



Volume XVIII, No. 2

March 2012

PRESIDENT UPDATE



Carol Braund, UUP Chapter President

Upstate Medical University is growing - effective July 1, 2011, Community General Hospital (CGH) became the 'Upstate campus on the hill' and some 900 individuals became new Upstate employees. For these individuals, it brought to closure the ongoing speculation that CGH was going to close secondary to potential bankruptcy. Change, even positive change, is never easy, and, for those individuals involved, it has been a 'ride' on the road. Their jobs had to fit into the categories of the state. This meant new titles, new job descriptions and new reporting structures. The state has 'exempt' and 'non-exempt' titles, which means that, depending on where a CGH employee's new title fell, they may or may not now be eligible for overtime. Changes in overtime status may, in realization, feel like a salary cut for some employees. Adding to that adjustment, salaries connected with each title had to be within the guidelines set

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Downstate Unionists Stand Up to Wall Street

Raising their collective voice, nearly 100 UUPers from Downstate Medical Center stood behind metal police barriers in front of Brooklyn's Marriott Hotel at the Brooklyn Bridge to protest millionaire Wall Street investment banker Stephen Berger's plan to shut down inpatient operations at University Hospital and shift them to Long Island College Hospital.

The UUPers were joined by more than 250 members of the Civil Service Employees Association and the Public Employees Federation who were at the early morning protest Jan. 11 to rally against Berger and his state-appointed committee's recommendation to close University's hospital and Kingsboro Psychiatric Center. Thousands of Brooklynites would lose vital health services and dozens of health care workers—and UUP members—would lose their jobs if the plan becomes reality.

UUP members Jessica Xheneti and Helen Pruski, who work in the pharmacy department at Downstate University Hospital, were there to stand up for their union sisters and brothers.

"We work to provide important services for our community," said Pruski. "We are here for the people we serve and for our jobs."

"A lot of people need us," said Xheneti, who held a sign that read "Don't Berger-larize our health care."

The hour-long protest was held at the Marriott to "welcome" Berger, who held a conference at the hotel to promote the recommendations in the committee's 88-page study.

The protest began just after 7 a.m. when dozens of UUP, PEF and CSEA members disembarked from large buses and were directed by a cadre of New York City police to a concrete island in the road behind the barriers. They waved signs, blew whistles, and cheered as passing traffic honked their horns in solidarity.

For close to an hour, unionists—many wearing red UUP scarves and hats and yellow PEF scarves—loudly chanted slogans such as "We are the 99 percent," "Save our SUNY" and "Health care yes, Wall Street no."

"It's important to realize that we provide quality health care to 2.5 million people in central Brooklyn and five million in the borough," said Downstate Chapter President Rowena Blackman-Stroud. "This is about preserving critical health care services for the people of Brooklyn, not about a Wall Street millionaire making decisions about our health care for us."

Assemblyman Nick Perry (D-Brooklyn), a red UUP scarf draped around his neck, came out strongly against the Berger committee's recommendations and called the study "a poor job."

"The big problem is money and we're in this situation because of funding cuts from Albany and Washington," Perry said. "We shouldn't be closing down and depriving Brooklyn of these vital health services."

More than a half dozen news outlets turned out to cover the protest, including NY1, CBS New York (Channel 2), WNYC radio, and WEMP-FM (101.9-FM).

Reprinted from UUP website: <http://www.uupinfo.org/communications/uupdate/120111.php>

UUP 2012 Political Action Calendar*

As of January 2012

UUP events in italics • Register for 2012 Advocacy Days at: <http://bit.ly/nrZFAl>

| JANUARY | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Wed. 4 th | State of the State Address | ESP Convention Center |
| Tues. 17 th | Executive Budget Proposal | |
| <i>Tues. 24th</i> | <i>UUP Advocacy Day</i> | <i>LOB, Albany</i> |
| <i>Tues. 31st</i> | <i>UUP Advocacy Day</i> | <i>LOB, Albany</i> |
| FEBRUARY | | |
| <i>Fri. 3^d - Sat. 4th</i> | <i>UUP Winter DA 2012</i> | <i>Desmond Hotel, Albany</i> |
| <i>Tues. 7th</i> | <i>UUP Advocacy Day</i> | <i>LOB, Albany</i> |
| <i>Tues. 14th</i> | <i>UUP Advocacy Day</i> | <i>LOB, Albany</i> |
| <i>Fri. 17th - Sun. 19th</i> | <i>Black and Puerto Rican Caucus</i> | <i>Albany</i> |
| Mon. 20th - Fri. 24th | No Session | |
| Tues. 28th | No Session | |
| <i>Wed. 29th</i> | <i>UUP Advocacy Day</i> | <i>LOB, Albany</i> |
| MARCH | | |
| <i>Mon. 5th - Tues. 6th</i> | <i>NYSUT HE Lobby Day</i> | <i>Desmond Hotel Albany</i> |
| <i>March 14</i> | <i>Coalition Advocacy Day</i> | <i>LOB, Albany</i> |
| <i>Mon. 19th - Tues. 20th</i> | <i>NYSUT Committee of 100</i> | <i>Desmond Hotel, Albany</i> |
| <i>Tues. 27th</i> | <i>EOP/EOC Advocacy Day</i> | <i>Meeting Rm. 1, LOB, Albany</i> |
| APRIL | | |
| <i>Sun. 1st</i> | <i>NYS Budget Due</i> | |
| Mon. 2nd - Fri. 6th | No Session | |
| Mon. 9th - Fri. 13th | No Session | |
| <i>Tues. 17th</i> | <i>UUP Advocacy Day</i> | <i>LOB, Albany</i> |
| <i>Fri. 20th - Sat. 21st</i> | <i>UUP Spring DA 2012</i> | <i>Desmond Hotel, Albany</i> |
| <i>Thurs. 26th - Sat. 28th</i> | <i>NYSUT RA</i> | <i>Buffalo, NY</i> |
| MAY | | |
| <i>Tues. 8th</i> | <i>UUP Advocacy Day</i> | <i>LOB, Albany</i> |
| <i>Mon. - Tues. 21st - 22nd</i> | <i>NYSUT Committee of 100</i> | <i>Desmond Hotel, Albany</i> |
| AUGUST | | |
| <i>Mon. - Tues. 13th - 14th</i> | <i>NYSUT Endorsement Conference</i> | <i>Desmond Hotel, Albany</i> |

*Please note that all dates are subject to change.



Individual Development Awards

Michael Lyon, Co-Chair, Joint Labor Management Committee

This past fall we got a surprise. The Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) decided to sweep all of the accounts of remaining funds. This included all of the various grants that are available, as well as the unspent funds in the IDA money. Then, GOER, SUNY and UUP got together and decided how best to utilize these funds. Even though there is no contract, they decided to keep some of the money in the campus grants programs as well as the bulk of the funds going to the IDA program. This is a very popular program here at Upstate and I have had the privilege to serve as co-chair of the Joint Labor Management Committee along with Patty Brecht from Human Resources.

A little about how things work. The committee consists of three UUP Executive Board members and three members of management. Once all the applications have been received, we have a meeting, which normally lasts for a couple of hours. Here, the applications are randomly divided among the members for approval. After every one has been examined, we discuss each application, even those that are not approved, in order to get committee consensus. Some apps get rejected for various reasons. One of the most common mistakes is that there is a request for equipment, which is not allowed under our current guidelines. Equipment is a purchasing category and can be something like a hard drive of minimal value but, nevertheless, would be classified as equipment.

While our end usually goes smoothly, the state side never seems to work as well. It is frustrating to never know when the money will be available for release from the Division of Budget, then the Comptroller's Office, and then SUNY Central. Once SUNY receives the money, they set up campus accounts, campuses set up individual accounts and recipients are notified. This process can and usually does take a couple of months even when things work well. The latest bulletin I have is that the

Comptroller's Office has sent the money to SUNY. Maybe by the time this is out you will have gotten your award.

When the dust settled, even with the shortened timeframe, we had 127 applications requesting approximately \$150,000 and we could not fund them all. As in the past, the committee decided to give priority to individuals who had not received funding during the current contract (2007-2011) with the exception of part-time employees (a minimum of 15% must be set aside for part-time employees). This was to ensure that as many members as possible benefit from this award program. However, the committee found that even first-time applicants exceeded the available funds. This left the committee with an even tougher decision. It is difficult to say whose meeting, course, or other activity is more significant than another or who is more deserving. Also, it was not clear to us at that time whether or not, when our new contract is ratified, the IDA program would survive. So, for the first time in the 10 years that I have been doing this, the committee decided to approve and fund every first-time applicant at a reduced level.

The committee received 70 first-time applications totaling \$86,000. Since we only had \$52,366.14 to spend (about two-thirds of what we have normally received in the past), we determined a cutoff point of \$812 with a very few receiving \$825. By doing this, we were able to expend all but \$1.14 of our allotment.

Congratulations to all awardees! We are proud to be able to assist you in your professional development. One request that we do have is that, if you received an award and cannot use it for whatever reason, please let us know. This way, someone who is on the waiting list can use the award before the deadline.

PRESIDENT UPDATE

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forth by union contracts, resulting in increases for some and decreases for others.

All this has occurred during the media 'demonization' of unions. According to what you read and hear, the unions are crippling states' economies and the states are broke because of public employee pensions. The Center for Economic Policy Research (CEPR) analyzed census data last September. It found that state and local government workers are often older and more educated than private sector employees, but they earn 4% less than those with the same age and education.

In reality, the fiscal problem is due to decreased tax revenue due to the recession.

Things happening within SUNY are also unsettling. The Chancellor has proposed a "shared services" initiative, which included a proposal to consolidate the campus administrations of Delhi and Cobleskill, Canton and Potsdam, and Morrisville and SUNY IT in order to save money through the coordination of goods purchased and services delivered. While in theory this seems positive, the greater concern is that this may actually be a workforce reduction proposal in disguise. Upstate is

currently dealing with our first retrenchment action. The proposal involves the elimination of an entire group of people, the monitor techs who watch cardiac monitors. Their jobs are being 'taken' by a new, upgraded monitoring system that will communicate directly with the bedside nurse, directly or indirectly increasing RN workload.

UUP's Negotiation Team continues discussions with the State's negotiators. UUP's proposals cover a broad array of issues involving 25 contract articles and seven appendices. The State's proposals involve compensation, health benefits, duration of a new contract and possible furloughs. Updates on the 'conversations/negotiations' can be found on our Upstate UUP website. Historically, UUP does not 'negotiate' in the press, so these releases on the website are the latest information from the Negotiations Team.

We welcome your involvement in UUP. Our monthly Executive Board meetings are open to any member who wants to know more about what their union is doing or seeking information about ways to become more active. Please join us!

EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

UUP Syracuse Outreach Committee

The Syracuse UUP Outreach Committee is comprised of SUNY Upstate Medical University UUP-represented employees who are interested in advocacy. Members participate in a wide range of activities ranging from marching in the Labor Day Parade at the New York State Fair to meeting with legislators in their local and/or Albany offices. The Committee works closely with the SUNY Upstate Office of Government and Community Relations in an attempt to coordinate and prioritize efforts, a partnership that was quite effective when dealing with the proposed recommendations of the Berger Commission.

Recently, several members of the Syracuse UUP Outreach Committee, including Robert Fluck and Brain Tappen, attended the January 24, 2012 UUP Advocacy Day in Albany, NY. They met with representative Will Barclay, Nancy Calhoun, Bill Magee, Cathy Young and Crystal People-Stokes to discuss several issues pertinent to our teaching and health care missions.

If you are interested in joining the UUP Syracuse Outreach Committee, please call the Syracuse Chapter Office at 422-5028.



EVENTS & ANNOUNCEMENTS

Negotiations Update: January 30

State Responds to UUP's Counterproposals

UUP's Negotiations Team met with state negotiators on Jan. 26. At this meeting the state responded to a comprehensive counterproposal presented by UUP on Jan. 11. UUP's counterproposal covered all items on the table for consideration. The state's response to UUP did not lead to agreement on any items.

UUP continues to press for a contract that is fair, meets the needs of all UUP members, and is acceptable for ratification by our diverse membership. The UUP bargaining unit includes professional and academic part-time and full-time employees who work in a range of settings across different types of SUNY institutions, including public hospitals and health science centers, university centers, specialized and technical colleges, and comprehensive colleges.

UUP's Negotiations Team continues to spend long hours at work before and after every meeting with the state. A typical workweek for the Team begins with a 6-10 p.m. Wednesday night work session and continues

with full days of work and/or meetings with the state on Thursday and Friday, often including a Thursday evening work session.

Though contract talks have advanced well beyond preliminary phases, the negotiations process is a dynamic one. It is necessary to analyze and reassess information and data as the proposal-counterproposal procedure unfolds.

As UUP and the state address contract items and respond to each other's proposals with new potential agreements, the Negotiations Team must assess all items under consideration with regard to their impacts on our diverse membership. The Team appreciates the support and encouragement extended by our colleagues from across the state and will continue to do everything necessary to reach an acceptable agreement.

UUP's next negotiations session with the state is scheduled for Feb. 9.

Sign Up to Attend an Advocacy Day in Albany!

With the current state of economic affairs, it is more important than ever that UUP members travel to Albany to remind our legislature about the important work we do on our campus. It is through these visits that our representatives are kept aware of educational and health care issues, as well as our unique contributions to these fields.

Signing up for a visit has never been easier – just take a look at the UUP Political Action Calendar included in this newsletter and then go to <http://bit.ly/nrZFAl> to register. Once signed up, you will receive follow-up e-mail communications about your specific travel date.

A typical UUP Advocacy Day is as follows:

| | |
|------------|--|
| 8:30-9:00 | Briefing at UUP Headquarters (HQ) at 800 Troy-Schenectady Rd, Latham, NY |
| 9:15(ish) | Bus departs UUP HQ for Legislative Office Building (LOB) in Albany, NY |
| 10:00-2:30 | Appointments at LOB with Legislators made for you by UUP |
| 11:30-1:30 | Free lunch available in the Albany Room |
| 3:00 | Bus departs LOB to return to UUP HQ |

If you have any questions about Advocacy Days or would like to carpool to any event, please do not hesitate to contact our local UUP chapter office at 422-5028.

Making a Connection

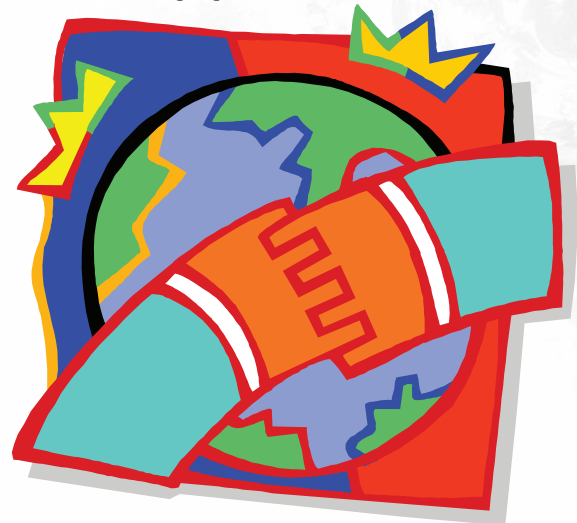
An anonymous letter to the Editor

Today the computer network went down, possibly related to a recent upgrade. After finishing all work that could be done on the computer, I embarked on a journey of discovery like I've done many times before. I could not have expected that this one would be different from all the rest.

While on my walkabout, I ran into people that I haven't seen in a while. After partaking in a few brief, but meaningful, conversations of my own, that's when the metaphorical light bulb was switched on. Something was different. There were more people than usual. People were talking. Walking. Smiling. Laughing.

Like a warm spring day (on last day of autumn), people were up and moving around. Faces unglued from monitors. They were celebrating camaraderie and spreading cheer for the holidays.

Today a discovery was made and it is this: a network may connect devices, but without it... people connect.





Looking for direction.... ?



One facet of the NYSUT mission statement is to improve the personal lives of its members and their families. NYSUT Social Services is a valuable benefit available to you. There is no charge, no limitation on usage and is completely confidential. We provide you and your family with a personal response to your unique issue.

Call NYSUT Social Services
1-800-342-9810, ext. 6206
socsvcs@nysutmail.org

Scott Hicks, LCSW
Ani Shahinian, LCSW-R

Problems come in many forms.
So does the help NYSUT provides.



NYSUT members: Are your pets protected?

As all animal lovers know, unexpected pet care expenses can quickly become overwhelming. Our favorite four-legged friends (along with exotic pets) are famous for devouring socks, coins and other “treats” that can make for expensive vet visits.

While it's difficult to anticipate accidents and illnesses, it is important to be prepared for them. It's also helpful to have some assistance when it comes to routine care for your pet.

NYSUT Member Benefits is here to once again help you save some hard-earned money through our new endorsed pet insurance program.

This Member Benefits Corporation-endorsed program offered by VPI Pet Insurance offers a variety of coverage options for dogs, cats, birds, and exotic pets.

The “scoop” on VPI

VPI – part of the Nationwide Insurance family – has served as the largest and most recommended pet insurance plan in the U.S. since 1982. VPI currently has nearly 500,000 policies in place and occupies 61% of the pet insurance market.

Pets under the age of 10 are eligible for coverage, and medical plans provide benefits for accidents and illnesses – ranging from ear infections to cancer. Optional CareGuard plans provide benefits for preventive care.

It pays to be a member

NYSUT members receive a 5% group discount on the base medical plan and up to a 15% discount if multiple pets in a household are enrolled. There

are a variety of payment options available, including direct bill through your checking account or credit card; payroll and pension deduction will be offered down the line.

Easy submission process

VPI offers an easy, three-step claim submission process with a prompt turnaround for the majority of reimbursements.

- Simply pay for your pet's medical treatment at the time of service.
- Send the one-page claim form along with your receipts to VPI.
- After meeting your policy's deductible, your eligible expenses will be reimbursed.



Policyholders can quickly process claims online, via email or fax, and easily keep track of their policies and download pre-printed claim forms through a helpful website.

VPI has an average turnaround time of 12-14 business days for a claim. The best part is that you will know up front exactly what is covered

with your plan and how much you are eligible to be reimbursed thanks to the VPI published benefit schedule.

What to do first

To get started, please contact VPI toll-free at 866-838-3461 (this is a dedicated number for NYSUT members) or visit memberbenefits.nysut.org and click on “Discounts & Travel – Members” and then “VPI Pet Insurance.” There, you'll find a link to a NYSUT member-specific VPI website. You can also contact Member Benefits at **800-626-8101** with any questions.

VPI Pet Insurance is a NYSUT Member Benefits Corporation (Member Benefits)-endorsed program. Member Benefits has an endorsement arrangement of 5% of adjusted gross premium for this program. All such payments to Member Benefits are used solely to defray the costs of administering its various programs and, where appropriate, to enhance them. Member Benefits acts as your advocate; please contact Member Benefits at 800-626-8101 if you experience a problem with any endorsed program. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

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The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors or of the Syracuse Chapter and are not necessarily the opinions of United University Professions. The editor welcomes member submission of letters, articles, pictures and comments of interest to the Syracuse Chapter.

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