



**United University Professions
Albany Chapter**

**Labor-Management Notes
May 3, 2021**

Attendance: (L) Aaron Major, Zakhar Berkovich, Paul Stasi, Greta Petry, Michelle, Anne Wolfe
(M) Brian Selchick, Steven Galime, William Hedberg, Keiffer Peralta, Joanne Bocchino

1. Retirements: Greta Petry will be retiring from the University this month. Her contributions to this campus and our union are too many to list. We will miss her greatly and wish her well on much deserved retirement.
We send the very best wishes to Greta Petry. She is retiring effective May 10. Greta has been involved with UUP for numerous years (15) and she has been incredibly helpful and compassionate. We will miss her tremendously.
JoAnne Bocchino will also be retiring from UAlbany after 11 years of service. She has been integral part of the Human Resources. Our thanks and congratulations!
2. Health and safety concerns regarding return to work: We have heard from members in multiple units (Libraries, and several professional units in Academic Affairs) that employees are being asked to return to work spaces that violate the campus' COVID-19 health and safety protocols.
 - a. Members in the Libraries and Academic Affairs report that supervisors are advising employees that mask wearing inside is not necessary in a shared office space if they can maintain 6' of physical distance. This contradicts the campus' stated health and safety procedures, specifically: "Everyone on campus is required to wear a face mask inside all buildings — unless the person is inside a private residence hall room, office or other enclosed space where they are alone — and required to wear a face mask outdoors at all times."
There are very few if any employees returning to campus. UAlbany is abiding by state and federal rules. GOER released some guidance about return to work for those who have been vaccinated. However, UAlbany currently does not ask about vaccination status. If there are spaces that are not conforming to the safety or employee is not feeling safe to be in their office space, they should contact OHRM. Offices with cubicles, the height of the walls should be above the head. If the heights are lower, employees should be request installation of the plexiglas shield from their supervisor. OHRM has conducted a survey of the staff and preliminary information suggests that 64% of the staff are vaccinated. It was extremely useful to have closed PODs on campus to provide space and vaccines. OHRM asked that any issues in regard to the violation of the COVID policies be reported to: <https://www.albany.edu/covid-19/report-problem>. The form is reviewed just by two members and is confidential.
 - b. Members in Academic Affairs (especially those members involved in student advising) have been told to expect to meet with small groups of students in their

offices for in-person advising. This contradicts the campus' stated health and safety procedures regarding physically distancing. Even when masked, employees should not be meeting face-to-face with students in enclosed spaces.

Academic Advisors are not going to be asked to meet with students in their offices over the summer for Freshman/Transfer Orientations. The meetings will take place in the classrooms with 7-10 people. Summer EOP will take place online.

UAlbany's building and many spaces are MERV filters. Also in many spaces there are pre-filters. UAlbany staff can check information about these filters here:

<https://www.albany.edu/covid-19/health-safety> under the Enhanced Facilities Services and Building Ventilation

- c. Members in Academic Affairs remain concerned about the air quality in their work spaces, specifically members who work in the Academic Support Center (Library 36), UGE Dean's Office (LC-30), Student Engagement/Honors College (LC 31), and EOP (LI 94). We are requesting that the campus confirm that those spaces have been fitted with air filtration systems appropriate for dispersing the COVID-19 virus and to describe the measures taken to ensure that appropriateness.

There is a video on SkillSoft that talks about prevention and covers the COVID-19 related issues. Members are encouraged to view the video, though it is a bit outdated. The SkillSoft platform is being migrated to a new software so there may be new links.

As units prepare to bring employees back into the office we ask that the campus remind all supervisors of these, and other, health and safety procedures and ensure that all return-to-work plans are made in line with this guidance.

3. Follow-up from President's spring address: We expect to have follow up questions from the President's spring address, specifically around the issue of the campus budget planning.

It may be beneficial for us to have a meeting with VP Foreman re: budget updates. It was great to hear that budget has settled and it was appreciated that no layoffs took place. UUP leadership expressed appreciation for President's and Provost's patience in making cuts and saving jobs. We would like to continue a conversation about the priorities that President discussed. It seems that CAS has been omitted.

4. Clarification on "paper free" campus policy: Several members have reported discussion around a campus policy to go "paper free" which could involve, among other things, reduced access to printing and photocopying. Is such a policy being contemplated or enacted? If so, where can the details of this policy be found?

This is not a campus policy. This is a SUNY wide policy. The guidance from the policy is not clear. It is also not clear if this is a mandate or an opt-in/opt-out. It was recommended that UUP chapter connected with UUP Statewide and have that conversation with SUNY.

5. Status of IDAs: Member IDA awards have not been announced and the window is closing to do a second round of applications to allocate unused funds. What are the remaining roadblocks to distributing these awards and moving the process forward? *SUNY has not provided needed training for the committees. The funds have been released to the UAlbany. Provost's office is setting up the accounts through which reimbursement can be submitted and guidance will be issued shortly. Some of the requests were submitted for travel, and there will need to be a specific guidance offered. There are some funds left over and a call will go out for second round next week.*

6. Follow up on academic workload conversation: We would like to follow-up on an on-going conversation regarding the evaluation and measurement of the workload of academic faculty. Some time ago the campus shared a draft plan to evaluate academic faculty workloads through a “time bucket” approach, to which we provided feedback. What is the status of this plan, or other approaches to evaluating academic faculty workloads?

This issue is still in discussion stages. Glyne Griffith is a provost fellow who will be taking a look at this issue. This conversation is ongoing. A conversation will be brought to UUP and deans in near future.

7. Encouraging innovative teaching practice: As the campus plans to return to its pre-COVID mix of teaching modalities we hope that the campus will continue to promote flexible approaches to teaching. For example, blended or “flipped” teaching models that alter the mix of in-class and out-of-class, or remote, instruction.
 - a. State room capacity and social distancing guidance for the fall semester remains unclear but could prevent the full utilization of classrooms for face-to-face instruction. Equipping teaching faculty now with a flexible set of teaching tools could smooth a potential late-summer pivot to hybrid teaching.
 - b. While many of our students struggled with fully-remote instruction, others benefitted from the flexibility that it afforded. We are also hearing reports from departments that they expect many of their students to need access to remote instruction options in the fall. Given the campus’ commitment to serving nontraditional students, equipping teaching faculty with the tools and technology to structure classes in a way that serves learners from diverse backgrounds and life stages is key to fulfilling that commitment.

We ask the Provost’s Office to coordinate training and workshops to assist faculty interested in exploring these tools and to encourage college Deans to support requests from faculty members interested in developing their courses along these lines.

A conversation took place around this issue. Management asked for time to think about these items and prepare to address. Management appreciated that this conversation is taking place early.