



# The Sentinel

UUP — Oneonta Local 2190

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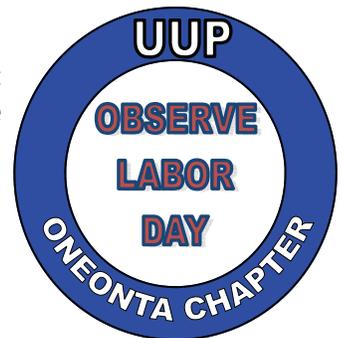
## UUP Labor Day Picnic Lunch and Meeting: Monday, September 3, 2012

By Bill Simons, Chapter President



United University Professions (UUP) cordially invites all members of the UUP bargaining unit to a Labor Day picnic lunch and meeting on Monday, September 3<sup>rd</sup>, in the Otsego Grille, Morris Complex, between 12 noon and 12:50 PM. As befits, a Labor Day picnic, UUP will serve hot dogs, hamburgers, and all the “fixins.” (Vegetarians can call UUP Administrative Assistant Peg Carney to reserve an alternate cuisine.) Given the information and discussion accompanying the luncheon, the event is for members of the UUP bargaining unit.

UUP and SUNY face unprecedented challenges in the year ahead — the continuing budget crisis, the possibility of retrenchment, and a new contract. The picnic meeting will feature a presentation by Dr. Jamie Dangler, Chief Negotiator for the UUP contract and State UUP Vice President. Candid and informed, Jamie is a charismatic speaker, social activist, and redoubtable author. Following formal remarks by Jamie Dangler, the forum will be open for questions and discussion from all attendees.



Jamie at the mike

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## ***UUP Labor Day Picnic Lunch and Meeting (continued)***

In addition Chapter leaders will discuss campus issues, including the upcoming ***UUP Oneonta Quality of Professional Life & Administrative Assessment*** survey.

Why does UUP advocate for appropriate observance of Labor Day? Context and solidarity render the Labor Day program a vehicle for recruiting new UUPers, energizing current UUP members, sharing information, and increasing union visibility on campus and in the community. Against the specters of crisis and malaise that assault higher education, Labor Day 2012 takes on special significance for SUNY and UUP.



**UUP Labor Day 2011: Oneonta asks--why are we working on Labor Day?**

When UUP supports our rights on Labor Day observance, it has transferability to other issues. Much still needs to be done, and your Labor Day advocacy can make a difference. UUP's strength comes from professionals and academics, from the ranks of full-timers and part-timers, advocating for each other. The working women and men of America find themselves assaulted by rising prices, the polarization of wealth, and the arrogance of power. The American Dream is imperiled. It is important on this Labor Day that your voice is heard. Our choice is stark: either allow anxious inertia to defeat us or fulfill our destiny as the emancipators. Solidarity is essential.

A recent survey indicated that the following SUNY/UUP campuses did not have classes on Labor Day:

1. Albany
2. Alfred
3. Binghamton
4. Brockport
5. Buffalo Center
6. Buffalo HSC
7. Buffalo State
8. Cortland
9. ESF
10. Geneseo
11. New Paltz
12. Old Westbury
13. Optometry
14. Oswego
15. Potsdam
16. Purchase
17. Stony Brook HSC
18. Stony Brook University
19. Upstate Medical
20. Utica/Rome

Through the years, numerous UUPers have strongly and unequivocally articulated the need for Labor Day observance. These representative comments were selected from many received by your union. The authors of these statements are eloquent and courageous proponents of social justice. Let us consider a few of them---and find our own inspiration.

## UUP Labor Day Picnic Lunch and Meeting (continued)



1. John Relethford, Distinguished Teaching Professor, Anthropology: *"Labor Day is an important federal holiday that highlights the history and achievements of labor unions. It sends a message to our entire society about past inequities and working conditions and our hopes for tomorrow. These are particularly important lessons for the next generation of workers, our students. To have classes on this holiday while offices are closed sends the wrong message to our students and strips the day of its meaning of celebrating the efforts of all working people (and unions). I find that after looking at the ...academic calendar at the other colleges in our sector, most are closed on Labor Day."*

2. Dan Payne, Professor, English: *"It is important to keep in mind that the faculty who are in favor of commemorating Labor Day are not doing so to receive a day off—the instructional day will be made up elsewhere in the college calendar. The purpose of observing this national holiday is to recall the sacrifices and contributions of the working men and women of this country. For me, those sacrifices were not simply something read about in a history text, but were part of growing up in a union family. When I was fourteen years old, my family and I spent Christmas at my father's union hall (Communications Workers of America) since the CWA was in a bitter, protracted strike against AT&T. The members of my father's union, like those in many other unions over the last century, sacrificed a great deal to stand up for what they thought was right. Observing Labor Day is a way of remembering and thanking them for their sacrifices."*

3. Bill Ashbaugh, Chair, History: *"Before joining the SUNY system here at Oneonta State, I had been a student or taught in all three California higher education systems, the Penn State system, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania system, and a private university (Drexel). None of these colleges, universities, or higher education systems required courses to meet on Labor Day. To make matters worse, here at SUNY Oneonta administrators and many people in support services DO have the holiday and get the day off. Why shouldn't professors, instructors, and students also have the right to celebrate this significant federal holiday that simply honors workers one day a year?"*



Two Bills at the Capital advocating for SUNY: Ashbaugh and Simons

4. Steve Walsh, Associate Professor: *"Grouping Labor Day in with a few other unacknowledged holidays is a matter of administrative convenience. Unfortunately, doing so diminishes us all. We all – administrators, too – are toilers in our particular field who are making huge efforts to elevate our college and our students. In a recent article in The Sentinel, Tom Horvath noted quite correctly that many of us engage in close to 80-hour work weeks. White-collar or not, make no doubt of it, we are laborers. We are also part of a nation that was built by laborers. Both of my grandmothers suffered the loss of their husbands in tragic ways when each of my parents was quite young. The stories that I heard about the difficulties they endured and the enormous labors they engaged in were both frightening and awe-inspiring. My father was a cop whose labor resulted in his becoming the head of the homicide bureau in a Sheriff's Department in one of the most populous counties in this country. My mother was a secretary in a large school district who became the top ranked classified employee, as secretary to the Superintendent of Schools, in the last few of the thirty-one and one-half years in which she labored there. This just speaks rather superficially of two generations of my family history. Going backward to time immemorial my ancestors were all laborers as were the ancestors of almost everyone who will read this. It is time that we honored them and ourselves with just a single, thoughtfully dedicated day."*

## UUP Labor Day Picnic Lunch and Meeting (continued)

5. Brian Haley, Chair, Anthropology: *"After joining the College community in 2000, I was surprised to learn that Labor Day was not a holiday for faculty and students. All other public institutions I've been a part of in my life gave students and faculty the day off. That is the way it should be here at Oneonta. Otherwise we diminish respect among our students for the contributions of workers to the quality of life in this country, and we inadvertently create the impression that those who teach and those who study aren't really working. For an institution that prides itself in the quality of its teaching and the quality of the new teachers it produces, this is remarkably short-sighted."*

6. Orlando Legname, Chair, Music: *"The military took power in Brazil when I was one year old. Later, I supported Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva, a Metal Workers' Union leader in the process of developing the Labor's Party. In the 80s, the country needed to become a democracy again and I participated in the fight for direct elections for president...This is living history. It illustrates the real power of workers and unions. The observance of Labor Day is crucial to remind us of that and to make sure that we are each doing our responsibility."*



Orlando Legname



Renee Walker

7. Renee Walker, Associate Professor, Anthropology, Presiding Officer, College Senate, and UUP Oneonta Grievance Officer:

*"When I started teaching at SUCO..., I was excited to come to a place that was so supportive and welcoming. I was very surprised to learn that classes are held on Labor Day. Having come from a private college that does observe Labor Day, I was astonished that a state institution did not have this same tradition. I come from a family of hard working people and feel very strongly that Labor Day is not about 'having a day off' but about celebrating the American work force. I very much support a change in the schedule that would provide for all ... employees having the day off to celebrate properly."*

8. Ben Dixon, Associate Professor, Geography: *"It is fitting that the SUNY College at Oneonta recognize Labor Day since this is the state where it first began in 1882 with a parade and celebration in New York City. New York State officially decreed it a state-wide holiday five years later, and in the following ten years, it was celebrated from coast to coast. A look back in old newspapers from the early 1900s to the 1930s show that Labor Day rivaled Memorial Day and Christmas as the most popular holiday of the year because that generation recognized the importance and sacrifices of our country's labor movement in making the nation great. Our nation has continued to prosper because of the hard work ethic instilled in successive generations of Americans, and therefore, we must always remember our nation's labor force by setting aside just this day for commemoration."*

9. Linda Drake, Executive Director, Center for Social Responsibility, and UUP Director, Community Service: *"Labor Day is dedicated to the achievement of the American work force. All SUNY employees should be entitled to a day off for Labor Day. Everyone on our SUNY campus works hard, each employee is vital and each job is important. I feel that teaching is the most important job one can have. It is through teaching that professors are responsible for shaping the future of our society. It is because of the professor's dedication to the students that we see SUNY's strengths and leadership. Most office employees get to observe Labor Day, professors should get that privilege as well. They've earned it!"*



Linda Drake, first row (right)

## **UUP Labor Day Picnic Lunch and Meeting (continued)**

10. Don Hill, Professor, Anthropology: *"I've been a teacher at SUNY Oneonta since 1978. I have enjoyed my tenure; I like our school and the people who work here and I find it a wonderful working and living environment. Before coming to Oneonta I worked at the American Museum of Natural History, Hunter College, Indiana University, San Francisco University, Goodman Heating and Air-Conditioning Factory, and about four of five other places. This is the only place where I have worked where WORK was required on LABOR DAY. I find this very, very difficult to understand. Why do we work on a nationally approved holiday, glorified by Republicans, Democrats, Greens and other political parties? It is considered by our state and national leaders as a legitimate day of rest, a day to reflect on labor organizations and the work ethic, but not apparently by our local administration. What gives? Why do they insist on returning us to the days of yore, before the Triangle Factory Fire, before the organization of the AFL, the CIO, UUP, and my favorite workers group, the IWW?"*

For further information concerning the Monday, September 3<sup>rd</sup> Labor Day luncheon meeting, please contact any of the following UUP Oneonta leaders:

UUP Vice President for Academics Rob Compton at [Robert.Compton@Oneonta.EDU](mailto:Robert.Compton@Oneonta.EDU)

UUP Vice President for Professionals Norm Payne at [Norman.Payne@ONEONTA.EDU](mailto:Norman.Payne@ONEONTA.EDU)

UUP Secretary Tom Horvath at [Thomas.Horvath@ONEONTA.EDU](mailto:Thomas.Horvath@ONEONTA.EDU)

Part-Time Concerns Officer Caridad Souza at [Caridad.Souza@ONEONTA.EDU](mailto:Caridad.Souza@ONEONTA.EDU)

Membership Director Hanfu Mi at [Hanfu.Mi@ONEONTA.EDU](mailto:Hanfu.Mi@ONEONTA.EDU)

Outreach Representative Gina Keel [Gina.Keel@ONEONTA.EDU](mailto:Gina.Keel@ONEONTA.EDU)

Affirmative Action Officer Nithya Iyer at [Nithya.Iyer@ONEONTA.EDU](mailto:Nithya.Iyer@ONEONTA.EDU)

Academic Delegate Nancy Cannon at [Nancy.Cannon@ONEONTA.EDU](mailto:Nancy.Cannon@ONEONTA.EDU)



Labor Day Commitment to SUNY



### **Distribution of the Fifth UUP Survey:**

#### ***Quality of Professional Life & Administrative Assessment***

By Bill Simons, Chapter President

In a short time, all members of the UUP bargaining unit will receive the survey: ***Quality of Professional Life & Administrative Assessment***. Dissemination and tabulation of the survey will be electronic and done in a manner to guarantee the confidentiality of respondents. Dr. Jen-Ting Wang, Associate Professor of Statistics, Department of Mathematics, Computer Science, & Statistics, will tabulate the results. Those to be evaluated include the president, vice presidents, and associate provost.

At its December 19th, 2011, meeting, the UUP Executive Board voted to conduct, during the fall 2012 semester, the College at Oneonta's fifth evaluation of ***Quality of Professional Life & Administrative Assessment***. The Executive Board created a committee, consisting of Rob Compton, Norm Payne, Jen-Ting Wang, Andy Perry, and Bill Simons, to design the survey instrument. The committee held well attended meetings with the UUP bargaining unit to receive their input concerning the design of the membership; members of the UUP bargaining unit were also encouraged to contact members of the committee with their suggestions. In addition, UUP discussed the contents of the survey with Management.

The rationale for the vote of the UUP Oneonta Executive Board to conduct this evaluation rests on several factors, amongst them:

1. All employees, including administration should be accountable
2. Subordinate personnel are continuously evaluated,
3. UUP Oneonta has an on-going practice of periodic evaluation of senior administration, and
4. Such evaluations of senior administrators provide important feedback.

## ***Distribution of the Fifth UUP Survey (continued)***

The senior Administrators to be evaluated are noted below:

- **President** Nancy Kleniewski
- **Provost & Vice President for Academic Affairs** Maria Thompson
- **Vice President for Student Development** Steven R. Perry,
- **Vice President for Finance and Administration** Todd Foreman
- **Vice President for College Advancement** Paul J. Adamo
- **Associate Provost for Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness** Patricia Francis

A copy of the survey appears below.

### **UUP 2012 Survey**

#### (1) Quality of Professional Life

**Instructions:** Choose one choice per item from the scale: 1=Strongly Disagree (SD) to 7=Strongly Agree (SA), or N/A.

#### **I believe that ...**

1. our faculty/staff possesses positive morale.
2. the College provides a safe and adequate physical environment for my work.
3. the College provides adequate technology support.
4. the College provides adequate funding and time for my professional work.
5. I am recognized and appreciated for my professional work.
6. the Discretionary Salary Increase (DSI) process is fair and appropriate.
7. my salary is equitable and appropriate.
8. the College provides reasonable job security.
9. the process of assessment and accreditation activities is manageable.
10. the content and results of assessment and accreditation activities are meaningful.
11. the content/scope of my work is reasonable.
12. my department or area receives an adequate amount of attention and support from the administration.
13. my supervisor is an effective advocate for my department or area.
14. the College effectively uses my ability and potential.
15. the College uses external consultants effectively.
16. the faculty/staff plays a significant and appropriate role in the governance of the College.
17. the administration makes decisions in a transparent and effective manner.
18. the administration is regarded positively.
19. the administration promotes diversity in recruiting and retaining faculty/staff.
20. the administration appropriately and effectively resolves personnel disputes.
21. overall, working at the College is satisfying.
22. Please write your comments concerning any of the preceding in the box below.

**Distribution of the Fifth UUP Survey (continued)**

(2) Performance of Given Administrators

**Instructions:** Choose one choice per item for each administrator from the scale: 1=Strongly Disagree (SD) to 7=Strongly Agree (SA). If you don't know the administrator enough to answer an item, please choose "Don't Know" (DK).

**This administrator:**

1. is accessible if and when there is a need to discuss problems, make inquiries, or suggest changes.

- |  | 1(SD)                 | 2                     | 3                     | 4                     | 5                     | 6                     | 7 (SA)                | DK                    |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| a. President (Dr. Nancy Kleniewski)  | <input type="radio"/> |
| b. Provost and VP for Academic Affairs (Dr. Maria Thompson)                                |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| c. VP for Student Development (Dr. Steven Perry)   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| d. VP for Finance and Administration (Mr. Todd Foreman)                                    |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| e. VP for College Advancement (Mr. Paul Adamo)   |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |
| f. Associate Provost for Institutional Assessment and Effectiveness (Dr. Patricia Francis) |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |                       |

2. is fair-minded and flexible.

3. is considerate and concerned about my work needs.

4. effectively promotes professional growth.

5. recognizes the strengths and weaknesses within his/her areas of responsibility.

6. selects and manages personnel effectively.

7. properly allocates spaces, supplies, equipment, and budgetary resources.

8. overall, effectively fulfills her/his responsibilities.

9. Please write your comments concerning any of the preceding in the box below.

**Demographics**

1. Type of Position: Academic Professional

2. Type of Appointment: Permanent/Tenured(Continuing) Non Permanent/Non Tenured

3. Employment Status: Full-time Part-time

4. Gender: Female Male Transgender

5. Years of Service at this College: 0-5 6-10 11-15 16-20 Over 20

6. Rank:

Academic: Professor Associate Professor Assistant Professor Lecturer Adjunct Other

Professional: SL-1 SL-2 SL-3 SL-4 SL-5 SL-6 Don't Know

Librarians: Librarian Associate Librarian Sr. Assistant Librarian Assistant Librarian Other

## Distribution of the Fifth UUP Survey (continued)

PLEASE NOTE THE FOLLOWING:

- All members of the UUP bargaining unit will be sent this evaluative instrument to complete.
- The confidentiality of participants in the survey will be protected.
- Completion of the survey will take only a few minutes.
- If you cannot fairly answer an item, select the "Don't Know" (DK) choice.

In addition to the statistically-based questions, UUP encourages you to submit free response comments for both the quality of professional life and for senior administrators in the spaces provided. Do not include any remarks that might identify you in your free response comments. Remarks should relate only to the performance of professional responsibilities of those evaluated and should not include any references to race, ethnicity, gender, appearance, orientation, or any other ad hominem attribute. Keep in mind that UUP will tabulate and disseminate the statistical and free response results of this evaluation of the senior administration.

Your participation in this evaluation of senior administration and professional life is important as it will allow us to better understand ourselves and our priorities as an academic community, and it will enable UUP to better represent you. UUP will provide all chapter members with a substantive and meaningful report. Thank you for your participation.



## Rebirth Day with Loraine and Rich: Thanks to UUP Volunteers



Where once a house stood

Thanks to the many good people, some of them anonymous by choice, who have generously donated to *Loraine and Rich's Tyler's Wish List*. Kudos also to UUP volunteers for sharing **Rebirth Day**, Saturday, May 26<sup>th</sup>, with Loraine and Rich high atop Franklin Mountain, the site of their once and future home. And thanks to Rich and Loraine for welcoming us to participate in a wonderful experience of rebirth. From the arrival of the first volunteers to the

departure of the last, approximately 20 of us had the opportunity to participate in the first planting. Working aside Loraine and Rich in the heat, volunteers, wearing sensible hats, old shoes, soiled gloves, and tattered clothes, wielded shovels, pickaxes, hoes, trowels, wheelbarrows, water containers, mulch, peat, and moss, as they moved stones and dug holes to coax a rainbow of sprouts into the good earth. With communal solidarity and fortified by periodic hydration—and homemade cookies, the volun-



Some of the volunteers



Rebirth

teers took joy in their efforts. It was a profound experience for all of us to witness the recently charred land, laid desolate by fire and explosion, take on new life. For their gift of time and work on Memorial Day weekend, thanks to Karen Anderson, Hanfu Mi, Janet Nepkie, Fran Bliven, Gina Keel, Jeri Anne Jerminario, Rob Compton, Janet Frankl, Nancy Cannon, Fred Miller, Jon Arakaki, Richie Lee, Maria Montoya, Ellen Alex, Chris Schuler-Ghiorse, Paul Conway, and Bill Simons.

## Defined Standards and Equity at Oneonta: Missing?

By Rob Compton, Vice President for Academics

### Introduction: Rules and Procedures and Equity/Inequity

A high level of uncertainty surrounds many assistant professors on our campus. The expectations for and the measurement of teaching, research and service remain poorly defined and in some cases arbitrary. It is incumbent upon this administration, working with the Deans Advisory Committees (DAC), the Promotion and Tenure Committee (P&T), the Deans, Provost, Departments, and Governance to establish the contours of such a document.

Ultimately, as this involves terms and conditions of employment, UUP would have to be involved. To delay further only invites confusion, detriment to recruitment and retention, and most devastating a sense of fear, uncertainty, and low morale. If the College is serious about moving toward becoming an “employer of choice,” this issue needs resolution.

In spring 2001, I arrived on the Oneonta campus for an interview. The Political Science Department was gracious and wonderful hosts. As customary, towards the end of the interview, the departmental members wanted to know if I had questions. One of my questions was: “Reappointment, tenure, and promotion are based on teaching, research and service, as is the case at all colleges and universities. What is the breakdown of the three components at Oneonta?” One of the search committee members asked me what the balance was at my current position at Western Kentucky University. I indicated that it was assumed to be 60%-20%-20% at Oneonta given its primarily teaching mission. I was told that it was 80% teaching and 20% research and service, interchangeable to a degree. At the same time, future colleagues reminded me that research in the form of publication was necessary for tenure and promotion at Oneonta. To this day, I am unclear about what the standards are for reappointment, tenure, and promotion. Lack of specified rules often contributes to arbitrary and sometime even capricious actions and result.

The primary problem is equity in all its shape and form on this campus. Instead, high levels of inequity exist absent a clearer set of expectations for teaching, research, and service. Lack of clarity impacts reappointment, tenure and promotion, and if faculty are to be able to invest in building equity at the College, inequitable rules and standards detract from our ability to become vested in Oneonta. Thus, the result would be a sizeable number of faculty seeking to divest themselves from Oneonta. Some of the most talented may seek employment elsewhere.

### Inequity of What is Expected

...the “shifting goal posts” syndrome for personnel decisions has reached alarming levels on this campus.

Over the years, many faculty have told me that they are unclear about the expectations for reappointment, tenure, or promotion. They look around campus and see great variations in levels of productivity and output of faculty and unequal results in re-appointment, tenure, promotion, and DSI. One tenured faculty member stated to me, “I have seen some surprises. On several occasions, individual with no grants or publications have received tenure and promoted. Then I have seen very good teachers lacking publications not retained.” For those who are part-time or contingent, the requirements for re-appointment or DSI are less clear. PT faculty’s teaching performance is the basis for their DSI, if we say that research improves our teaching, shouldn’t PT faculty be credited for research or extraordinary service? What are the expectations for lecturers? The expectations in this area also vary by department. Such variations can lead to capricious personnel decisions based on personality conflicts and internecine politics.

These discrepancies are not anomalies in higher education; however, the “shifting goalposts” syndrome for personnel decisions has reached alarming levels on this campus. Frankly, no one seems to know what the Deans Advisory Council, the Promotion and Tenure Committee, or the administration sets as the standards. For example, some members



Rob Compton at Viet Nam’s Permanent Mission to the UN

## ***Defined Standards and Equity at Oneonta: Missing? (continued)***

received the large discretionary pay increases (DSI), relative to their colleagues, the year before, after, or the year of non-renewal or other adverse personnel decision. Others have received positive reviews and then in the fifth or tenure decision year found themselves in difficulty. In other cases, people who have published major research, won a chancellor's award, or a Fulbright received no DSI the following year. In some cases, the difficulties visited upon them seem at best, arbitrary. Such uncertainty makes it difficult for faculty to be able to manage their life, not to mention workload and anxiety level.

During these economic times, the level of anxiety increases. The ubiquitous message in the news is that people have to do more with less. On the Oneonta campus, the faculty expectations have increased in regards to teaching, research, and service. We know that the distribution of our professional obligations is supposed to add up to 100%. What we do not know is what constitutes 100% or the totality of our expectations. Put another way, what was 20% twenty years ago is not 20% today. 100% obligation has changed over time. So not only are we unaware of what 100% is, we do not know what the expectations are in regards to the components which make up the whole.

What is good teaching? Given that teaching is our primary responsibility, it is necessary to document what this means. There is no understanding on this campus regarding how to define good teaching. The Student Perception of Instruction (SPI) seems too much like a popularity contest driven by consumer (student) tastes and preferences. Additionally, there are cases where significant variation exists from one course to another and from semester to semester. Other indicators, such as letters are also problematic.

What is good research? In this era of journal proliferations and numerous volumes starting and ending the "1", a publications' merit is variable. In some disciplines, journal articles are very difficult to publish, yet in others, a job candidate is expected to have a half-dozen articles. Furthermore, not all publishers or journals are of the same quality and the articles and books published even if in the same journal or through the same press are of the similar quality. In other words, there are significant variations in measuring research output for reappointment, tenure, and promotion.

So perhaps the answer is service? Unfortunately, the same problem exists. How do you measure service? One can sign up for a large number of committees and virtually do nothing as part of those committees. Which is more important: Service to College, Department, Community, or Discipline? Specific committees also vary in importance. How does service within governance and the union fit into this mix? Often what's on paper is not indicative of effort or even achievement.

When standards are weak or confusing, a grave danger exists for adverse personnel decisions and the destruction of careers when mobbing and cliques form in work units. This creates increased anxiety and stress. While departmental bylaws are critical in setting a baseline for rules, without clearer standards for personnel decisions, animosity feeds the ego and predatory behavior of a few bullies. Others react to uncertainty by seeking to conform, whether conscious and/or unconsciously to unfair practices and individuals. It can create the atmosphere of "I'm okay because you're not."

**"UUP does not believe that everyone should be re-appointed, tenured, promoted, and given large DSIs. UUP is not a refuge for lazy faculty."**

### **A Way Forward?**

As noted above, the problem is two-fold. One is content and the other is measurement. UUP does not believe that everyone should be re-appointed, tenured, promoted, and given large DSIs. UUP is not a refuge for lazy faculty.

**(Note that the Oneonta UUP leadership consists of some of the most highly respected teachers and scholars on this campus. UUP seeks to recruit from among the best academics on campus.)** Most Oneonta faculty work far beyond the normal work week. UUP wants clear and reasonable standards and expectations. We need to resolve what constitutes the balance of teaching, research, and service by setting clearer standards and expectations that do not vary from year-to-year and person-to-person. Second, we need to figure out how to demonstrate and measure effective

## ***Defined Standards and Equity at Oneonta: Missing? (continued)***

teaching, research, and service. This need not be excessively reliant on quantitative measures or rubrics. For example, external validation of teaching, research, and service is one critical component of excellence in these three areas. To what extent does one's teaching, research, and service extent and impact people and organizations beyond the campus? This is the scope of impact. Another aspect of impact is longitudinal or sustained over time. For example, the value of a faculty member input varies from one student to another. At the same time, the impact on the student's success cannot be adequately measured at the conclusion of the semester-long course. It may take a year or even a decade to assess the value of the education. Part of this also depends on whether the student is successful and even lucky in his/her life.

Dialogue on campus and administrative leadership is necessary for the College to address issues of inequity. If the college believes that "good teaching" is necessary but not sufficient for tenure and promotion, then that needs to be stated. Failure to address inequity leads to an atavistic, narcissistic, and predatory behavior and negatively impact campus climate. Respect for colleagues decline and even self-respect becomes imperiled. While anecdotal, the following is a cautionary warning: a colleague told me that his/her doctor asked: "What is going on at the College? I've prescribed more antidepressants to Oneonta faculty and staff than everyone else combined over the past couple of years." I'm embarrassed and saddened by this. You should be to. That's why we need to get this done.



## **UUP at Oneonta Outlaws Game**



UUP at bat

On Thursday, July 19, 2012, a UUP Oneonta delegation attended an Oneonta Outlaws game and burnished the Chapter banner at historic Damaschke Field. The photograph was taken by UUPer Mike Shea, former Oneonta superintendent of schools and the son of UUP Oneonta's first Chapter President, Denny Shea. Fred Miller, who helped carry the UUP banner at the ballpark, served several terms as Chapter President. Amongst his many milestone achievements, Fred was a minor league baseball pitcher, with a wicked curve ball, in the old St. Louis Browns farm system.

**Labor Management Meeting**  
**Monday, May 14, 2012, 3pm**

**Management:** Nancy Kleniewski, President and Lisa Wenck, Senior Executive Employee Services Officer

**UUP:** Bill Simons, President and Rob Compton, Vice President for Academics

I. UUP shared information for assisting Loraine and Rich Tyler Tylers following destruction of their home, including the materials collection website and the May 26<sup>th</sup> *Rebirth/Planting Day* on their property.

II. Management indicated that the membership for the 2012-13 Deans Advisory Committees and the Promotion and Tenure Committee has not yet been decided.

III. The next Labor Management meeting focusing on the budget is scheduled for Wednesday, June 20, 2012.

IV. UUP and Management discussed the upcoming UUP *Quality of Professional Life and Administrative Assessment*. UUP noted that for a number of years the union has periodically conducted surveys of Management. UUP shared questions from the most recent instrument past while noting that the questions for the upcoming survey have not been finalized. Management expressed concern about the question concerning resource allocation by Deans and Vice Presidents. UUP noted that a “don’t know” option has appeared on past surveys.

V. UUP and Management discussed Structured Phased Retirement Options for its members. We agreed to continue discussions.

VI. UUP and Management discussed the May 10<sup>th</sup> Professional Workshops concerning “Legal Issues in Social Media.” Both sides agreed that these workshops provide useful experiences and that the series will continue.

VII. Management and UUP have decided to maintain the present arrangements for Labor-Management meetings with the first and last of each semester to be comprised of the two-on-two meetings. UUP and Management have found these productive.

VIII. UUP and Management discussed the possibilities of a Farmers’ Market on Campus.

IX. Management noted that only a few Part-Timers teach more than three courses per semester and that those are emergency basis situations.

X. UUP and Management discussed the future of the Tripartite Process. UUP looks forward to a process that promotes fairness and justice given the problems of the past process.

XI. Other Terms and Conditions

A. UUP stated that there was some confusion about summer school remuneration.

Management provided clarification, and UUP will continue to stay informed on the issue.

B. Management indicated that the 2012 Summer Parking Pilot arrangement will not continue into the next academic year.

Meeting Adjourned 4:20pm.

## **Labor-Management Meeting Notes: Wednesday, June 20, 2012, 3 PM**

*By Rob Compton, UUP Vice President for Academics*

**For UUP:** Nancy Cannon, Rob Compton, Hanfu Mi, Fred Miller, Norm Payne, Bill Simons, and Darryl Wood,

**For Management:** Todd Foreman, Nancy Kleniewski, Steve Perry, and Lisa Wenck,

UUP acknowledged Management and especially the Division of Administration and Finance for its timely and accurate information. UUP thanked the Administration for increased transparency and data sharing by that office.

The Administration noted that the College is in reasonably good condition for the coming year, even expecting a small surplus of \$500,000 despite the overall decline in State support. Over the past five years, state support has decline significantly, so much that state tax support now only accounts for 27% of the College's operating budget. In 2008, it was 42%. To offset the declining support, students and their families pay a greater share. It appears that this trend is unlikely to change.

Despite increased tuition cost for students to the rational tuition increase process, SUNY tuition remains among the lowest in the Northeast. In particular, as it relates to Oneonta, the student fees for the coming year will not increase, save the \$4 SA fee and the marginal board fee increase that is directly deposited into their spending accounts. SUNY Oneonta fees and especially room and board is so low that other campuses have used Oneonta as a study case by visiting operations here.

The Administration's budget calls for strategic spending initiatives based on the College's Strategic Plan in the areas of diversity, sustainability, and others. Funding is also included for the hiring of new faculty and professionals as needed based on the Strategic Plan and in areas of enrollment growth. The College see no imminent large scale or systematic reduction-in-force. The budget plan aligns itself in the direction of shifting resources away from administrative costs toward direct student expenditures (e.g., student learning including services and faculty).

UUP asked about the possibilities of sweeps of campus reserves or IFR accounts. The Administration noted that there is always this possibility but that the Colleges and Universities are expected to maintain a minimum of 10% reserve. Our College continues to maintain a reserve level higher than the mean.

Administration noted that fund-raising through the College Foundation remains an important priority with money directed toward scholarships, faculty development and other crucial areas. The College continues to look for savings opportunities.

More information on the budget can be found here: [http://www.oneonta.edu/bac/documents/BAC\\_Open\\_Forum\\_42712.pdf](http://www.oneonta.edu/bac/documents/BAC_Open_Forum_42712.pdf)

\*Labor Management meetings in June are primarily reserved for a budget briefing. UUP considers the budget briefing useful for informational purposes as it engages in SUNY-Advocacy, for UUP Statewide reporting purposes, and as information for our members.

## Words Matter: “This is Good Work”

[The reflections below appeared in Tony Maramarco, “Professor Benbow’s Good Work,” *Colby*, Spring 2012, 4.]



Mark Benbow slipped away Oct. 18, 2011... [He] contributed...to the blossoming of Colby into one of the world’s great small liberal arts colleges.

Colby’s loss is my deep personal loss... Mark once wrote on one of my papers: “This is good work,” four words that have meant more to me than anything any other teacher has ever said or written about my efforts. To turn Bassanio’s words to Portia on their head: “These are a few of the pleasantest words that ever blotted paper.”

I am holding here a folder of all the papers that I wrote for Mark...Most of them are from English 394B, a course Mark designed as part of a rigorous curriculum that would lead to an Honors in English distinction. The syllabus contains an apology for the cost of books and implicit warning about the difficulty of the course. I remember looking around the table with what must have been the same blank expression that stared back at me. Hooker’s *Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity*? What?! But this was the price the dozen of us gladly paid to have Professor Benbow to ourselves for a semester.

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But back to that syllabus. Mark laid down the ground rules—what was, in essence, the touchstone of his scholarship, and ours; the primacy of the text. Words matter. And therein lies Mark Benbow’s greatest contribution to his students: He treated our essays and exams, our texts, as seriously as he treated—and expected us to treat—the great texts of literature. To see and read his comments on our papers was to realize that he respected our texts—and us. So to have someone of Mark’s intelligence and stature write those four simple words—“This is good work”—on one of my papers left me, and continues to leave me, rapturously speechless.



## UUP Remembers Bill Swain: Educator and Storyteller

Since the last publication of *The Sentinel*, Bill Swain, another longtime member of the UUP bargaining unit, has died. A vivid personality, Bill, in appearance and energy, brought to mind the actor Hume Cronyn.

Although a venerable fixture on the SUNY campus and its environs, Bill Swain was a scion of the South. William Alexander Swain III began his journey in Asheville, North Carolina, on November 16, 1924. From baseball announcers to literary icons, many of the great voices of America have come from the South. Bill Swain was one of the distinctive voices that rendered the South ubiquitous in our cadences and consciousness. A founder of the Storytelling Center of Oneonta, he was one its evocative practitioners. Those who know from whence they came know where they are going, possessing a centeredness that allows exploration of the universal on their own terms. Bill, for example, came to find his religious expression in the Unitarian Universalist Society of Oneonta. An amalgam of the particular and the universal threaded through the rich mosaic of Bill Swain’s life.



**Bill Swain**

Along with 16 million others of the Greatest Generation, Bill served in the military during World War II. Enlisting in the Navy, he trained as a fighter pilot. In the years that followed, Bill earned four degrees, culminating in a doctorate from Teachers College, Columbia University.

As a career educator, Bill’s teaching and administrative postings were significant — a Fulbright in England, Operations Crossroads for West Africa, USAID in Tanzania, SUNY Geneseo, and the Oneonta public schools. In Oneonta, he served as the first principal of the Greater Plains Elementary School.

Starting at the Bugbee School, Bill’s defining professional experience was at SUNY College at Oneonta. In the Education Department, he supervised student teachers, taught theory, shared experience, and mentored students as well as colleagues. His work on the Curriculum Committee shaped several College initiatives. Resonances of the South, through timber and anecdote, punctuated many a meeting and class.

UUP honors the life of Bill Swain, and the union wishes the solace of memory to his wife, Molly, and to the extended Swain family.

## Inaugural UUP Solidarity Paddle Highlights Union Concerns about Fracking

UUP Oneonta participated in the inaugural Solidarity Paddle on Friday, June 6<sup>th</sup>. The Solidarity Paddle built Chapter strength and dramatized union concerns about the dangers fracking poses to our region's water resources. Those resources include the Susquehanna and Delaware rivers. The Susquehanna and Delaware originate from local sources, provide millions with essential drinking water, support tourism and other economic infrastructure, possess rich human and natural history, remain essential to the ecosystem, allow for diverse recreation, and replenish us through their transcendent beauty.

On a perfect summer afternoon, the UUP contingent, including kayakers and canoeists, paddled the Susquehanna upriver from Portlandville to Crumhorn Landing and then downriver back to Portlandville. UUP Secretary Tom Horvath, Director of Environmental Sciences and research specialist in limnology, shared his knowledge of the water and its surroundings with fellow paddlers.



Lily and Gina set the pace

UUP's Director of the Labor Film Series Gina Keel and her daughter Lily paddled in tandem as did Vice President for Academics Rob Compton and his daughter Katie.



Katie and Rob triumphant

Stalwart Paul Bauer was accompanied by his loyal Jack Russell, an engaging dog named Lily.

Chapter President Bill Simons journeyed in his venerable aluminum Grumman's canoe. Non-competitive, the UUPers, equipped with lifejackets, water, and sunscreen, kept their vessels close together as an expression of solidarity, enjoying the river and the company. Upon reaching Crumhorn Landing, Tom shimmed up a pole to hang the UUP banner.



Paul and our trusty UUP scout



Potsdam participated in the Solidarity Paddle through UUP icon George Kahn, known to all as G. G, a great friend of the Oneonta Chapter, began his canoe at 2 PM and joined us for three hours, albeit his *Old Town Chipewyan* launched onto the *Raquette River* from Lehman Park in the North Country. Oneonta appreciated G's Solidarity.

When the Susquehanna mirrors a Jacob's coat of autumnal foliage, UUP will advertise the next Solidarity Paddle, open to all unionists.

**UUP raises the union solidarity banner on the people's river: no to fracking!**

## Bus Monitor's Bullying Mild Compared to What Teachers Often Face

CHRISTINE ARMARIO, AP Education Writer

(Excerpted from: CHRISTINE ARMARIO, AP Education Writer, "Bus Monitor's Bullying Mild Compared to What Teachers Often Face," *The Ledger.com*, June 23, 2012

<http://www.theledger.com/article/20120623/NEWS/120629735?template=printart>)



The bullying that bus monitor Karen Klein endured on a ride home from an upstate New York school was painful and egregious, but also shows how student harassment of teachers and administrators has become more spiteful and damaging in the online era.

Much attention has been paid to students who bully students in class, after school and on the Internet. Less has been given to equally disturbing behavior by students who harass instructors, principals and other adults.

It's something that's long existed; think ganging up on the substitute teacher. But it has become increasingly cruel and even dangerous as students get access to advanced technology at earlier ages.

In Maryland, students posed as their vice principal's twin 9-year-old daughters on pedophile websites, saying they had been having sex with their father and were looking for a new partner. Elsewhere, students have logged on to neo-Nazi and white supremacist sites claiming to be a Jewish or minority teacher and inciting the groups' anger. Others have stolen photographs from teachers' cellphones and posted them online.

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Students poked the bus monitor with a textbook, called her a barrage of obscenities and threatened to urinate on her front door, among other callous insults. One student taunted: "You don't have a family because they all killed themselves because they don't want to be near you."

Klein's oldest son killed himself 10 years ago.

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...students are equipped with cellphones with video cameras and a plethora of apps that allow them easily to share information among each other and post online.

One of the new ways that students are harassing teachers has become known as "cyberbaiting." Students irritate a teacher to the point that the teacher breaks down; that reaction then is captured in photos or video to post online. A Norton Online Family Report published last year found that 21 percent of teachers had experienced or knew another teacher who had experienced "cyberbaiting."

## Veil of Ignorance and Social (In)Security\*

By Rob Compton, Vice President for Academics



President Franklin Roosevelt signing original Social Security legislation: 1935:  
Will reactionaries undue FDR's legacy?

It appears that no public good is safe from privatization. Over the past ten years, under the guise of the "Ownership Society" as articulated by the proponents of neoliberalism and radical marketization, the clamor for privatizing Social Security has increased. The sententious narrative goes like this: "Social Security is bankrupt and there will be no benefits for the next generation. Social Security funds yield only a 2% rate of return. We must encourage greater rates of return by investing the monies in market-based retirement account where people can be accountable for their own future."

On the morning of May 18<sup>th</sup>, as I was headed to the CO-ARM meeting to deliver my comments, my eldest son, Chris asked me why I sought to defend the defunct government program. He said that there is only social insecurity for people of my generation. Then he startled me by saying, "there will be nothing left for me" and that it was a failed program. I told him that the Social Security program has been the most successful government program in history and that the country would be plunged back into a Dickensian past without it.

In this article, I want to explain why the statement above is false. Secondly, based on the idea of the veil of ignorance by philosopher John Rawls, I want to explain why society would not seek to dismantle collective goods. Lastly, I will examine the ramifications of privatizing Social Security.

### Social Security is not Bankrupted

Social Security is not bankrupt. Despite the Obama tax cut on FICA, the trust fund is solvent until 2033. The federal government, both under Republic and Democratic governments have raided the trust fund to pay for deficit spending over the years. In other words, the rate of return is 2% because the funds are "invested" long-term government debt. This is a political decision that, some argue, has allowed the government to finance part of its debt at bargain rates. Despite the recent FICA tax cuts, numerous pre-tax deductions, the maximum income limits for FICA taxation, and the pending retirement boom Social Security remains not only popular among older Americans but it also provides a safety net for Americans. In signing the Social Security Act on August 14<sup>th</sup>, 1935, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt stated,

"We can never insure one hundred percent of the population against one hundred percent of the hazards and vicissitudes of life, but we have tried to frame a law which will give some measure of protection to the average citizen and to his family against the loss of a job and against poverty-ridden old age.

This law, too, represents a cornerstone in a structure which is being built but is by no means complete. It is a structure intended to lessen the force of possible future depressions. It will act as a protection to future Administrations against the necessity of going deeply into debt to furnish relief to the needy. The law will flatten out the peaks and valleys of deflation and of inflation. It is, in short, a law that will take care of human needs and at the same time provide the United States an economic structure of vastly greater soundness."

Over the years, social security expanded to include unemployment insurance, medical insurance, supplemental security income (SSI), and payments to dependents and survivors. In other words, Social Security provides security for society.

This modicum of security is particularly important given the termination of defined benefit pensions in the corporate and increasingly the public sector, and its substitution with defined contribution plans. Despite the great fanfare under which 401K plans debuted in 1978, many employees were restricted to company stocks and limited choices under the programs. Often, upon leaving employment, employees would cash in their 401K retirements. In 2007, prior

## ***Veil of Ignorance and Social (In)Security\* (continued)***

to the average 401K balance was \$71,000. Predictably, poorer workers were less likely to deposit funds into such accounts, are least likely to have company matching, and are more prone to “cash in” during protracted unemployment or other financial hardships. In other words, 401K cannot replace defined benefit pension plans adequately and there is a sharp class bases regarding who benefits from 401K and IRA plans. As the old adage goes, “It takes money to make money.”

### **Veil of Ignorance**

Jo Schaffer, the President of CO-ARM, told me there’s another reason why young people should support Social Security. Not only will young people eventually collect money, it is also insurance that protects them from financial ruin. Jo said that imagine all senior citizens becoming completely dependent on their children for financial survival.

If society were allotted a “do over,” it is improbable that society would choose a privatized strategy for retirement. John Rawls, in his experiments concerning the veil of ignorance, observed that people would not only seek to limit extreme wealth accumulation at the top, but they would also seek to create a solid safety net for society. According to his approach, let us strip away class, race, and gender from the equation. This means that no one know if he or she is a millionaire attorney, a professor, a custodial worker, a fast food restaurant employee, or an unemployed factory worker. Rawls says what would happen if “no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status; nor does he know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence and strength, and the like?” Stripped of all social and economic pretense, what would people choose? What sort of enlightened self-interest would emerge under this circumstance?

People prefer a social contract in which there is an equality of opportunity. While neoconservatives and libertarians may rejoice, they also want a degree of equality with a strong social net to prevent themselves from falling victim to the vicissitudes of life. In other words, when bad things happen to good people, through no fault of their own, social security is important. In other words, it’s completely understandable for a twenty year old to think of themselves as invincible and to conjure up hallucinations of grandeur attended by their room filled conspicuous piles of gold nuggets. By the time we reach forty, most sensible people realize the absurdity of such active imaginations and begin to see value in “social security.” Social Security prevents gross inequality in our society and allows human beings, yes our friends, parents, relatives, and eventually ourselves to age with dignity.

### **Conclusion**

Social Security is not bankrupt. Some people seek to morally bankrupt the program by pointing out the power of the markets and the ownership society and the “so-called” deficiencies of government. To call for Social Security’s privatization is veiled ignorance for corporate greed. It is also a morally bankrupt position in today environment of increased social insecurity.

Given the rise in the number of mutual funds and the financial markets over the past twenty years, the drumbeat for the privatization of Social Security continues to increase. For those who aspire to social justice and social security, it falls on deaf years. We have the responsibility for communicating with younger people and our friends and family about the truth of Social Security. Retirement should not be a lotto ticket but part of social security for all. Social Security is a public good that is necessary to prevent social insecurity. As unionists, we have a responsibility to mobilize for fairness and social justice by protecting our Social Security program.

\*This article is based on a presentation made to CO-ARM, UUP’s Active Retiree Chapter on May 18<sup>th</sup>, 2012 at their annual Oneonta meeting.

## UUP and Other SUNY Employees: Overseas Insurance Program

SUNY has procured several insurance policies that will protect the State University and its employees against a range of risks that they may encounter in overseas activities. The covered activities include running study abroad programs, engaging in research, participating in joint educational programs, attending conferences and generally engaging in other SUNY-sponsored or related educational endeavors. This program will provide a greater degree of protection for all campuses, System and SUNY employees as we increasingly engage in international activities and pursue global opportunities. The insurance coverage described below is provided at no cost and is in addition to the repatriation/supplemental health insurance coverage that may be purchased by SUNY faculty and staff through the HTH Worldwide program (contact the College International Education Office, 607-436-3363, for further information about HTH coverage).

### Coverage:

In summary, the insurance program provides the following types of coverage:

1. **General Liability Coverage** ( ACE International Advantage Program Policy)

Includes: commercial general liability, contingent automobile liability for rented or leased vehicles, employer's responsibility (primarily medical and repatriation coverage for medical emergencies and political unrest; does not cover medical costs such as hospital and doctors' charges). The amount of coverage is \$1 million per occurrence.

2. **Educators Legal Liability** (Chartis)

Includes: Directors and Officers liability and employment practices liability, such as claims of discrimination, wrongful termination, sexual harassment and breach of contract. The amount of coverage is \$1 million per occurrence with applicable deductibles (\$25,000 and \$50,000 respectively).

Both General Liability and Educators Legal Liability coverage is available for all countries with the exception of those under trade embargo or sanctions from the U.S.

3. **Kidnap and Ransom Coverage** (Chubb Executive Protection Package).

Covers costs and expenses including ransom or extortion payments and replacement salary arising out of a kidnapping or a threat thereof. Provides access to the services of the Ackerman Group, a security consulting-crisis response firm. Covers employees and students and their relatives or guests. Coverage is worldwide with the exception of Nigeria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Sudan and Somalia. The amounts of coverage are confidential, in order to protect the viability of the coverage.

### In the Event of an Emergency:

If an incident occurs, travelers must follow instructions below and then contact UPD at 607-436-3550:

**UUP and Other SUNY Employees: Overseas Insurance Program (continued)**

**Kidnapping:** As a client of Chubb, you are guaranteed immediate response from The Ackerman Group Inc. In the event of a kidnapping, you may immediately **contact The Ackerman Group (305.865.0072, day or night)** and identify yourself as a Chubb Insured. Please see attachment RISKNET™.

**Medical or Political Emergency:** Call Europ Assistance® USA for Medical and Political Evacuation Emergencies, for Emergency Travel, Legal and personal Assistance Services and for Concierge Services. **Call Europ Assistance® USA at (800) 766-8206 (if calling from U.S. or Canada) or if calling outside the U.S. and Canada, the following number should be utilized: IDD + 800 0200 8888.** Please see attachment Executive Assistance® Services or go to the web site [www.aceexecutiveassistance.com](http://www.aceexecutiveassistance.com) (Login id: **acepremier Password: 7kilt6**)

In the case of all other incidents, contact should be made with OGS Bureau of Risk, Insurance & Fleet Management at [BRIM@ogs.ny.gov](mailto:BRIM@ogs.ny.gov), who will in turn notify Cool (the insurance broker) to report the claim.

**Travelers are advised to print the full document below for reference while abroad.**

For further information or questions about these policies, contact Susan Clemons, Controller, at 607-436-2081 or [susan.clemons@oneonta.edu](mailto:susan.clemons@oneonta.edu).



First World Series, 1903: Boston vs. Pittsburgh

## SENTINEL QUIZ

What Major League Baseball team will win the 2012 World Series? Eligible predictions must reach Nancy Cannon ([cannonns@oneonta.edu](mailto:cannonns@oneonta.edu)) by September 20<sup>th</sup>. The first correct answer will receive a UUP cap.

The April *Sentinel* quiz asked, “What film performer won a record three Academy Awards for Best Supporting Actor?” The answer is Walter Brennan. The first correct answers were submitted by Ann Miller, Fred Miller, and Mark English.

## Challenging Conventional Wisdoms about Students: “You are not special. You are not exceptional.”

By David McCullough, English Teacher, Wellesley High School (MA)

(High School English teacher David McCullough criticized the ubiquity of appellations designating superiority at the June 1, 2012, Wellesley High School (MA) graduation ceremonies. McCullough’s comments have attracted considerable attention and debate. Excerpts from McCullough’s speech appear below. **Source:** B. Brown, “Wellesley High grads told: ‘You’re not special,’” *The Swellesley Report*, June 5, 2012) <http://www.theswellesleyreport.com/2012/06/wellesley-high-grads-told-youre-not-special/>



The American Commencement 2012

Normally, I avoid clichés like the plague, wouldn’t touch them with a ten-foot pole, but here we are on a literal level playing field. That matters. That says something. And your ceremonial costume... shapeless, uniform, one-size-fits-all. Whether male or female, tall or short, scholar or slacker, spray-tanned prom queen or intergalactic X-Box assassin, each of you is dressed, you’ll notice, exactly the same. And your diploma... but for your name, exactly the same.

All of this is as it should be, because none of you is special.

You are not special. You are not exceptional.

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Across the country no fewer than 3.2 million seniors are graduating about now from more than 37,000 high schools. That’s 37,000 valedictorians... 37,000 class presidents... 92,000 harmonizing altos... 340,000 swaggering jocks... 2,185,967 pairs of Uggs. But why limit ourselves to high school? After all, you’re leaving it. So think about this: even if you’re one in a million, on a planet of 6.8 billion that means there are nearly 7,000 people just like you. Imagine standing somewhere over there on Washington Street on Marathon Monday and watching sixty-eight hundred yous go running by. And consider for a moment the bigger picture: your planet, I’ll remind you, is not the center of its solar system, your solar system is not the center of its galaxy, your galaxy is not the center of the universe. In fact, astrophysicists assure us the universe has no center; therefore, you cannot be it. Neither can Donald Trump... which someone should tell him... although that hair is quite a phenomenon.

“But, Dave,” you cry, “Walt Whitman tells me I’m my own version of perfection! Epictetus tells me I have the spark of Zeus!” And I don’t disagree. So that makes 6.8 billion examples of perfection, 6.8 billion sparks of Zeus. You see, if everyone is special, then no one is. If everyone gets a trophy, trophies become meaningless. In our unspoken but not so subtle Darwinian competition with one another—which springs, I think, from our fear of our own insignificance, a subset of our dread of mortality — we have of late, we Americans, to our detriment, come to love accolades more than genuine achievement. We have come to see them as the point — and we’re happy to compromise standards, or ignore reality, if we suspect that’s the quickest way, or only way, to have something to put on the mantelpiece, something to pose with, crow about, something with which to leverage ourselves into a better spot on the social totem pole. No longer is it how you play the game, no longer is it even whether you win or lose, or learn or grow, or enjoy yourself doing it... Now it’s “So what does this get me?” As a consequence, we cheapen worthy endeavors, and building a Guatemalan medical clinic becomes more about the application to Bowdoin than the well

## ***Challenging Conventional Wisdoms about Students (continued)***

being of Guatemalans. It's an epidemic ... where good is no longer good enough, where a B is the new C, and the mid-level curriculum is called Advanced College Placement...By definition there can be only one best. You're it or you're not.

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The fulfilling life, the distinctive life, the relevant life, is an achievement, not something that will fall into your lap because you're a nice person or mommy ordered it from the caterer. You'll note the Founding Fathers took pains to secure your inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness—quite an active verb, “pursuit”—which leaves, I should think, little time for lying around watching parrots rollerskate on Youtube. The first President Roosevelt, the old Rough Rider, advocated the strenuous life. Mr. Thoreau wanted to drive life into a corner, to live deep and suck out all the marrow. The poet Mary Oliver tells us to row, row into the swirl and roil. ... The point is the same: get busy, have at it. Don't wait for inspiration or passion to find you. Get up, get out, explore, find it yourself, and grab hold with both hands. (Now, before you dash off and get your YOLO tattoo, let me point out the illogic of that trendy little expression —because you can and should live not merely once, but every day of your life. Rather than You Only Live Once, it should be You Live Only Once... but because YLOO doesn't have the same ring, we shrug and decide it doesn't matter.

None of this day-seizing, though, this YLOOing, should be interpreted as license for self-indulgence. Like accolades ought to be, the fulfilled life is a consequence, a gratifying byproduct. It's what happens when you're thinking about more important things. Climb the mountain not to plant your flag, but to embrace the challenge, enjoy the air and behold the view. Climb it so you can see the world, not so the world can see you. Go to Paris to be in Paris, not to cross it off your list and congratulate yourself for being worldly. Exercise free will and creative, independent thought not for the satisfactions they will bring you, but for the good they will do others, the rest of the 6.8 billion—and those who will follow them. And then you too will discover the great and curious truth of the human experience is that selflessness is the best thing you can do for yourself. The sweetest joys of life, then, come only with the recognition that you're not special.

Because everyone is.



## **You Must Join UUP to become a Member and Vote on any New Contract!**

### **Who can become a member of the UUP?**

To be eligible to join UUP, one must be an employee of the State University of New.

### **I am on the faculty at SUNY Oneonta/ part of the professional staff / a librarian, so I am automatically a member of UUP, right?**

No. By legislative action, UUP has “agency fee,” meaning that all individuals who are classified as being members of the “Professional Services Negotiating Unit” pay a fee to the union if they are not actually members. The fee is equal to the dues charged UUP members, because Fee Payers receive many services from the union even though they are not members. Nonetheless, unless one signs and returns a membership application form to UUP Central, one cannot vote in UUP elections, run for office within UUP or participate fully in UUP policy making. In short, if you don't sign the card, you are not a member of UUP.

### **What do I need to do in order to join?**

You can obtain a membership application by contacting the UUP Oneonta Chapter Office at 607-436-2135 and leaving a voice mail message with your name and telephone number, or you may contact Membership Director Hanfu Mi at [Hanfu.Mi@Oneonta.edu](mailto:Hanfu.Mi@Oneonta.edu). You may also download the Membership Application (in PDF Format) from the UUP Central website, [www.uupinfo.org](http://www.uupinfo.org), by clicking “Welcome/Join,” and “How to Join”.

## Memorial Day on the River

By Bill Simons, Chapter President



**Serge on the Susquehanna**

As the light of day dies, nature sounds most alive along the river. I find it a time profound and poignant. On Memorial Day eve, my aluminum canoe entered the Susquehanna by the backwater at Portlandville. Sitting a few inches above the water, I passed under the bridge and headed north. On the left bank, a solitary figure fished; we called out greetings. Surprised by his southern accent, I said, “You don’t sound like you are from this area.” “I grew up in Georgia. After I retired from the army, I settled here,” he responded. Our distance grew but not so great to muffle his final word: “Peace.”

I find many satisfactions in recreational canoeing but know myself a sandlotter compared to the competitive paddlers. Given the elemental nature of the sport, canoeing possesses a certain purity. Even the great ones, despite their strength built from resilience — and canniness drawn from experience — can expect few material rewards and scant recognition outside of their circle.

My special purpose that evening was to assess the river conditions the competitors would encounter the next day in the General Clinton Canoe Regatta. The race carries the name of a Revolutionary War leader, who launched a controversial campaign against the Iroquois from the Susquehanna.

Given the paucity of recent rain, the water was no longer high. My canoe rocked going over partially submerged wood, perhaps not unrelated to the beaver that plunged beneath the surface a few feet away. Combined with the heat and humidity, the decline in water depth and stray wood would increase river time for Regatta competitors by perhaps an hour or more. A long race would not help a venerable canoer.

Like other sentimentalists, my favorite paddler was no longer young. After seven years away from the Susquehanna and scars from several operations, Serge Corbin, at age 55, had returned. In his day, the great French Canadian had dominated his sport as thoroughly as the Babe, Billie Jean, Tiger, Jordan, Gretsky, and Ali had mastered theirs. Without preening ego or celebrity, Serge had entered and won the annual Clinton Regatta 28 times, spanning a chronological interval from his adolescence thru middle age. His partners in the two-person canoe changed over time, but Serge never lost on the Susquehanna. No other athlete in such a physically grueling, competitive sport ever excelled for so long a period of time. Once Serge finished the nearly 70-mile Regatta in a record 6 hours, 34 minutes.

## ***Memorial Day on the River (continued)***

Before I left the river that Memorial Day eve, I viewed a canoe coming towards me from the opposite direction. From a distance, I could see that the canoer wore an U.S. army desert camouflage uniform—a combination of a gray, desert sand and foliage green, a pattern that darkens and lightens with the sun. Despite the cap, short blond hair was visible on the sides. I initially thought it was my stepson Steve, a Gulf War veteran who lives nearby. Only when I was a few yards away did I realize that this veteran was younger and smaller than Steve; they shared a similar demeanor, however. I said, in passing, “Nice night.” He snapped back, “What did you say?” “Nice night,” I repeated. He answered flatly, “Yes.” We paddled on in different directions.

On Memorial Day, Nancy and I saw relatively few flags. At the Oneonta Greenway along the Susquehanna, a bit more than the Regatta’s half-way point, we waited for Serge. Children played with squirt guns and splashed. Pit crews readied drinks to hand to the racers. A few set folding chairs in the river. At the Greenway, Serge and his partner, Steve Corlew, overtook another canoe to claim the second spot, 6 minutes behind the leaders, Andy Treibold and Steve Lajoie. When Serge came within a few yards of us, we cheered—and hoped. Still, I overheard a voice murmur “Treibold strokes like Serge used to.”

Travelling to the finish line in Bainbridge, Nancy and I took the scenic way, old Route 7, so we could hug the Susquehanna. We arrived early at General Clinton Park and looked upstream with anticipation. It was not to be. Serge and Corlew finished second in the top C-2 Pro class, 11 minutes and 44 second behind Treibold and Lajoie, whose victory was announced over the public address system almost as an afterthought. Once across the finish line, competitors, bodies suddenly going slack, immediately stretched cramped legs as their canoes meandered to the dock.

Serge did not leave the river quickly. Cooling off and working out kinks, he soaked his body, nearly neck-high, for a period of time in the water. As Serge finally walked up the small incline from the water to the bluff above the bank, the small assemblage applauded with an appreciation it had not granted the winner.

In the modest group gathered at the Regatta finish in Bainbridge, the young veteran, whom I had seen on the river the night before, stood. He wore the same army camouflage uniform. Despite the milling of others along the river bank, he seemed alone on Memorial Day 2012.



## UUP Annual Spring Party: Saturday, May 12, 2012: Union Families in Celebration and Solidarity



UUP Solidarity Picnic: May 2012

Over 100 UUPers and their families gathered on Saturday, May 12, 2012, at the College Camp for our annual spring Chapter meeting and celebration.

State UUP Vice President for Professionals Philippe Abraham joined and addressed the assemblage.

Oneonta's great friend from Upstate Brian Tappan again joined us and helped pick up the food, juggled, and took photographs.



Brian Tappan juggled--and did so much more

Talented musicians Kyle Britton and Willy Wood filled the air with sounds of joy and inspiration. Their rendition of *Solidarity Forever* reminded us of the ties that bind us in good times and bad as well as of our efforts to make the world a better place, the true mission of unions.

A Chapter meeting preceded the party. Meeting agenda items included UUP participation in the Rebirth Day to help

Lorraine and Rich Tyler's property rise from the ashes of fire and demolition, the contract process, the upcoming union survey of campus management, Labor- Management agenda items, and UUP service initiatives.



Philippe Abraham greets the Horvaths, Tom, Annika, & Julius



Music of the Worker: Kyle and Willy perform *Solidarity*

## UUP Annual Spring Party (continued)

Brooks' House of Bar-B-Q provided their distinctive and delicious food. Music, animated conversation, laughter, and games made for a great time. UUPers drawn from three generations, took respite from their multitude of responsibilities to celebrate with friends and colleagues. The scene resembled a tableau from a Frank Capra movie. It was the people's day. UUP celebrants created a rainbow of diversity. These salt-of-the earth, hard-working unionists who have given so much to the College and community garnered new strength for the struggles ahead. Only those with the capacity to express joy possess the courage to demand the right of all to pursue happiness. Thanks to the incomparable Loraine Tyler for organizing this special gathering.



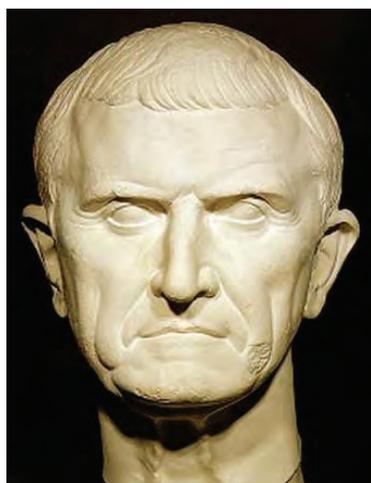
Loraine Tyler and Carol Forman run the kitchen



## The Clear and Present Danger of the Koch Brothers

By Martin Manjak, Editor and Professional Delegate, SUNY Albany

[Editor Note: The following originally appeared as "Letter from the Editor" in the UUP Albany newsletter and was authored by Martin Manjak, UUP Albany newsletter editor and professional delegate. The article below is reprinted with the permission of Martin Manjak.]



Marcus Licinius Crassus

Marcus Licinius Crassus (115 BCE – 53 BCE) is considered one of the wealthiest individuals in history. He, along with Pompey and Julius Caesar, formed the first triumvirate in Rome, i.e., the rule of three men. This political arrangement proved to be the transitional phase between the end of the Roman Republic and the emergence of a persistent, hereditary dictatorship.

Crassus enjoyed military successes, but his fortunes really took off when he started buying Roman real estate. Fires were frequent in ancient Rome and no one beat Crassus and his agents to the scene of a conflagration. (It was rumored that not all these fires were accidental.) Crassus would offer to buy the burning property on the spot. It was the quintessential buyer's market. Once he'd obtained ownership, he would demolish the existing structures and rebuild, constructing tenements that would generate revenues many times the purchase price of the property.

Crassus' money bought him political influence that elevated him to a position of immense power. He used that power to liquidate those whose fortunes he coveted, and in such fashion augmented his considerable wealth. That wealth led to increased power, all concentrated in his person and exercised through a network of clients or dependents, the classic example of gangster rule.

## ***The Clear and Present Danger of the Koch Brothers (continued)***

Charles and David Koch are worth close to \$25 billion each, making them the fourth richest Americans. Combined, their fortune makes them the third wealthiest people on the planet. They too exercise considerable influence on politics.

In 2010, the Kochs spent at least \$40m on congressional elections, swinging the balance of power in the house firmly into the laps of Tea Party Republicans who have pressed a radical agenda designed to disenfranchise minority voters, roll back environmental protections, weaken unions, privatize Social Security and Medicare, and implement a regressive tax policy that shifts even more of the nation's wealth into the hands of the financial elite.

The Koch brothers exercise their influence through a network of organizations operating at the state and federal levels. Founded and funded by the Kochs, Americans for Prosperity has 35 state chapters and claims to have about 2 million individual members.

Its Wisconsin operation contributed \$500,000 to Gov. Walker's efforts to cut social spending and revoke the bargaining rights of the state's public employees. Similar efforts are underway in Ohio and Indiana.

These attempts to weaken unions dovetail nicely with efforts to elect radical Republicans at the state level, and move those states into the red column for presidential races.

Like Crassus, the Kochs are fond of heat. They vigorously oppose any attempts to address climate change. According to Kent Davies, the director of research for Greenpeace, the Kochs have spent more than \$50m since 1998 on "various front groups and think tanks who...oppose the consensus view that climate change is real, urgent, and that we have to do something about it."

The Koch brothers' strategy resembles Crassus'. They use personal wealth to build a network of dependents, electing politicians beholden to them who then pass legislation that weakens unions, minorities, environmentalists, advocates of progressive tax codes, etc.

Simultaneously, they oppose or thwart efforts to limit the influence of money on the political process, advocate for tax policies that favor the wealthy at the expense of the majority of Americans, and resist any attempts to develop energy policies that would negatively impact Koch Industries—the second largest, privately-held company in the US and a source of \$100bn annually derived from oil refining, chemical products, and financial services.

Crassus' ambition ultimately led to his death while invading Parthia. It is said that the Parthians poured molten gold into the mouth of his corpse. The Koch brothers are spending whatever it takes to own our political process. If unchecked, the corpse on the floor will belong to the American Republic.

### **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 go to the UUP Oneonta chapter website, go to the following link [www.1ontauup.org](http://www.1ontauup.org)

Norm Payne and Alex Jean-Charles are UUP Oneonta Web Masters.

The chapter website contains a number of innovative features and links.

The statewide **UUP website** is located at [www.uupinfo.org](http://www.uupinfo.org) It contains information about members benefits and many other important topics.

## Executive Board Contact Info

President (d)	Bill Simons	William.Simons	436-3498 (office)
Managing Editor			
VP for Academics (d)	Rob Compton	Robert.Compton	436-3048 (o)
VP for Professionals (d) ; Co-Web Master	Norm Payne	Norman.Payne	436-2021 (o)
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Facilitator, Academics And Photographer (d)	Nancy Cannon	Nancy.Cannon	436-2160 (o)
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Disabilities Officer	Dawn Hamlin	Dawn.Hamlin	436-3526
Director, Special Events And Retiree Representative	Loraine Tyler	TYLERLL	433-2452 (h)
Co-Web Master	Alex Jean-Charles	JEANCHA	436-3384 (o)
Director, VOTE COPE (d)	Kyle Britton	BRITTOKJ	436-2263 (o)
Outreach Representa ve (d)	Fred Miller	MillerFredR@yahoo.com	432-3459 (h)
Format Editor, Sentinel	Terri Treibits	territreibits@yahoo.com	436-3318 (c)
Affirmative Action Officer (d)	Nithya Iyer	Nithya.Iyer	436-3128 (o)
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Facilitator, Professionals (d)	Janet Frankl	Janet.Frankl	436-3227 (o)
Facilitator, Academics (d)	Mike McAvoy	Michael.McAvoy	436-3533 (o)
Facilitator, Professionals (d)	Robin Nussbaum	Robin.Nussbaum	436-3213 (o)
Facilitator, Professionals (d)	Andrew Perry	Andrew.Perry	436-4141 (o)
Facilitator, Professionals (d)	Michael Sullivan	Michael.Sullivan	436-2825 (o)
Administrative Assistant	Peg Carney	ONEONTA@UUPMAIL.ORG	436-2135 (o)

UUP Oneonta Office: 206 Human Ecology Building

### Other Delegates & Alternates:

Joe Baldwin	BALDWIJC	436-3517 (h)
Chris Bulson	BULSONCE	397-9345 (h)
John Carney	CARNEYBK@VERIZON.NET	432-5360 (h)
Jeri Anne Jerminario	JERMINJA	436-2377 (o)

\*e-mail addresses are  
@ONEONTA.EDU  
(d = delegate, o = office,  
h = home)