



**United University Professions
Albany Chapter**

**Labor-Management Notes
June 30, 2020**

Attendance: (L) Anne Wolfe, Zakhar Berkovich, Aaron Major, Maureen Seidel, Greta Petry, Michelle Couture, Paul Stasi
(M) Keiffer Peralta, Brian Selchick, Joanne Bocchino, William Hedberg, Carol Kim

1. Promoting the Voluntary Reduction in Work Schedule (VRWS) program: We would like to discuss ways in which we can promote the VRWS program. We trust that the campus agrees with our view that, in this time of economic crisis when tens of millions of U.S. workers are unemployed and future job prospects are dim, separating people from employment should be avoided at all costs. The Chapter is eager to encourage our members to use this program if we can negotiate some agreement that the savings generated will be used to prevent job losses.
2. Budget constraints and adjunct hiring: We have been hearing from members across different Colleges that budget reductions that departments are being asked to make is effectively forcing them to make steep cuts in their adjunct budgets for the upcoming academic year. Realizing that this question may be addressed in the Open Budget Forum on the 25th, we are requesting information on how the campus budget situation is impacting adjunct employment.

The university is following CDC and State guidelines for openings. The budget is very tight. Dashboards were offered to the deans that they have to been working with. The Provost has asked deans to model 10% and 15% reductions. It seems that there is more time available to make the overall reductions. Adjunct budget is the largest portion of the Academic Affairs Budget. The overall sum is \$8.2 million budget for the adjuncts. The Academic Affairs is mindful of the term status as well as the dates of the notification. Most likely adjuncts will be the primary “casualties” of this situation. The conversation with the deans is just beginning, these conversations are one on one and will take place this week. The Deans are asked to submit their recommendations by August 1. It was noted that it may be better to notify adjuncts sooner than later. Provost agreed with this sentiment, but also wants to make sure that the cuts are as strategic as possible, especially now with longer timeframe.

3. Combining course sections: We have heard from members that some departments have contemplated combining course sections into one, larger on-line section as a way of reducing their adjunct budgets. We would like to raise two concerns regarding this practice, should it be implemented. First, it could constitute a unilateral increase in workload by effectively doubling the typical number of students taught in a course. Second, this practice would likely make many part-time instructors lose their benefits eligibility, denying them access to health insurance during a global health pandemic.

Provost noted that because we are in the pandemic mode, and while some of these changes are not “normal” they may need to take place just for the time being until we go into recovery. There is data that Provost is planning to use and to share with Deans to help them making better decisions. It is possible that electives and topics courses will be reduced or eliminated or offered on less regular basis. A note was made that currently full time faculty are during the “off” time and are still being asked to prepare the course. There will be less support from GA and TAs because they will not be present (a lot of graduate students are international at UA). Increasing the size of the sections may result in let go of adjuncts, less attention granted to individual student.

4. Health and safety questions regarding the campus reopening plans: We have several questions about the health and safety protocols laid out in the Return to Work Guidelines (RtWG) and the current version of the Forward Together plan (FT).

Provost noted that health and safety is the highest priority of the administration. Provost is hopeful that townhalls that will be hosted will be attended by the UUP Membership and learn

- a. The RtWG references a daily "Health Screening." The training video distributed through SkillSoft (COVID-19 Response: Return to Work Training) indicates that screenings may be performed remotely, before staff report to office locations or may be performed on site. If there's a remote screening option, are members supposed to take their own temperature reading at home and then go to a portal to answer screening questions? If they are performed on site, the video said those conducting the screenings will be supervisory-level employees or health care professionals. Will these “screening” supervisors be assigned and be provided a no touch thermometer to take people's temperature?

Employees are asked to watch the video on SkillSoft and take the self-assessment. This is based on the honor system.

- b. Both the FT draft and the RtWG say that one cloth mask will be provided to employees. We question whether a cloth mask qualifies as PPE in this context; we also question whether the campus providing one, and only one, mask to employees meets the Governor's directive that employers (including state agencies) provide PPE to all employees.

Every employee is being issued a minimum of 1 mask. There is a stock pile but will be managed. While the video is suggesting that there is opportunity to use one time use masks, but it is better to use cloth masks. All supervisors are responsible for ordering masks.

- c. It would seem prudent to have the place where employees and students can pick up additional PPE be located in the periphery of campus. If someone needs a facemask, and they need to get to the Bookstore to get one, they have to enter the main podium area, walk through the busy campus center, and then enter the Bookstore presumably without a mask.

Supervisor may go to Customer Service area or Environmental Health and Safety or purchase at the Bookstore. There is still discussion about how to give out the masks to students. There was a concern about students not purchasing or wearing masks. It is strongly encouraged that supervisors pick up PPE to limit the exposure and risks.

- d. Has anyone tested whether instructors can wear a facemask in classrooms (specifically the large lecture center rooms) and give lectures--especially if those lectures need to be recorded for remote learners?

There will be an option to have a face shield as well distance noted where 6 feet are noted on the floor to show the distance from the first row.

- e. The cleaning protocol looks insufficient. We will contend that it is the employer's responsibility to ensure that all workspaces are cleaned and disinfected; cleaning and disinfecting is not part of our members' job duties.

It is noted that most recent research shows that surfaces are not the primary ways of communicating the virus. The virus mostly transmits through the respiratory droplets and through interactions, thus having masks would be increasingly important. The students will be asked to clean their desks before and after the class. There is a point made about public lunch spaces. The public spaces will be cleaned more regularly.

- f. Similarly, the RtWG seems to suggest that employees that have some kind of public-facing component are responsible for marking off the space (with tape, or other signage) to help promote social distancing. This needs to be done by trained professionals.

Supervisors should be doing this demarcations and supervisors should be making decisions about shared offices and location of personnel in the cubicles.

- g. Is the campus providing hand sanitizer stations? We contend that, at the very least, they need to be located at high-touch areas (major doorways entering and exiting buildings, bathrooms and elevators).

Yes, hand sanitizer should be located in many locations.

- h. In what ways is the HVAC system being evaluated and upgraded to ensure adequate circulation of clean air into classrooms and office spaces?

The HVAC will be utilized both recycling and new air to assure adequate circulation. The campus has appropriate air filtration system.

- i. Enforcing student compliance with mask wearing--this has been asked about many times by faculty in various meetings, but the FT plan gives no clear guidance on how this will work, and only references a "influencer campaign". Who is enforcing the mask wearing rules and the other "strict" social distancing protocols that the FT plan references?

There will be disposable PPE available at the beginning of the semester. Part of the student conduct will be wearing the masks. If students are not following the guidelines, students will be brought to the Student Conduct Board and could be dismissed. Students will know their norms and responsibilities, including the hygiene and masks. Additional guidance will be coming out this week for faculty.

- j. The FT plan references testing and contact tracing as necessary to reopening. How many tests have been purchased or otherwise acquired to date? How many need to be purchased or acquired? How is contact tracing being done (i.e. manually or through an app)? Who is keeping this data? Is it secured?

The students will be asked to use app to report their condition. There will be some testing available. There will be rapid tests available at the health center. If a person is tested positive they will be isolated, students will be moved to the quarantine housing. The testing on Colonial quad has capacity of testing 1,000 people per day, now they are testing 300 or so. The campus is still working with the health partners in the area regarding the testing. The federal guidelines recommend that no need for as frequent testing as it was thought before. There are apps that are being looked at for tracing. There is a team that is being assembled and trained from the School of Public Health to assure tracing.

- k. The FT plan limits quarantine procedures for students to the roommate of an infected student. This does not sound consistent with CDC guidance.

Students will be housed in the singles or double. The students in the suite will be considered family unit.

- l. The FT draft notes that roommates are being treated as a "family unit". This would imply that roommates are not allowed to significantly mingle with other students in the dorms or in non-university housing (for example, a student in a dorm room has a romantic partner

in another university dorm or non-university housing). How will the "family unit" nature of roommates be enforced?

It will be enforced as much as possible.

- m. The FT draft notes the need to end classes before Thanksgiving in order to prevent students from traveling for the holiday, and then returning to campus. This suggests that student travel is a concern. Given that many of our students travel on a regular basis (because their family is within a short drive), how will student travel be monitored and reported?

The students will be discouraged to travel far outside of the campus. There will be additional programming designed to keep the students on campus. During social norming campaign students will be encouraged to keep with the rules and guidelines. If we all fail this, and COVID increases the campus could be shut down again and students will be sent home.