

THE FORUM

November 2010

Your UUP Albany Chapter Newsletter

Issue 116



Special Issue: Program Deactivations & Budget Cuts

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President's Corner

Hopefully, most of you actually "read" the email I sent to the Chapter listserv just over two weeks ago. Whether you did or didn't, I will once again applaud all of you who attended the recent Senate meeting and had your voices heard in speaking against the current proposed deactivation of five programs here at the University, in addition to the non-renewal of the term faculty in Project Renaissance. You clearly sent messages about the non-acceptance of the apparent loss of degree programs within the Humanities – and brought to light how these deactivations will affect other UAlbany students in the future. I am very proud of all of you who passionately stated your feelings and concerns – and the reason I say that is because "I" alone am not the union.... **YOU are all the union and you stood together in solidarity** for what you felt was right.

We are far from the end of the battle. The officers of the UUP Albany Chapter attended an additional meeting with the President on October 22, 2010, to gain more clarification about claims that individuals were being "retrenched". Although the contract article in the Agreement is long, you should all familiarize yourselves with what "retrenchment" really involves and means. All of the language on retrenchment appears in Article 35 of the current agreement. The President maintains that he is not retrenching at this point, and that administrators are trying to work with each affected faculty member to place them in other vacant positions, wherever possible.

As conversations and discussions continue to find other ways to save money, we need to remember at this time NOT to point fingers at anyone else, or any other program. To recommend or participate in any discussion that might lead to the loss of a position or another department is against general UUP bylaws – and is NOT an act of solidarity. So please, please, please do not engage in these types of discussions.... **The job you save may be your own!**

We are currently working with UUP Statewide to investigate other methods of resolving this issue. If our requests are successful, I will send a blast email to the UUP bargaining unit to keep you up to date about actions which we will need you to take. It may require an investment of your time and effort – but once again, there are at least another 160 proposed position cuts left – and **the job you save may be your own!**

In the meantime – keep up the good work! Keep the pressure on!!! Other University Centers are not deactivating multiple programs – so why should we?? Promise to support all of your University at Albany colleagues by responding to the call for action! **The job you save may be your own!**

-Candace A. Merbler

Officers' Corner

Program Deactivations

Ivan D. Steen
Vice President for Academics

As we all know, the University at Albany administration has announced the deactivation of five programs—French, Italian, Russian, Classics, and Theatre—and Project Renaissance has been discontinued. It is important to understand, though, that at this time there has been no retrenchment at the University at Albany. To undertake retrenchment, the campus would have to request, and be granted, permission to do so from SUNY System Administration, and this has not happened. For now, at least, the faculty involved in the five academic programs are still on the payroll. However, the Project Renaissance faculty were all on term appointments, and those appointments have not been renewed. The five academic programs will no longer be admitting graduate students or majors, although there is a possibility that some instruction in those areas may be continued after current graduate students and majors have completed their degrees. Of course, the future for faculty in those programs is bleak, and there is no certainty that they will continue to be employed after students in the programs have graduated. Moreover, deactivation not only affects those programs, it also has an impact on many other areas in the College of Arts and Sciences, not to mention the reputation of the university in the national and international academic community. The decision to deactivate programs and the choice of which programs to deactivate are made by the university's administration; and while we may argue about the wisdom of which programs were chosen and we may question the consultative process, the final decision is theirs to make. Still, many of you have expressed your support for these programs, and others undoubtedly will join you. In making your arguments, though, I urge you to be positive about these programs and not be negative about others. We do not want to make campus morale any worse than it already is.

One thing is clear: The University at Albany has a serious budgetary problem. That problem has been caused by a substantial decline in state appropriations for SUNY over the last three years, and especially for this budget year, without any increase in revenue from other sources. For that we can blame the state's revenue shortfall, and the decision made by the governor and the legislature to deal with the state's fiscal woes at the expense of SUNY. UUP has worked very hard to try to convince legislators that appropriating money for SUNY is a wise investment, especially in hard times. I must say, though, that most of you have not been helpful in that effort. Where were you when the call went out to join us in meeting with legislators? Will these program discontinuations be a wake-up call, or will you continue to let others volunteer their time to try to prevent your program from being discontinued?

While many of you have not been helpful in the struggle for state support for SUNY, SUNY's chancellor has not been very helpful, either; in fact, it seems to me, she has been harmful. Instead of working with UUP to advocate for an increase in the state's share of funding for the university, she has devoted her efforts to promoting a deeply flawed Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act. Only after that act failed to be passed did she advocate for a more equitable share of the state budget for the university. Let us hope she has learned a lesson, and that next time she will be willing to compromise to find common ground with UUP. Labor—and that includes you—and management need to work together to secure adequate funding for SUNY, so that we can continue, and strengthen, all our excellent programs.

From the Vice President for Professionals

J. Philippe Abraham
Vice President for Professionals

Sisters and Brothers,
In this time of crisis, we need to be mindful of two important points:

- a) The mission of UAlbany must be carried out to the best of our ability.
- b) As such, in the face of recent decrease within the professional ranks and with the prospect of an additional 160 (the majority of which will be professionals) slated for elimination according to the administration, we should be flexible and willing to assist the institution in carrying out its core mission.

However, taking on additional duties temporarily because another colleague who used to perform those functions is no longer with UAlbany, for example, should be accompanied by either a change in your performance program (in other words an updated version of your PP), so that the new function is recorded, or it should be noted, in writing, in a separate document signed by you and your direct supervisor.

In either case, there should be a clear statement in those documents mentioned above of a beginning and end date for those additional functions that you are willing to discharge temporarily to see the institution through this crisis.

As officers of this chapter, we can only assist you if you keep us informed of any issues you may be experiencing. I remind you, once again, that we are here to help with whatever concerns you may have. Please don't hesitate to pick up the phone or send us an e-mail.

News & Notices

R.I.P Project Renaissance

This year will be the last year for Project Renaissance, University at Albany's innovative first-year studies program. The six faculty in the program, all full-time lecturers with between **8 to 21 years of teaching and service to the University at Albany**, received non-renewal notices before the beginning of the current academic year.

"Proj Ren" was a year-long program that introduced first-year students to the University at Albany through small classes, close acquaintance with faculty in the program, and community living. Project Renaissance grew out of a faculty-led initiative, and in Fall 1996, the first 200 students were admitted to the program. By 2000, Project Renaissance was recognized by the Middle States Association in their report to the University as an important and innovative program:

The University should be particularly proud of Project Renaissance and its contribution to the freshman experience. The educational impact on the students involved is unique and the opportunity it provides for faculty to rethink their commitment to teaching, to bond with students, and to incorporate innovative techniques into their work in the classroom is extraordinary.

(http://www.albany.edu/feature2000/special/middle_states_report/programs.html)

About to retire?

That doesn't mean you have to give up your UUP membership

Retain your membership in United University Professions by sending a check for \$34 to the UUP Administrative Office, P.O. Box 15143, Albany, N.Y. 12212-5143. Your check for \$34 covers annual dues to UUP; membership does *not* include coverage for health/prescription drug/dental insurance, but ensures union voting rights, coverage under UUP Group Life Insurance (\$1,000), a discount vision plan and access to discounted affiliate (NYSUT and AFT) member benefits.



Retired Membership Application

Please supply the following information.

Retired from: Campus _____ Date of Retirement _____
Social Security No. _____ Home Phone _____

September 1, 2007 - August 31, 2008

Name _____
Address _____ E-mail _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Dues are assessed on an annual basis.
Send check for \$34 payable to: United University Professions
P.O. Box 15143, Albany, N.Y. 12212-5143
Current members need not return this application.

SUNY Policy on Program Deactivation and Discontinuance

From the State University of New York website (http://www.suny.edu/sunypp/documents.cfm?doc_id=332):

Summary

When a State University of New York (University) campus makes a decision not to admit any more students to a program but to maintain the program registration, this action is referred to as deactivation. The deactivation date is the first regular admission date as of which new students will no longer be permitted to enroll in the program. A program is often deactivated to allow time for a campus to determine whether to continue the program offering or to reorganize the program structure and/or resources.

When a campus decides to remove a program from its complement of registered programs so that credentials will no longer be awarded for its completion, this action is known as discontinuance. The discontinuance date is the last graduation date for which credentials will be awarded for program completion.

There are several situations in which a campus determines that the deactivation or discontinuance of an academic program might be appropriate. The program may no longer be considered a viable offering. Campuses deactivate or discontinue programs in response to budgetary stringencies or internal resource reallocations on the campus. Perhaps a campus has determined to treat the program as an option or as an integrated part of another major or interdisciplinary program.

The policy outlined below is not meant to limit the authority of the campus president or of other campus constituencies. Rather, it is intended to ensure the quality and diversity of curricular offerings within the State University of New York.

The procedure for the deactivation or discontinuance of academic programs applies to all University campuses and to all academic programs which cannot be initiated without authorization external to the individual campus. These programs are listed in the State University of New York Academic Program Information System (APIS) maintained by system administration's office of academic affairs.

Policy

A request for deactivation or discontinuance of a registered academic program is submitted in the form of a letter from the campus president to the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs containing the following information:

1. the program name and degree, certificate, or diploma designation;
2. a brief description or explanation of the reason for requesting the deactivation or discontinuance of the program;
3. when appropriate, a statement of how enrollment of incumbent students and the credentials granted to them in the future will be accommodated and reported;
4. the proposed effective deactivation or discontinuance date—the date for deactivation of a program should be coordinated with the campus admissions process so that admission to the program will be closed in sufficient time. In setting a discontinuance date, the campus should be sensitive to the interests of students already enrolled in the program and honor the University's intention to give enrolled students the opportunity to complete their programs unless unusual circumstances make it impossible or inappropriate to do so;
5. the information requested will enable the office of the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs to coordinate with other offices of system administration. Appropriate offices in system administration will then review the impact of the proposal on (1) University-wide offerings, (2) campus mission, (3) campus budget, (4) campus staff and students, and (5) desirable state and public services. Special attention will be given to the proposed discontinuance of a program unique within the University. The office of the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs will provide a reaction to the campus president as soon as possible after a request has been reviewed. A minimum of 60 days lead time is required for system administration review of the proposal. In the event of a fiscal emergency, a shorter time frame may be accommodated;
6. in the case of program discontinuances, the campus recommendation, when reviewed by system administration staff and approved by the chancellor, will be presented to the University Board of Trustees for formal action. No programs may be discontinued without formal approval by the University Board of Trustees. Campus presidents will be notified promptly of the board's action; and
7. in cases where a campus wishes to reactivate a program which has been deactivated, the proposal to do so should be sent by the campus president to the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs and will be reviewed by appropriate system administration offices. Reactivation of a doctoral program that was deactivated by the University does not require master plan amendment approval.

Relevant Definitions from the SUNY/UUP Contract Agreement

In order to help you familiarize yourself with the terms of our contract, we have included relevant passages below. You can access the contract in its entirety at <http://www.uupinfo.org/agreement.pdf>

Notice of Non renewal of a term appointment

From Article 32 of the Labor Agreement (pp. 42-3)

§32.1 Written notice that a term appointment is not to be renewed upon expiration is to be given to the employee by the College President, or designee, not less than

- a. 45 calendar days prior to the end of a part-time service term appointment;
- b. Three months prior to the end of a term expiring at the end of an appointee's first year of uninterrupted service within the University. For such employees serving on the basis of an academic year professional obligation and academic employees at the Empire State College whose terms end in June, July or August, notice shall be given no later than March 31.
- c. Six months prior to the end of a term expiring after the completion of one, but not more than two years of an appointee's uninterrupted service within the University. For such employees serving on the basis of an academic year professional obligation and academic employees at the Empire State College whose terms end in June, July or August, notice shall be given no later than December 15;
- d. Twelve months prior to the expiration of a term after two or more years of uninterrupted service within the University.
- e. Notwithstanding the above provisions, full-time employees with titles in

Appendix B-1 and B-2 of Article XI of the Policies of the Board of Trustees shall receive not less than six months' notice prior to the expiration of a term appointment.

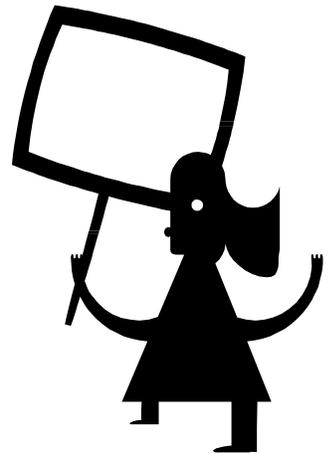
§32.2 Employees who intend to leave the employ of the University shall give 30 days' notice to the President or designee. In the event an employee fails to provide the full 30 days notice, it shall be within the discretion of the President or designee to withhold from such employee's final check an amount equal to the employee's daily rate of pay for each day less than the required 30 days. Such action shall not constitute discipline.

§32.3 In the event the University elects to terminate a term appointment before the expiration of the term, the University will pay such employee's balance of salary for up to the maximum of the time remaining on the term appointment at the time of such termination.

Retrenchment

From Article 35 of the Labor Agreement (pp. 47-52)

§35.1 Retrenchment shall be defined as the termination of the employment of any academic or professional employee during any appointment, other than a temporary appointment which may be terminated at any time, as a result of financial exigency, reallocation of resources, reorganization of degree or curriculum offerings or requirements, reorganization of academic or administrative structures, programs or functions or curtailment of one or more programs or functions University-wide or at such level of organization of the University as a College, department, unit, program or such other level of organization of the University as the Chancellor, or designee, deems appropriate.



Rally to Defend Public Education, October 7, 2010



UUP member Bret Benjamin warns the crowd that a once proud system of public higher education is slowly being asphyxiated.



A student holds a sign mocking UAlbany's marketing slogan in light of the program reductions.

Program Deactivations: a Timeline of Announcements and Reactions

Announcements:

August 3, 2010: NY State Senate finalizes the 2011 budget for the fiscal year that began on April 1, 2010. The budget includes almost \$12 million in cuts to UAlbany for the 2011 year, bringing the total cuts in the past three years to \$33.5 million.

August 2010: Project Renaissance faculty members receive non-renewal letters.

October 1, 2010: UAlbany President George Philip issues a directive to suspend new admissions to the Classics, French, Italian, Russian and Theater programs:

<http://www.albany.edu/budget/october.1.2010.shtml>

<http://www.albany.edu/news/9902.php?WT.svl=news>

October 18, 2010: UAlbany Faculty Senate open discussion:

[http://www.albany.edu/banner_images/Speaker_Comments\(4\).doc](http://www.albany.edu/banner_images/Speaker_Comments(4).doc)

Select Responses, On-campus and Off:

October 4, 2010: Inside Higher Ed:

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2010/10/04/albany>

October 7, 2010: Rally to Defend Public Education held on the podium at UAlbany
Reply from President Philip:

<http://www.albany.edu/budget/october.7.2010.shtml>

October 11, 2010: *New York Times* contributor Stanley Fish reacts to the news:

<http://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/10/11/the-crisis-of-the-humanities-officially-arrives/>

October 19, 2010: MLA Executive Director Rosemary G. Feal's letter to the State Department of Education:

http://www.mla.org/pdf/mla_letter_to_suny.pdf

UUPers, from left, Claudio Gomez and Patrick Romain listen to speakers at the rally.



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Financial and legal services include a financial counseling program, online banking (money markets, savings and CDs), mortgages, credit monitoring service, consumer credit counseling services, and a legal service plan.

Discounts include TripMark.travel (hotels, flights, cruises and more), Wyndham Hotels & Endless Vacation Rentals, Motivano Online Marketplace, EPIC Hearing Service Plan, Powell's Books, OfficeMax, Bose, Barnes & Noble.com, Working Advantage (discount tickets and more), Philips Lifeline, car and truck rentals, Six Flags, Buyer's Edge Inc. (buying service), HEAT USA and Defensive Driving (online or classroom). Be sure to check the Member Benefits website, www.memberbenefits.nysut.org, for particulars on these discounts, because some you can only receive by linking off the Member Benefits site. Many have unique ID numbers.



Other services include MAP (Member Alert Program), an e-mail information service; payroll and pension deduction of Member Benefits-endorsed programs, which often yield reduced premiums or additional coverage; MPP (My Program Participation), an online look-up service on programs in which you participate; Consumer's Guides on Automobile Insurance, Homeowners and Renters Insurance, Legal Services, Long-Term Care Insurance, Long-Term Disability Insurance and 403(b) Plans; and MetDESK (Division of Estate Planning for Special Kids).

Workshops include Identity Theft, 403(b) Basics, 403(b) Employer Contributions, Inside the 403(b), Unraveling the Mysteries of Credit and Credit Reports and The Financial Planning Puzzle. Workshops are scheduled by

your local president, chapter leader, retiree council leader or retiree chapter leader.

To request information, call Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 or visit www.memberbenefits.nysut.org.

Some benefits may not be available in all local associations.



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

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

Faculty Statements

Eloise Briere

Associate Professor of French

It has been several months since I stood with President George Philip in the Campus Center ballroom as we mourned together the disaster that struck the Haitian people on January 12th. It has been six months since the Spring '09 Faculty Meeting where I received the University at Albany's highest award for excellence in teaching. Five months have elapsed since Chancellor Zimpher awarded me the SUNY Chancellor's award for excellence in teaching. Three weeks have elapsed since I learned that I am to be "deactivated", along with the French Studies program in which I teach about the Francophone world (Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, the Caribbean and Canada). I would not be at UAlbany were it not for the opportunity to prepare students to be citizens of our globalized world. Every time a student encounters an unfamiliar culture and its alternative perspectives, her mind develops further. Learning a new language is only the very first step in this transformative process that reaches deep into the recesses of the mind and heart. It takes years to know the inner workings of another culture, but eventually students do traverse cultural boundaries and learn to act within entirely new contexts.

This begins at UAlbany when professors model the language and teach the ideas and cultural foundations of non-US cultures. It also happens outside of the classroom: working side by side with farmers in a Haitian village, hearing debates in Quebec's National Assembly, volunteering at a children's hospital in Montpellier, France, sitting in a lecture hall in Marrakesh, Morocco: the mind begins to understand, the heart begins to empathize. With such skills several students I have known have gone on to medical school, aiming to work with Doctors Without Borders, another is a Professor of Arabic, yet another has developed a flourishing career in international finance: all of them can traverse cultural boundaries and be effective citizens of the world.

Providing students with such skills, like any valuable product, is costly. As universities across the nation experience dramatic financial pressures, I realize that our President had to make difficult choices. He must have wondered what was precious enough at UAlbany to be preserved? What could be discarded? Should a surgical cut be made into the fabric of a program or department? Should a surface cut be made across all programs or departments of his alma mater? The humanities alone were earmarked for "deactivation". Presidential advisors, failing to take into account the humanities' unique transformative qualities, provided top administration with surface arguments, failed to consult with the faculty that were directly affected and, most importantly, failed to live up to the University at Albany's mission: expanding knowledge and transforming minds to shape the future of our community and our world (Strategic Planning Committee Report).

Timothy D. Sergay

Assistant Professor of Russian, Slavic and Eurasian Studies

I would have to be a very indifferent Russianist indeed to agree with the conclusion that Russian is a dispensable, inessential language for a research university to maintain, especially a research university that invariably bills itself as a kind of gateway to a "globalized" future. Russia remains the world's largest country and its second major nuclear and spacefaring power. Its potential as a political, scientific, and trading partner in an increasingly integrated global economy remains too great to disregard. The literary culture to which knowledge of Russian opens the door is certainly one of the world's richest in terms of imagination, humor, charm, musicality, and philosophic, psychological and religious profundity. Russian at UAlbany has a long and distinguished history that includes pioneering work in establishing unique faculty and student exchanges with Moscow State University and the Thorez Institute of Foreign Languages (Moscow). The program has generated important cultural and linguistic research, notably a standard and indeed *revered* reference work of Russian-English lexicography, Sophia Lubensky's *Russian-English Dictionary of Idioms*, (Random House, 1995, now being revised at Yale University Press). It has trained specialists who have used their language skills in professions such as government, business, language services, and law. I would certainly prefer UAlbany students to have the greatest possible access to linguistic, cultural, and historical instruction in this area. My colleague Professor Charles Rougle adds that students wishing to pursue anything beyond lower-level Russian in the state of New York will now have to do so at an expensive private university. We are the only full-fledged Russian major in the entire SUNY system, indeed the only such major at a public university between Maine and Pittsburgh. The decline in enrollments in Russian language has been a problem common to the entire field of Slavic studies since the end of the Cold War. The likelihood that students will envision careers based largely on Russian-language skills clearly depends on many factors (in US-Russian relations, the general international situation, the business and legal climate in the Russian Federation) that are beyond the control of Slavic faculty anywhere. But recent years have seen a stream of majors, minors, and elective students of the language at UAlbany that is admittedly small, but sufficient to sustain a program that has already contracted naturally through retirements to a minimal size of three tenure-stream faculty. Eliminating the language altogether or preserving only a four-semester elementary sequence to be handled by adjuncts on a "demand basis" would be a serious blow to both UAlbany and the SUNY system.

David Wills

Professor, Language Literatures and Cultures

Surgical strike?

The recent UAlbany decision to “deactivate” 5 programs in the humanities is presented as an unavoidable, but minimally invasive procedure, which will allow the institution overall to survive and eventually to flourish. Yet it is now clear that the ramifications of that decision reach into many areas of university life: from students and faculty in the targeted programs, to graduate students in sister programs, to research undertaken by colleagues in a variety of disciplines, to grants, to the University in the High School program, to giving by alumni, and so on. Suddenly the university appears shaken to its core. And all that without mentioning the untold damage that has been done and continues to be done to its reputation across the nation and abroad: in print and other media, on blogs, Facebook and Youtube, but more than anything by word of mouth, as the chilling news spread within the broader academic community and the public at large.

One has to wonder about the thinking that led to such an irresponsible decision on the part of our administrators. I would like to put it down to naivety or even stupidity, but I don’t want to believe that they could possibly think that a university of the size or stature (present or future) of UAlbany could, for example, limit offerings in European languages to a single degree program (Spanish). One is therefore left to presume that this is part of a plan to reformulate the institution by fiat, with little if any substantive input from the intellectual leaders of the university community. Vague and general language from a series of consultative groups and committees has now given way to the obliteration of vast areas of the academic landscape.

We are told to blame the state legislature, and there is no doubt that, now more than ever, we should demand that public higher education be funded at the level that it deserves, given the returns on such an investment for the state of New York. But I, for one, also hold responsible my academic and administrative colleagues for failing to do their jobs in upholding, before and after everything else, to the very end, by whatever means necessary, the academic mission of the university.

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