



The Sentinel

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*"As your island of knowledge grows,
so does your shoreline of wonder."*

- Anon

Strategic Planning at the Chapter Level and Beyond: UUP Oneonta and the Future

By Bill Simons, Chapter President

In the eternal present, significant tactical decisions and initiatives can dominate time, resources, and agendas. Service to members occurs day-by-day, and crises punctuate our schedule. UUP Oneonta is continually engaged in on-going issues concerning terms and conditions related to academics, professionals, and part-timers as well as acting as a conduit for retirees. These activities may manifest themselves in the form of labor-management relations, potential grievances, contractual and non-contractual representational matters, legislative advocacy and outreach on behalf of SUNY, monitoring health and safety, enlarging diversity, facilitating benefits and grants, chapter building, chapter governance, community service, communication through internal and external media, on-going collaboration with Statewide UUP and other chapters, and sponsoring diverse special events. To chart long-term development, however, it is necessary to create a strategic mission. SUNY, the College at Oneonta, and Statewide UUP have all begun strategic planning. During this transitional time of challenge and opportunity, UUP Oneonta will also examine its own strategic mission. As a starting point for this endeavor, discussion about four areas demand our attention—SUNY, the College at Oneonta, Statewide UUP, and the chapter.



the New UUP

SUNY needs UUP's support as never before. The threat of budget cuts potentially threatens programs and personnel. Moreover, misguided proposals to allow campuses to set differential tuition and acquire unprecedented levels of flexibility could undermine the SUNY system, creating an unhealthy Darwinian competition between institutions. The Midwestern model of a few flagship public university centers dwarfing other higher ed public institutions would not serve our students, the people of New York, or our members. Even more than in the past, UUP Oneonta must play an informed, active, and effective role in advocacy and outreach for funding to keep SUNY strong. At this time of fiscal crisis, UUP Oneonta leaders and rank-and-file members need keep paramount the need for sustained SUNY advocacy and outreach. Let us go in numbers to Albany to make the case for SUNY. Let us also build on our established ties with local legislators during in-district advocacy. At on campus programs with legislators, let us demonstrate our numbers and articulate our concerns. It is imperative that all UUPers participate in faxing and telephoning and letter writing. SUNY advocacy can not be a spectator sport if

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our cause is to prevail. Our chapter knows the importance of collaboration with students, other campus unions, the community, and Management, as well as with State UUP and other chapters, to make the case for SUNY.

The College at Oneonta has embarked on Strategic Planning. Management graciously invited UUP to appoint an official representative to the Strategic Planning and Resource Council (SPARC). Upon consultation with our Labor Relations Specialist and solicitation of political advice, UUP respectfully declined the offer, following normative practice by chapters. UUP informed Management that the union appreciated the overture, but needed to avoid even the appearance of partial authorship of the eventual SPARC mission statement. We explained that representational or contractual issues might emerge in the future, in circumstances unforeseen and unintended, that derived from the strategic planning document. UUP must always maintain its ability to provide representation for its members concerning terms and conditions of labor. UUP, however, recognizes the time, commitment, and efforts of those serving on SPARC. Several senior UUP officers ran for SPARC, as individuals rather than as union officials, and UUP Vice President for Academics Rob Compton was elected. UUP also encourages its members, without claims of representing the union, to participate in various SPARC activities. UUP also communicated to Management its hope to share information and perspectives during the life of SPARC. Moreover, UUP did ask for and accept an invitation to meet with SPARC consultant Dr. David McFarland in November, much in the manner that UUP, though separate from the presidential search process, met with the four finalists. Finally, through Labor-Management meetings, *The Sentinel*, and other forums, UUP will continue to promote discussion.

Statewide UUP is creating its own strategic plan. This is an opportunity to share, discuss, and debate ideas about the union's future. A Statewide UUP Executive Vice President, functioning as a chief of staff, would ameliorate day-to-day burdens of the Statewide President, allowing more attention to priority issues and the future of the union. Proposals to provide more resources to chapters, increase efforts to facilitate lateral collaboration between chapters, a congress of chapter presidents with its own officers, and chapter input on evaluation of the LRS have the potential to enlarge grassroots union activism. UUP Oneonta applauds union initiatives on the state level to share chapter newsletter articles on best practices between chapters and to develop standardized surveys of campus administrations, both areas in which Oneonta has served as a pioneer practitioner. Term limits and the direct election of statewide officers by all UUP members, rather than by a few hundred delegates, merit examination. Use of You Tube and electronic meetings would encourage a level playing field for challengers, producing vigorous, contested elections that would engage the passions of the membership, encourage competing union parties on the campus and state level. UUP is the largest higher ed union in the U.S., and it has a proud history, built on past and contemporary achievements. Innovation and new ideas will strengthen it still more.

The chapter also needs to consider its own strategic planning. UUP Oneonta should consider the chapter's future. Advocacy and outreach on behalf of SUNY, representing and providing services to members, and a host of other activities must, of course, continue in a manner that is responsive and effective. We need, however, to examine our "constitution," the chapter bylaws and consider amendments or the creation of a new document, in conformity with State UUP constitutional protocols. A preamble would more sharply define mission. Procedures and structure need examination. The process of revising the chapter bylaws would involve a designated committee, the Executive Board, and the entire UUP membership. Panels, articles, and *Vision for the Future* forums will foster dialogue. Following discussion in chapter meetings, the entire membership would vote on the document. Such a process would energize and empower the membership. It would also invest leaders, developing and new, with valuable experience and perspective. UUP Oneonta has a depth of new and emergent leaders, and their time is approaching. The mentoring of these exceptional leaders need receive highest priority. They are the future of the chapter. Continuity and change will animate our efforts in creating a new "constitution."

History tells us that difficult passages often foster reform, creativity, and progress. This is our time, the time of the New Solidarity. Let us use it wisely as we think strategically about the road ahead.

Labor-Management Meetings: Approaches and Philosophy

By: Rob Compton, VP for Academics

The new academic year is well underway and most of us have settled into our routines. The same can be said about UUP, both at the Chapters' level and the Statewide organization. This year, the biggest challenge for SUNY and our College will be the deleterious budgetary climate facing public education. Many of us have heard of the disastrous conditions and the assault on public education in states like Florida and California. UUP at the state and chapter levels remain strongly committed to the mission of public higher education. Over the next several years, I am certain that we will engage in joint advocacy for the College at Oneonta with CSEA, Council 82, NYSCOBA, the Student Association, the College Senate, community organization, regional Labor Councils, and hopefully the administration. Certainly, the upcoming College and Community panel on October 28th will highlight areas of cooperation and growth for the College. In our Labor-Management meetings--which are mandated by the contract between the Governor's Office of Employee Relations (GOER) or the state and UUP--the chapter union will work assiduously to advocate for the interests of our members and the College.



I write this article because many new faculty and professionals have joined our community over the past two years and since the inauguration of President Kleniewski. Over the past year, we approached Labor-Management relations differently than in the past. UUP wanted to get to know the new President and establish a working relationship. The President also wanted to do the same and get to know the role of UUP on this campus and its officers. Therefore, over the year, UUP's strategy was to meet with President Kleniewski and Associate Vice President Lisa Wenck on a regular basis to develop the relationship necessary for moving Labor-Management relations forward. At the same time, Labor also sought to develop a constructive relationship between its officers and their Management counterparts. Rather than elevating numerous concerns to the agenda of Labor Management, UUP President Bill Simons often delegated tasks to UUP officers to engage in dialogue with Management counterparts to resolve problems. Overall, that strategy produced several concrete results, including a systematic examination by Management of DSI practices, maintenance of a cooperative framework for dealing with environmental and facility issues, and systemic and regular briefings on the budget, including the September 15th meeting. The details of this briefing can be found at: <http://www.oneonta.edu/president/budget1009.asp>.

New Beginnings in Labor-Management Meetings

It is UUP hope and desire that relations between Management and us reflect mutual respect and good faith negotiations and discussions free of intimidation. Beginning with October 26, UUP and Management will have regular meetings with recorded notes. The notes will be published in the Sentinel on a regular basis. In Article 8, sec. 4a of the contract between GOER and UUP states,

A College President, or designee, shall meet with local UUP representatives once each month to discuss matters of interest raised by either party, including those matters necessary to the implementation and administration of this Agreement which are local in nature. The College President shall attend these meetings at least once each semester. A written agenda shall be submitted by UUP to the College President ten working days before the scheduled date of the meeting, whenever feasible. In no event shall the agenda be submitted less than five working days before the scheduled date of the meeting.

The details of these meetings provide important data and information for the Statewide UUP leadership when they meet with GOER in their Labor-Management meetings. In addition, our most important constituents, our members, come to expect a fair and assertive representation of the issues. The best way for members to get their issues onto the Labor-Management meeting agenda is to come to Chapter meetings.

What Our Members Can Expect

Our members should not expect every or any issue that they bring up to be addressed immediately in the Labor-Management venue. Some issues are best addressed through informal discussion and a meeting between a

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specifically designated UUP officer and his/her Management counterpart. At other times, political timing and the collection of additional information and the seeking of legal advice, both with our Labor Relations Specialist and his superiors in Albany, needs to be taken into consideration. Generally, our goal is to resolve problems before they get to the “table.” So if there is an issue that people are talking about, and UUP appears not to have acted yet, please don’t assume that we are “ignoring the problem,” or “have sold out.” Our network is vast, both on this campus and at other campuses.

The union is an important counterbalancing institution of the College. The Administration is part of the College just like the Union. Collectively, we are components of the College. While we are in a strong partnership on 90% of the issues, we disagree 10% of the time. This is not personal, but rather one of representation as UUP has a fiduciary responsibility to protect our members and advance their well-being.

Over the past year, UUP has met with the new President and members of her cabinet to establish a strong working relationship. When there are disagreements, we hope that the 90% we have in common will help us move forward with a common goal: strengthening our beloved College.

Professional Development

On the Oneonta chapter, we look at the union as a vehicle for professional development and growth. Whether service is with our joint Labor-Management Grants Committees, Saturday’s Bread, on a or statewide UUP committee. Perhaps you contribute to VOTE-COPE, participate on a panel or attend a UUP sponsored event (e.g., College-Community Panel, a *Vision for the Future Forum*, the UUP Labor *Film Series*, or the newly inaugurated Diversity Panel Discussion Series, there is a place for you to express both solidarity and find friendship.

Some of our members have decided to run for elected UUP positions on campus and at the statewide level. Those who attend the Labor-Management meetings are the senior officers of the Chapter organization and those designated by the President based on specific issue-based need at (a) meeting(s). They have become experts in their issue areas and/or have a breadth of knowledge of issues obtained through a combination of professional expertise, union activism, and attending meetings, workshops, and the Delegate Assembly (usually held in Albany, three times a year). We do this because we are committed to the College, the idealism of unions, and because we obtain the professional development necessary to become effective advocates for our members.

Conclusion

As we enter into a tumultuous budget time, UUP will do its best to advocate for strong funding for our College. At the same time, we will pledge to our members that we will work in partnership with the administration, serve as a counterbalance, and advocate tirelessly for justice and fairness. We are not magicians, so we cannot produce rabbits from a hat. However, I can attest that many of our supporters have told me how much better off we are with a strong union on this campus. We will carry out our Labor-Management meeting duties with professionalism, assertiveness, civility, and aplomb. Stay tuned for the regular notes from Labor-Management meetings!

UUP Labor/Management Meeting of September 22, 2009: Notes

The September 22 Labor/Management meeting was attended by (Management) President Nancy Kleniewski and Associate Vice President Lisa Wenck; (UUP) Chapter President Bill Simons and Vice President for Academics Rob Compton.

Issues addressed included the following: a Joint Labor/Management grant proposal for community outreach; encouraging applications for Drescher leaves; further questions about the implementation of the 21-hour teaching load for faculty; and UUP participation in the campus strategic planning process. In addition, UUP shared with Management the position that Labor Day should be observed by not holding classes; Management shared with UUP information about the membership of the Promotion and Tenure and Deans’ Advisory Committees and information regarding changes to the process for Discretionary Salary Increases.



The “D” Word

By Alex Thomas, Associate Professor, Sociology,
and
UUP Representative,
Labor-Management Grants Committee

Decline is a dirty word, but one that should be breathed from time to time so as not to be taken in by your own marketing. Indeed, rather than waiting for the first whiffs of failure, it is more prudent to examine the potential for decline during the upswing – perhaps, through careful planning, it can be avoided. Decline can come from any number of sources, but they seem to fall into two categories: decline that stems from the loss of a relative advantage over competitors, and decline that stems from internal conditions.

The College at Oneonta is today, on paper, one of the most selective public colleges in the United States and one of the jewels of the SUNY system. It is, in fact, both a model for emulation and a target to be overtaken. In the 1990s I served on the faculty of a two-year SUNY college, and one of my duties was to represent my department at the Faculty Congress. During the hours I spent listening to arguments in that dingy classroom, perhaps the most interesting were those spent trying to choose a new name for the college. The one selected, according to the arguments of my comrades, had the advantage of obscuring the distinction between that institution and the comprehensive colleges like SUNY Oneonta.

One basic fact that Oneonta, like other colleges in our sector, must contend is that SUNY Central and our representatives in government have given our traditional educational niche to what had formerly been two-year colleges. Through such initiatives as K-16 and seamless transfer, comprehensive colleges are to be forced to accept whatever courses they teach as our own, whether the other school requires their faculty to have a terminal degree or even a degree in the discipline they are teaching (some, like the one I was at, do not). The idea is for a system that is uniform across schools, but the term “system” seems to apply primarily to the lower division schools. No one has suggested that the comprehensive colleges be able to offer graduate courses that *must* be accepted at the university centers – nor will I. (For that matter, few have suggested that the SUNY Central bureaucracy be shrunk to the point that it can fit in the upper floors of the Coulson’s Convenience Store across Broadway, either). In any case, with the former two-year colleges allowed to “come up” to the level of the comprehensives and SUNY Central guaranteeing a monopoly of R1 status to the university centers, we must find a formula that neither impinges on the university centers nor keeps us in head-to-head competition, surely to increase, with the two-year colleges. Simply stated, a failure to act now will lead to a *de facto* decline simply as other colleges catch up and even pass us in our own race. The “Regional University” model, or “University of the Catskills,” or whatever you want to call it, meets this challenge.

Another concern should be internal. Over a third of the faculty has been hired in the past six years, and as such the pattern of exuberance and vitality exhibited by newly minted PhDs is found all over campus. Many members of the senior faculty have commented on this dynamism, but we should consider the downside of having so many come in at roughly the same stage of life: they will go through many of the stages together, and with them the character of the college will change as well. Will the dynamism wane as the pressure of earning tenure changes to the comfort of having tenure? Will the excitement of on-campus activities falter as the organizers have children who demand more time – in their own plays, sports, and social lives – that keep their parents in their own homes and off campus? Simply stated, will the exuberance of youth found among so many of the faculty turn to the malaise of middle age? Administration can play a role in preventing malaise by, on one hand, leading the quest for a truly regional liberal arts university, and on the other establishing a climate in which the abundant creative energies of the faculty can flourish. This means fresh dialogue and a willingness to promote and fund new projects; it also means that faculty have the time and energy to involve themselves in such ventures. In short, it means treating faculty as agents of change and creativity, and not merely, as friend of mine is fond of saying, “teachers of classes.”

There are ways to address the potential – not certainty – of internal decline. A commitment to a diversity of age groups among the faculty is a start. SUNY Oneonta is an excellent place to raise a family, for example, with three zoos within an hour and a half, museums and entertainment venues stretching from Binghamton to Utica to Albany, with some right here in Oneonta and Cooperstown. It is a selling point, and

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such facilities as the Bugbee Childcare Center and the Science Discovery Center, as well as College Camp and a good campus trail system, make the college family friendly. A renewed commitment to such facilities, as well as an openness to the full diversity of families found in our society – “traditional” or not – is not only humane, it is good for the college. Also, in this day of academic families, a mechanism for hiring faculty spouses and domestic partners will not only help us attract and maintain an excellent faculty, and not only complement our course offerings, but will aid our families by not forcing couples to choose the career of one person or the other.

I have, over the past four articles, presented some ideas and opinions that make sense to me. Ultimately, my opinion is that the college needs to reinvent itself to become a regional university – one that serves the community and region and in doing so fully achieves the potential of a public university. One that develops the programs and expertise to act both locally and globally, and creates its own niche that respects the goals and objectives of other SUNY colleges but also distinguishes what is special about SUNY Oneonta. The “Granola Strategy” of targeting students who would be attracted to the type of community that Oneonta actually is – a reasonably healthy town in the mountains – and investing in the infrastructure that will not only attract students, but make the community a better place to live. By doing so, we can attract the wide diversity that this campus needs and deserves. To the extent that people agree with my point of view, I appreciate the support. But I do not ask for support, but for dialogue, and eventually for action. Don’t just read these articles and say, “Oh, you,” but let’s talk. And let’s act.

Professionals on Campus

By Norm Payne, Vice President for Professionals

There are 6 levels of professionals on this campus. From SL-1 to SL-6, each level is supposed to denote a higher level of skill, competence, and responsibility. Professionals have a wide range of tasks at Oneonta, from a staff assistant to a college physician. Each professional has a performance program that outlines their duties and responsibilities. They perform their duties during what could be called a work day. For someone working in an office, the work day usually starts at 8:00 am and ends at 4:30 pm with an hour for lunch. For a Residence Hall Director the work day may be fluid. An admissions counselor may work a varied schedule based on the admissions cycle. While they are on the road recruiting they may work evenings, while they are back on campus they may work 8:00 to 4:30 and some Saturday open houses. It seems that there is really no “normal” work hours for professionals.



The title “professionals” comes with yet another set of standards. As a professional, you are expected to complete your professional obligation- your job. This is where two worlds collide, lines are drawn and your career is defined.

On one hand you are expected to complete your professional obligation, but we all know that the work will not stop, it will be there tomorrow. We get up and leave our jobs at 4:30, unless you are in the middle of working with a student, or a project that just can’t end. Your work may take you 10 minutes longer to complete past 4:30. You are a professional you get it done.

Professional 1- Wilma is an SL-3 she works from 8:00 to 4:30. Occasionally her duties take her past 4:30 as she deals with some unknown circumstances. At some point in her career her supervisor noted that she pitches in and gets the work done, whatever it takes. Her job is not one that requires her to open an office, so she can get to work a bit past 8:00 and no one has lost service. Her supervisor really does not care that she is not in at exactly 8:00 as long as she completes her professional obligation. When Wilma works a rare Saturday, her supervisor reminds her to take some time (as long as she tells the supervisor when) to make up for providing a service to the mission of the college.

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Professional 2- Fred- is an SL-2, he works from 8:00 to 4:30. When his duties take him past 4:30 or on a Saturday, he has a more formal way of doing things. He writes down the time he works after time, and then submits a request to use his comp time. He realizes that he can't use the hours on a 1 to 1 basis, but he has it worked out to his satisfaction. The form he uses is the exact wording from his contract, and his supervisor is under the same contract (UUP) and understands the use of comp time, as explained by Human Resources.

Professional 3- Barney- is also an SL-2, he work from 8:00 to 4:30. At some point in his career he felt like he was being taken advantage of. He was told that there was no such thing as comp time. He was told that he had a professional obligation to fulfill, and if a job or student took longer than normal, and it was past 4:30, he had to finish the job. So the games began. Even though Barney was in the parking lot at 7:45, he waited in his car until 7:58, and walked into the office at 8:00. If there was a job to do and the office was pitching in and working past 4:30, he would not stay. So the supervisor writes him up for coming in at 8:05. There was a slow tractor coming up West Street, causing him to be late for work. Then the supervisor said that working an open house on a Saturday was part of his professional obligation, so he had to work Saturday with no comp time. Barney goes to the Union and the Union goes to HR, and low and behold, no one wins.

So why are there so many different ways that supervisors deal with employees and comp time? I think it is a unique dynamic between a supervisor and an employee. Part of it is management style, part of it is what the supervisor believes they must do to be a manager, and part of it is the employee being supervised. By now everyone knows that comp time is earned and can be used, so at least that part of the dynamic is settled. How a supervisor chooses to deal with the use of comp time speaks to the relationship the employee has, the confidence the supervisor has, and the style the manager uses or may be forced to use.

Being a professional means you act like a professional and are treated as a professional. If one of these two don't happen, and no one knows which came first, the college community looses. There was a time, when I first came here I heard that a secretary was assigned the duty of watching out a front window of Netzer to find out who came in at what time. I am not sure what they did with the information, but it certainly did not promote a healthy work environment. There was a time when the VP's would flip a coin to see who's turn it was to watch a certain person, who was quite a character, and call him if it was past 10:30 to remind him to come to work. Those times have come and gone. Now most professionals on this campus are treated as professionals.

The college promotes a professional environment where if given a chance, we can grow, change and contribute. Just as the procedures for applying for Discretionary Salary Increases have changed, the attitude toward comp time has also changed. Comp time has now become widely accepted by everyone. HR has reinforced the existence of comp time to VP's, Unit managers and Directors. Everyone has seen the page in our contract that speaks to comp time, and even read the exact sentence to use when and if you want to use comp time. I have been working with Lisa on many issues professionals have brought to me. This issue is one of them. If you think there is a problem with comp time, and you are stuck in a rut like Barney, there may be a way to start over. Call me, we can work on your problem.

There is one more thing about comp time and our contract that you need to understand. The contract does not speak about hour for hour compensation. So this is the part you have to work out with your supervisor. My ending note: I am going to ask for 5 volunteers to be on a professional issues committee, where you will be asked to come up with any issues the professionals around you may have, and plan a course to resolve them. Look for an email in the coming weeks.

Maintaining Excellence in Teaching

By Tom Horvath, Secretary, Health/Safety Officer,
and Academic Delegate

By now all of the teaching faculty have already settled on their spring semester courses. This has been the first academic year of the new 21 sh teaching load. UUP has mentioned that moving from the previous 24 sh load to the new 21 sh load is a move in the right direction. UUP still holds to the position that the college should consider the next move to an 18 sh load. Until we have achieved this load, which by the way would put Oneonta in the same company as several other SUNY colleges in our sector, we can still use the provisions outlined in the Faculty Handbook to request course load reductions.



Here is how this works. If a faculty member meets one of the 9 provisions listed below, they must work with their Department Chair to request a course load reduction. If the Chair agrees to support the request, they must forward the course schedule indicating that the faculty member has a reduced load in the proposed schedule and must also justify it. This all requires ultimately a Dean's approval.

In the past, UUP has reported in *The Sentinel* the actual figures of how many requests have been submitted to the Deans, and how many requests have been granted. UUP plans to continue to report these figures in the spirit of transparency.

Most recently we have become alarmed that these provisions are being used as a list of what is minimally required of faculty. For example, a Memo originating from the Deans' offices suggests that all faculty should not only satisfy the 21 sh load for an academic year, but also meet the minimum 375 credit hours each semester. This amounts to each faculty have at least 125 students in their classes each semester (assuming a 3 sh course). A stated below in section f, this figure is considered to be considered an exceptionally heavy load, not the bare minimum of what we are expected to do. The Deans' memo is rather contrary to the notion that Oneonta has a low student to faculty ratio and offers small intimate learning environments in classes. We certainly do need some classes to be able to handle large numbers of students. For example, this semester I am teaching two courses each with over 150 students. Although this is not the pedagogic goal, it is unavoidable in some instances. We will be again asking for a clarification on this issue at a Labor-Management meeting this year. In the meantime, UUP encourages all its members to take the time to read through these provisions in the Faculty Handbook. If you feel you may qualify for a course load reduction, you should start a conversation with your Chair. The fall 2010 semester schedule is just around the corner.

Here are the provisions in the Faculty Handbook (found on page 25).

From Faculty Handbook:

Appropriate justifications for reductions may include but are not limited to the following:

- a. exceptional involvement in specific instructional activities, such as preparation of a new course, the revision of existing course materials, involvement in the development or instruction of new academic programs, or the instruction of graduate level courses;
- b. exceptional involvement in a specific program of research and scholarly activity;
- c. exceptional involvement in specific service activities, such as assignment to special college projects or committees;
- d. involvement in professional development activities, such as retraining for another specialty area or to address departmental needs;
- e. administrative assignments, such as service as department chair or designation as program or area director;
- f. an exceptionally heavy workload in teaching assignment, due to reasons such as participation in courses with large class sizes resulting in unusual time commitments, such as assignments that generate a total of 375 credit hours or more.
- g. supervision of internship activities for program or department;
- h. an unusually high teaching load or other assigned professional responsibilities in a previous semester or planned for a subsequent semester;
- i. other assigned professional responsibilities or scholarly activities as deemed appropriate.

Please Join the Union and Enjoy the Benefits!

By Hanfu Mi, Membership Director

Another fabulous fall is upon us and it is once again a great time on campus and in the nearby Oneonta community. As the Director of Membership, I sincerely hope that faculty and professional staff will review your status to see whether you are a full member of the union. In order to be a union member, your paycheck **must** state "UUP Member." If it says "UUP Agency Fee," then you are included in the Professional Services Negotiating Unit, but are *not* a member of the union. The full UUP membership entitles you to:

- Vote on collective bargaining agreement;
- Hold union office and attend union workshops and meetings;
- Elect union leaders on our campus and choose state and national level representatives;
- Maintain UUP membership after retirement and be eligible for benefit programs; and
- Upon separation of service, obtain Associate Membership with NYSUT and be eligible for benefit programs.

Please contact me if you need to discuss any of the union benefits or you would like to have a membership card with some further information for becoming a member. I can be reached at mih@oneonta.edu.

Budget Briefing

By Tom Horvath, Secretary

UUP requested a briefing on the state of the College budget. Dr. Leif Hartmark presented detailed data that was also eventually presented in other forums.



The summary slides from his presentation are available via the College's website.
<http://www.oneonta.edu/president/budget1009.asp>

It is clear that state universities around the country are having a hard time of it, and SUNY is in the thick of it. Many of my colleagues at state schools are enduring mandated furloughs, and teaching staff downsizing. Luckily, our College is not in that bad of shape, but it is still a scary landscape.

The real issue affecting Oneonta and the other SUNYs is that the state is reducing the level of support from state monies. Despite the increases in tuition that students and their families have had to pay, SUNY is seeing less of it. The state provides only 36% of the core operating budget at Oneonta. We are slowly becoming a private university system. OAS is now the second largest source of allocated funds to the College, behind tuition dollars. State tax dollars comes in third.

In order to deal with the fiscal realities, Management's position has been to freeze vacant faculty and non-teaching positions in all areas of the campus. This isn't a 100% freeze, as I am aware of a number of searches that have been conducted very recently to replace essential faculty positions. As Dr. Hartmark points out, the overall reduction in teaching faculty experienced in 2009-2010 follows a few years of increases, so although we certainly could use all of the frozen positions, we are not as hard hit as many other SUNYs.

UUP has responded to the state actions by pressing the State Legislature and the Governor to return as much of the funding as possible. UUP is tireless in their advocacy, but a stronger message can be sent to our representatives if you all become involved. Follow the links that have been sent out that make it easy for you to voice your concern about budget cuts to SUNY. Give as much as you can afford to Vote Cope, which is the only way that UUP can support its advocacy actions.

UUP Labor Film Series



At Hunt Union Red Dragon Theater

Promoting Solidarity, Justice, and Environmental
Responsibility Through
Educational Film Screenings and Discussions

Land, Rain, and Fire Monday, November 16, 6:00 – 7:00 PM

What began as a teachers' strike on May 22, 2006 for better wages and more resources for students has erupted into a massive movement for profound social change in the state of Oaxaca, Mexico. **Land, Rain and Fire** tells the story of the police attack on fifty thousand teachers that were camped out with their children. Public anger at the police action transformed the strike into an unprecedented democratic insurgency, demanding the resignation of the Governor and the creation of a new constitution. Hundreds of unions, indigenous and women's organizations, neighborhood groups, students and professional associations came together and created APPO-- The Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca and a massive campaign of nonviolent civil disobedience. (2006)

These film runs 30 minutes and will be followed by an audience discussion. For more information, please contact Professor Gina L. Keel, Film Series Director, at keelgl@oneonta.edu



CSRC helps others to 'PAY IT FORWARD': The Center for Social Responsibility and Community

*By Linda Drake, Executive Director, CSRC
and UUP Director, Community Service*

The Center for Social Responsibility and Community (CSRC) connects student volunteers with nonprofit opportunities. CSRC has been very busy this semester. More than 600 students have already made an impact volunteering for 40 different nonprofits since the beginning of the semester.

Before classes even began, we started the year off with Freshman Service day on August 21st. There were three large service projects within the first week of the semester. Some examples of volunteer agencies that participated are: Friends of Oneonta Theatre (FOTOT), Otsego County Hazardous Waste Day, Enrichment Seminar Programs, Soup Kitchens, local Elementary Schools, and a number of walks for charitable causes. In addition, we have had three successful blood drives so far and two more are yet to go!

Not only is volunteer service a part of our SUNY mission, but volunteering is a great way for our students to learn how to become good citizens and to get involved in civic engagement. The benefits of volunteering are; students discover what career path they want to choose and what not to choose.

CSRC is not just for our students because we also encourage our UUP and CSEA members to join our volunteer data base to receive our emails each week on current events. Each semester the UUP and CSEA unions collaborate to staff *Saturday's Bread*. UUP has also participated in *Habitat for Humanity*, flood relief, and other endeavors. CSRC encourages you to volunteer for various opportunities by contacting and signing up in our office. Faculty, staff and administrators are always welcome to join us at any volunteer event arranged by the CSRC.

Our slogan at CSRC is "Pay it Forward." This means that once you do a good deed for someone, that person must 'pay it forward' and do another good deed for another and it keeps spreading! Please consider Pay it Forward in other community events as well throughout the school year.

Working with Homeless and Low-Income Veterans

By Joseph B. Simons, SUNY College at Oneonta Alumnus, Class of 2008

(Editor's Note: Alumnus Joe Simons, a former Student Association Senator, is in his second year at Suffolk University Law School. Two of his older brothers are veterans of the first Gulf War.)

I spent my summer interning at a nonprofit agency, *Shelter Legal Services*, which provides legal advocacy for homeless and low-income individuals in the Greater Boston area. I was assigned to work with veterans who fall into either of those two categories. *Shelter* represents clients with a wide variety of non-criminal legal issues. The veterans often came to us for help with their benefits claims. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) too often wrongly denies veterans' compensation claims, frequently with little explanation.

The process of applying for compensation from the VA is long and arduous, particularly if the initial claim is turned down. Many of the veterans that I encountered had served in the military with pride. In the service of our country, many of our clients were wounded, mentally or physically. By the time these veterans sought *Shelter's* assistance, they were sometimes dubious of ever receiving their full and legitimate benefits. Sadly others, worn down by repeated disappointment, had stopped trying.

The following example illustrates the frustration these veterans experience. One such veteran, whom I'll call "Greg," contacted *Shelter* asking if we could help him pursue a claim that had been denied repeatedly. He felt any further attempts would be futile, but he resolved to try one last time. Despite compliance with numerous VA requests for information, Greg had been turned down again and again.

When Greg entered the Army, he was a healthy 19 year-old. It even said so on his entrance physical exam. During his tour of duty, Greg was assigned to move large blocks of ice; subsequently, he slipped and fell off a truck. Greg's back hurt from the fall. But, with youthful illusions of invincibility, he didn't seek medical help right away, thinking his injury would just get better. Without a paper trail dating back to the initial condition, however, it was difficult for Greg to prove that his condition was service related. Like Greg, many servicemen and women toughed out an injury, failing to report it in a timely fashion. When Greg's tour of duty ended with an honorable discharge, his exit physical exam noted the back injury, yet for some reason the doctor wrote in parentheses, "maybe old."

According to the VA's own regulations, any doubt as to whether the veteran's injury arose from his service must be resolved in the veteran's favor. Yet the VA continued to deny Greg's claim. Greg provided authorities with evidence from their own VA hospitals as well as statements from private doctors and additional corroborating material, all indicating that his pain and disability most likely derived from his in-service injury.

Finally, after almost two years of navigating his way through the vast bureaucracy that is the VA, Greg was awarded his due compensation. He has now received at least some level of financial compensation for his back injury. I am glad that Greg received his due. I think, however, of all the other veterans in Greg's position who have yet to prevail. The daunting task of filing repeated and onerous appeals and then encountering rejection and denial undermines hope.

Many of our veterans exhibited courage in the face of hardship and danger. Having sacrificed to protect us and defend our freedom, they should not have to battle against unreasonable obstacles to receive compensation for injuries suffered in the line of duty. The VA too often falls short of its mandate to meet the needs of our veterans. Greg did everything he should have, but it took some coaxing from an attorney (my boss, who edited and signed the appeal) for the VA to do what it should have in the first place.

The plight of homeless and low-income veterans reflects the many ways that America's poor are underrepresented, treated unfairly, and pushed aside. Working with neglected veterans provided insight into

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the tragedy of poverty in our rich nation. Our disparities are too great. It was a privilege to come to know and learn from Greg and to provide a measure of help to him and over a dozen others. We owe our veterans much. My contributions are modest compared to theirs. I wish that I could have done more, and hope that my legal studies will enable me to do just that. Everyone deserves to have their basic needs met, and there is satisfaction in joining with those who have made the commitment to bring that aspiration to reality.

Vision Benefits For You And Your Dependents

By Mona Hughes, Benefits Officer

I frequently am asked questions regarding the UUP Vision Benefits so thought this might be a good time to give a review of this wonderful benefit.

The Davis Vision Care Plan allows eligible UUP members and their dependents quality eye care through a nationwide network of qualified optometrists. Members receive the maximum benefit from the Vision Care Plan when using an in-network provider. You may choose a network provider by accessing a list of in-network providers at www.davisvision.com or by phoning Customer Services at **1-800-999-5431**.

All you have to do is visit or phone the network provider and identify yourself as a UUP member or dependent. No claim forms or identification cards are needed.

Every 12 months, you and your dependents can have a comprehensive eye examination that includes glaucoma testing and dilation when indicated, and one pair of eyeglasses (prescription lenses and frames), or you can apply the benefit toward contact lenses. There are no co-pays or deductibles, but you can select enhancements for nominal co-pay.

Contact Lenses are standard, soft, daily-wear, disposable or planned replacement lenses. The Vision Care Plan mandates specific requirements regarding contact lenses that include complete patient training in insertion, removal, and care and wearing time. Once you have selected the contact lens option and lenses are fitted, the contacts cannot be exchanged for eyeglasses.

Eligible members and dependents are also offered the opportunity to have Laser Vision Correction Services at significant discounts through a network of credentialed surgeons. Members will save up to 25% on the regular rate or 5% off any advertised rate by an in-network provider. For more information about this service, go to www.davisvision.com or phone **1-800-584-2866** and enter client code **7512**. It is important to note that the Trust Fund has negotiated a \$20 per eye reimbursement for members and dependents regardless if you choose to use a in-network or non participating provider. You will be required to pay the provider directly for all changes and submit a claim within 180 days of the date of service to **Davis Vision, Laser Correction Claims Processing, PO Box 1620, Latham, NY 12110**. Claim forms can be found at the Davis Vision website or by phoning Davis Vision Customer Service.

In order to take advantage of this benefit, you must enroll for coverage under the UUP Benefit Trust Fund. Enrollment is not automatic, so you must file an enrollment card with the Fund directly. Enrollment cards are included in your UUP packets when you are hired. If you find you need another enrollment card, you can obtain one by phoning the Fund Office at **1-800-887-3863**, or through our campus **Human Resources Office**. After you enroll, it takes 42 days of continuous employment to become eligible. Employees, who are not eligible when hired but become eligible later, still have the same 42-day waiting period.



Development Funding Via UUP

By Ron Bishop, Chemistry & Biochemistry

(Editor's Note: Ron Bishop will serve as Acting UUP Oneonta Health/Safety Officer, beginning in late November 2009, while Tom Horvath is on leave. We salute Ron and Tom for their commitment to work safety issues.)

If you are a United University Professionals (UUP) member, money is available to you through a variety of programs offered by the Joint Labor-Management Committees. In case you haven't heard of them, these committees (partnerships of the Governor's Office of Employee Relations and UUP) have been granting development funds to SUNY faculty and staff people for more than thirty years.

Of course, I didn't learn about these grants until I needed one. Last year, I was delighted to receive from our provost a faculty development award to participate in a four-day course on laboratory safety. (As the stockrooms manager for our Chemistry and Biochemistry Department, I am responsible for Otsego County's most diverse collection of glassware, electronic gizmos, chemicals, biologicals, radioisotopes, cryogens and compressed gases. A number of folks around here agreed that I should pursue training focused on handling all of it safely.) However, the campus award didn't cover all of my projected expenses.

Fortunately, John Schaumloffel, Tom Rathbone and Norm Payne all suggested that I take a look at the Joint Labor-Management Committees (JLMC) programs. I navigated to their web site at www.nysuup.lmc.state.ny.us/ (following a link from UUP's site at www.uupinfo.org) and could hardly believe what I saw. There are six committees that manage funding requests: Affirmative Action / Diversity, Campus Grants, Employment, Professional Development, Safety and Health, and Technology. Each committee oversees up to three different programs.

The largest program (operated by the Professional Development Committee) funds Individual Development Awards of up to one thousand dollars each year. This the only sole-source program in the JLMC system; all other programs require a minimum of forty percent matching funds from the campus. This program is also unique in that award decisions are made locally at each campus; every other program award is decided by the overseeing committee in Albany.

The program that fit my situation was the Dr. Herbert N. Wright Memorial Safety and Health Training Award Program, operated by the Safety and Health Committee. Application to the program was straightforward: I filled out a downloadable two-page application form and a separate two-page budget summary, got everything signed by our president, Nancy Kleniewski (Management representative), Bill Simons (UUP representative), and myself, and sent the package to JLMC in Albany. (The address is given at the bottom of this article.)

The committee's secretary, Kathy Seney, soon let me know that the Health and Safety Committee had a problem with my proposed venue. I had selected the Laboratory Safety Institute's (LSI) course in Ottawa, Ontario because that was the earliest offering within easy driving distance. The committee was unwilling to fund any travel out of the country, even to Canada. They suggested that I choose another venue and submit a new application. They also alerted me to the fact that some of my proposed activities (traveling to and taking a certification exam) were outside the scope of the Wright Training Program, and my budget paperwork needed to be adjusted for that.

The next course offering in reasonable driving distance was to be held in Scranton, PA, so I tailored a fresh application and budget summary (with new per diems, mileage, etc.) for that location. I got new signatures from (and growing acquaintances with) Nancy and Bill, and sent in the revised request. This was quickly approved. At that point, I filled out campus travel request forms and began to prepare in earnest for the course.

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Two weeks before it was to begin, the Scranton course offering was scrubbed by LSI due to low enrollment. However, since my application had been approved, the Health and Safety Committee requested that I resubmit only a budget summary for the last-hope venue, Ithaca, NY. By this time, running the numbers and getting signatures was a pretty well-oiled machine.

I have to say that Ithaca is beautiful in the last week of July. The course was very intense, and I learned a lot more than I had realized there was to learn about hazard control practices. The certification exam was available at Cornell University directly after the LSI course, which streamlined (finally!) the whole venture for me.

My performance on the exam must have been alright, because my certificate showed up in the mail a few weeks later. (Reimbursement for my out-of-pocket expenses came through a couple of weeks later.) Now I am a Certified Chemical Hygiene Officer, registered with the National Registry of Certified Chemists. What's more, I'm better at my job here. I've been in touch with the Facilities Operations Group to discuss keeping our campus in regulatory compliance, I've initiated changes in how our chemical stocks and other equipment are handled, and I'm working on strategies to train science students in hazards control more effectively.

I'd like to thank Nancy Kleniewski, Dan Larkin, Tom Rathbone, Bill Simons, John Schaumlöffel, Connie Cox, Cindy Magee, Betty Tirado, Sheila Birkett, Norman Payne and Kathy Seney for helping me through this.

Finally, for more information about JLMC, you can email them at nysuuplmc@goer.state.ny.us; their phone number is 518-486-4666, and the postal address is:

NUS/UUP Joint Labor-Management Committees
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The Sentinel Websites and Disclaimer

Editor's Note:

Statements Made in *The Sentinel* do not necessarily reflect the opinion of UUP or any of its statewide representatives.

To read past issues — as well as the current edition — of *The Sentinel* on-line, go to www.uuphost.org/oneonta.

This site also includes other material concerning UUP Oneonta.

The statewide UUP website is located at www.uupinfo.org. It contains information about members benefits and many other important topics.

UUP Oneonta's Thomas Pullyblank Weaves History, Murder, and Campus Intrigue Into His Debut Novel

UUP applauds chapter stalwart and historian Thomas Pullyblank upon the recent publication of his debut novel, *Cornflower's Ghost: An Historical Mystery*. Set in a fictionalized upstate New York, the thriller is based on actual locations across the region. Tom “invented” a university town and placed it in central New York along the south banks of the Mohawk River. Clinton Falls, its campus, local taverns and difficult winter weather, as well as the characters in the story, should all be recognizable to the residents and students of upstate New York.” Two prominent characters, Cornflower, an Iroquois woman, and Revolutionary War hero Theodorick Crane, are fictionalized mosaics of people who lived in central New York two hundred years ago.

Thomas Pullyblank was born and raised in rural upstate New York. Having earned both his undergraduate and graduate degrees in history at the University at Albany, State University of New York, he teaches Western Civilization and Ancient History at the SUNY College at Oneonta. Tom is also an Ordained Elder in the United Methodist Church with a Master of Divinity degree from the Boston University School of Theology, and currently serves two small rural churches in Otsego County, New York. Tom hares a small farm near Cooperstown, New York with his wife Kristin and son Bradon and their horse Oliver, where together they raise chickens, sheep, turkeys and pigs.

The plot of *Cornflower's Ghost* intrigues and engages the reader. After grieving the loss of his parents and brother, graduate student Tom Flanagan returns from a lengthy sabbatical to his winter-locked SUNY upstate campus to begin life anew in the spring semester, only to learn of the “accidental” death of his history professor, Peter Langley. Puzzled by the accounts of the accident, Flanagan is driven to pursue the facts of the case—and is immediately drawn into the intrigue surrounding another death—that of the Revolutionary War hero Theodorick Crane—Langley’s obsession throughout his entire academic career. Putting his historical research skills to work, Flanagan pursues the two mysteries and soon becomes intimately involved with Crane’s descendants: a manipulative college administrator, her even more manipulative Congressman husband, and their captivating niece—all of whom have vague former connections to Langley. Standing in the shadows behind it all is the ghost of Cornflower, an Iroquois woman executed for treason by Crane, who seems to be the key to unlocking the secrets of the past. But as the semester progresses and Flanagan delves deeper into Langley’s life and death, he and those close to him become tangled in a dangerous web of political ambition and academic deceit, the unraveling of which threatens to disrupt the lives of all involved.

Cornflower's Ghost has received excellent advance reviews from academic and cultural historians alike. Brian Carso, Ph. D., Assistant Professor of History, Misericordia University, observes, “Thomas Pullyblank weaves this tale with a keen eye for detail and a storyteller’s gift. But there’s more than just a good story here: at the center of *Cornflower's Ghost* is history itself, and how we use the past to define ourselves and give meaning to our current struggles. Amid all the intrigue and suspense, Pullyblank’s characters are fighting to claim the past and to understand it, since only history can reveal the answers to the secrets at the heart of *Cornflower's Ghost*. It’s a novel that pulls you in and keeps you thinking long after you’ve turned the last page.”

Cornflower's Ghost is available in paperback, and is for sale both online and through retail bookstores. For more information about how and where to purchase *Cornflower's Ghost*, visit the publisher’s web site at www.squarecirclepress.com.

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