY system.

These developments raise critical questions about the nature of instruction at SUNY, and higher ed in general. Who is going to define the curriculum in a commodified SUNY, where students can take a class at any campus, physically or virtually, and apply it to their degree requirements? Who is going to define those requirements if a program is cobbled together from course offerings provided by an assortment of colleges, some outside the SUNY system? And who is going to perform the assessments and evaluations in such a distributed and nebulous environment?

It's not a terrible stretch of the imagination to envision departments losing control over their curriculum, standards, and assessment processes. There will be tremendous pressure from politicians and lobbyists to "streamline" operations and reduce costs, with private players avidly promoting their ability to do both. Indeed, those pressures and arguments are already in play.

If faculty are going to maintain their roles in instruction, standards development, and academic assessment, they will need to become much more active and vocal in the central discussions taking place within SUNY on these topics. If they don't, they will find themselves sidelined and "standardized." They can start by taking Deep Throat's advice to heart.

¹ <http://tinyurl.com/klmyaew>

² <http://tinyurl.com/lfsuoq8>

³ <http://tinyurl.com/lpffho3>

⁴ <http://commons.suny.edu/opensuny/>

Fast Food Workers Unite!

Paul Stasi

Hundreds of fast food workers in over 60 cities went on strike on Thursday August 29th demanding a living wage of \$15.00/hour, more than double the federal minimum wage of \$7.25. The strikes – which shut down a McDonald’s in Detroit and saw nearly 400 people protest in New York City – built on the momentum of a similar one day action that occurred last summer when over 2,000 fast food workers walked out in seven cities.

For labor activists, the strikes are one of many encouraging signs. Polls show that over two-thirds of the American public favor increasing the minimum wage to \$10/hour. And Labor Secretary Thomas E. Perez has voiced his support for the strikers, comparing the walkout to Martin Luther King Jr.’s March on Washington. Still, Congress has yet to act on President Obama’s proposal to raise the federal minimum wage to \$9.00, and a bill introduced in March by Senator Tom Harkin and Representative George Miller to gradually raise the minimum wage to \$10.10 by 2015 is currently stalled in Congress.

The hope of the strikes, then, is to keep the issue in the public eye while also correcting some misconceptions about who exactly these workers are. The most common misconception is that these jobs are taken largely by part time workers and teenagers who live at home, but increasingly this is not the case. Indeed, in 2012 nearly 36 million American workers made less than \$10/hour. 88% of these workers were over the age of 20 with 55% of them working full time and bringing home half of their family’s total income. And yet the federal minimum wage leads to an annual salary of \$15,080, about equal to the already austere federal poverty line for a family of two.¹ Perhaps more tellingly, as the public advocacy group the National Employment Law Project notes, there are currently zero states where this income allows you to rent a two-bedroom apartment.²

¹A thorough discussion of the limits of the current federal poverty standards can be found

here: <http://www.nap.edu/html/poverty/summary.html>

²<http://www.raisetheminimumwage.com/facts/>

Unfortunately, this kind of work is increasingly the only kind our “economic recovery” seems capable of creating. An early 2013 study, for instance, found that while 68% of the jobs lost during the recession came from mid-wage occupations – jobs paying between \$13.83 and \$21.13/hour – only 22% of those added in the recovery came from this sector. Instead over 58% of all new jobs are in the low-wage category.³ This imbalance in jobs, in turn, creates a downward pressure on all wages.

The best way to resist this downward pressure, of course, is to unionize. It can not be said too often: states with unionized work forces have higher income levels across all sectors of the workforce, union or not. In this way, the fast-food workers brave attempts to organize – from such particularly challenging personal circumstances – represent an effort to help all American workers.

Green Tips for Faculty/Staff

From the Office of Environmental Sustainability

Did you know that employee commuting comprises 10% of the University’s carbon footprint? And that we drive over 15.8 million miles during an academic year? You can help cut that number by signing up for the regional carpool matching service. Simply go to www.IPool2.org and register using your UAlbany email. While you’re there, you can also sign up for the guaranteed ride home program which will pay for you to get home in the event of an emergency on a day when you have carpooled, walked, or biked to work. You can also calculate the cost of your commute at:

<http://ipool2.org/Home/CostCalculator> and see how much you’ll save by sharing the ride. And don’t forget that employees can ride the UAlbany and CDTA buses for free by simply swiping their SUNY ID card. This fall the UAlbany shuttle arrival time can be tracked via GPS at:

<http://ualbany.alpinesystemsinc.com/omnitrans/ualbany-schedules.asp>

³<http://tinyurl.com/cr4h946>

UUP Chapter Committees 2013-14

- Academic Concerns
- Affirmative Action
- Contingent Concerns
- Disability Rights and Concerns
- Events
- Health and Safety
- Legislation/Outreach
- LGBTQ
- Membership
- Newsletter
- Peace and Justice
- Professional Concerns
- Solidarity
- Technology Concerns
- Website
- Women's Concerns

We also need UUP Chapter Representatives to the following:

- Capital District Labor Religion Coalition
- NYSUt Ed 10 District (higher ed rep to liaison with a K-12 district)

Please e-mail Bret Benjamin <bret.benjamin@gmail.com> with any questions or to volunteer to join one of the Chapter Committees.

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Jim Collins
Gail Landsman
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Rob See
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The Forum welcomes your comments

Email the Editor at pstasi27@gmail.com

Visit the Web for additional articles:

<http://www.albany.edu/uup/oct2013forumaddenda.pdf>

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