



February 12, 2024

UUP Oneonta Advocating for SUNY

By Bill Simons, Secretary



UUP advocating for SUNY



Achim, second from left, at NYS Legislature

The contract is essential to UUP employees and so too is the budget. The annual New York State budget is the source of SUNY funding. Campuses and programs face major fiscal challenges in this budget season. As always, UUP is the major advocate for SUNY. The union takes public higher education's message to the governor, the legislature, and the public.

On February 6, 2024, Achim Koeddermann, UUP Oneonta Academic Delegate, joined the Higher Education Lobbying Day spearheaded by our New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) affiliate. NYSUT public school locals, UUP chapters, and PSC-CUNY mounted a formidable presence, organized teams, mastered details, and met with numerous legislators. In response to Governor Kathy Hochul's initial flat budget proposal, the union contingent made a strong case for significantly augmented funding for higher education, and we will continue to

make that case. You need to be part of the on-going campaign. Join the lobbying, door knocking, and phone banking. There are currently deficits at many SUNY campuses.

On the SUNY Oneonta campus, Thursday, February 8, 2024, brought the Catskill Regional Teacher Center Annual Legislative Forum to Craven Lounge. Legislative participants included Assembly members Brian Miller, Joe Angelino, and Chris Tague as well as Senator Peter Oberacker. UUP Oneonta stalwarts, amongst them Acting President Shirley Clark, Secretary Bill Simons, former Officer for Contingents J McDermot, and active retiree Armand La Potin, joined K-12 colleagues from local school districts at the program. Legislators spoke candidly and responded to questions from educators. A variety of policies, issues, and concerns received attention.

Advocating for SUNY is not a spectator sport. Given the untenable financial situations that our campuses and our hospitals continue to face, it is imperative that legislators hear from UUP. We ask that you make an extra effort to attend these events and urge you to bring other members from your chapter. Below is additional information and the accompanying registration links:

1.) UUP’s Annual Advocacy Day – 3/4-3/5

Who: All interested members! Our goal is to send at least five members from each chapter.

When: Monday, March 4th from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm – UUP Legislative Reception
Tuesday, March 5th from 9 am to 4 pm – UUP Advocacy Day

Where: Monday Evening – UUP Legislative Reception – The Albany Room in the Empire State Plaza
Tuesday – Morning Briefing at the Hilton Albany (40 Lodge Street, Albany NY 12207) followed by legislative appointments at the NYS Capitol and LOB

Sign-Up: [UUP Advocacy Day Registration Link](#)



Building and Sustaining Momentum: Creating a Path Forward Together

By Mark S. Ferrara Oneonta UUP Vice President for Academics



Welcome back, everyone! I hope you had a good winter break and that your semester is off to a fine start.

I write with a brief update on some of the academic issues that UUP Oneonta has been working on over the last few months. After a series of delays related to negotiation and ratification of the new contract last year, UUP and Management have agreed to restart talks regarding compensation at the university. Rather than bring in expensive outside consultants to compile salary data from peer institutions, we've decided to move forward in a small group discussion format with Chris Sielaff, Shirley Clark, and Mark Ferrara representing the union and President Cardelle, Dia Carleton and Julie Piscitello representing Management. Discussions will begin this month and will continue throughout the semester and beyond. UUP and Management have also agreed to conduct a joint Health and Housing Survey this spring to identify challenges related to securing housing and healthcare in rural, upstate Otsego County.

Other issues that we're at work on include negotiations over a few "tweaks" to the new Renewal, Tenure, and Promotion (RTP) Agreement to clarify the role of the Senate Business Committee in conducting RTP committee elections and the eligibility requirements for faculty to self-nominate and serve on them. We seek also to make clear that tenured faculty serving on any personnel committee (DACs, LAC, P&T) may participate in RTP review committees at the departmental level—but only vote once on any candidate. We're also responding to Management's request regarding external RTP letters of support and the rank of letter writers vis-à-vis the rank of the candidate. In addition, UUP Oneonta will be holding a RTP training session in April (details are forthcoming).

We also continue to work on a variety of part-time concerns such as adjuncts being denied health benefits in cases in which they teach three 1-credit mini-courses together with one 3-credit course. Although most of us would agree that such individuals had taught 6-credits for the semester (thereby qualifying for health benefits), HR seems to be interpreting our contract to mean that part-time faculty members must teach 6 credits at every point throughout the semester. That is to say, were Management to take a "snapshot" of credit load on any given day, part-time employees must be teaching 6 credits. If that sounds odd to you, you're not alone, and we will be seeking clarification and resolution this semester. In addition, UUP Oneonta has sought an update on the status of full-time lecturers with seven years of consecutive service who are owed three-year appointment letters according to the new contract. We expect those multi-year appointment letters to be issued in March.

Yet, the biggest single challenge this chapter faces is recruiting future UUP officers. Many of us in leadership positions have held them for many years, and, let's face it, we're not getting any younger! We need junior faculty and those at mid-career to step up and to get involved. Remember, too, that work for UUP counts as university service in RTP dossiers! The nation's largest higher education union, UUP represents the faculty and professional staff of the SUNY system. UUP is also the collective bargaining agent for the faculty and non-teaching professionals of SUNY, and chapter officers play an essential role in overseeing the local implementation of bargained agreements and defending our members from administrative overreach, contract violations, workload creep, and a host of other issues.

Please consider getting more involved with Oneonta UUP. You can start by simply attending one or more of our Chapter Meetings this spring (full lunch served):

Thursday, February 22nd, (Noon–1pm), Le Cafe and Virtual Option

Thursday, March 28th, (Noon – 1pm), Le Cafe and Virtual Option

Thursday, April 25th, (Noon – 1pm), Le Café and Virtual Option

Thursday, May 23rd, (Noon – 1pm), Le Cafe and Virtual Option

And remember, if you're not already a member of UUP, [you may join anytime](#).

By way of closing, please don't hesitate to let us know what's on your mind. We want to hear from you.

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Sociology Under Siege**By: Melissa F. Lavin, Ph.D.****Associate Professor of Sociology and Criminology; Affiliate, Women and Gender Studies, SUNY at Oneonta**

On January 24, 2024 (updated on January 26th), the *NY Times* published a piece titled *Florida Eliminates Sociology as a Core Course at Its Universities*, written by Anemona Hartocollis. The piece notes that, in November of 2023, the 17-person Board of Governors approved removing Principles of Sociology (also commonly called Introduction to Sociology) from a list of courses that students take to fulfill a general education requirement. Wednesday, January 24th saw that decision finalized.

In December of 2023, Florida’s Education Commissioner, Manny Diaz Jr., wrote on social media that “Sociology has been hijacked by left-wing activists and no longer serves its intended purpose as a general knowledge course for students.” Florida’s Board of Governors approved a so-called “factual history course” as a replacement for Principles of Sociology. This language reveals a fundamental ignorance about what sociology is and does. *Sociology is the scientific study of all that is social*, and it offers a vast and expansive education within its terrain.

I am a tenured sociologist at the State University of New York at Oneonta. As an expert in the field being sidelined in bad faith, I am compelled to respond to this ill-advised move on the part of the Florida education commission. According to the piece by Hartocollis, Florida has one of the largest public university systems in the United States, with over 430,000 students. Removing sociology from the core educational canon will negatively impact them. Indeed, eliminating introductory sociology as a requirement is categorically bad for the state of Florida, bad for institutions of higher education across the nation—public and private—and bad for the social and cultural literacy of people in our society. Sociology is indispensable for reasons that are both academic and concrete.

Colleges and universities are domains that promote sophisticated thinking and philosophical mastery. Principles of Sociology, like all sociology classes, addresses topics including but not limited to race, class, gender, sexuality, age, ethnicity, and religion. The contours of social location influence experiences and outcomes in human lives. The fact that conservatives in Florida and other states have targeted and restricted education about these matters does not change this.

Sociology in particular promotes critical thinking about social life. Specifically, it introduces students to the *sociological imagination*; the knowledge that one’s personal troubles and public issues are related. It benefits students to learn the important, inescapable connections between individuals and the social structures (e.g., families, schools, communities) in which they are embedded. These links are underexplored in secondary education, which makes them even more important to identify in tertiary education. Moreover, sociology has contributed heavily to our everyday knowledge in ways that we don’t realize, including the language that we use—consider everyday terms like *role model*, *status symbol*, or even *dysfunction*.

In addition to allowing students to acquire fluency in social principles and philosophies, courses in sociology offer concrete applications and are integral to preparing students for lives of productive labor and positive citizenship. For example, principles in sociology are foundational in public health and medicine. Only by

understanding our social structures—including how class, gender, and race affect us—can we understand the social determinants of health and therefore create a healthier population. Sociology is also the mother field of criminology. Understanding patterns and trends of victimology, and how the criminal justice systems intersect with race, class, and gender, are crucial to understanding and improving crime rates, and measuring trust in the law. Sociologists analyze political systems and government organizations, including—much to the chagrin of ideologues—identifying fascist sensibilities in democratic societies.

Governor Ron DeSantis, along with his appointed administrators, have made a cornerstone project out of suppressing topics like these because they platform marginalized groups and lifestyles that right-wingers want invisible. However, such topics—foundational to the discipline of sociology since its inception—belong in a well-rounded adult education. The move to eliminate Principles of Sociology as a core requirement in Florida’s state university system is a further slide into ignorance and anti-intellectualism—not a way to shield students from “left-wing activists.” That is a projection. Ron DeSantis and his brethren are the ones who traffic in political ideology for they have offered no scientific proof for their claims against the boundless and diverse field of sociology. This wrong-headed policy to remove introductory sociology from general education in Florida will not settle to weaken Florida alone, but will spread to contaminate other states and systems of higher education and their students. Florida would be well-advised to reinstate Principles of Sociology as a general education requirement for its state so that it can foster—instead of defeat—cultural, social, political, and economic literacy in the United States.



The Granola Strategy (Reprise #2)

By Alex Thomas, Professor, Sociology, SUNY Oneonta

A long time ago, in January 2009 to be exact, I mentioned a memo that at one time was circulated by the administration on proper and improper terms for the college. After a short list of some of ~~my favorites~~ the more salacious, I noted:

In any case, the college's name does not seem to evoke a strong presence, and at the least does not stress the difference between Oneonta and some of the former two-year schools. I say we reopen the debate, if there ever was one, and my vote is for Oneonta University. Now, everyone say it ... Oh, You!

And now, fourteen years later, even though it is not reflected in the name, seal, or signage, we *are* a university, so it seems an update is in order. The original series, sometimes called the “Catskill University” series, stretched through 2009 and 2010, but it was reprised in honor of President Morris upon her arrival. What follows is an update of that article.

It helps to examine our ~~college~~ university from an intellectual standpoint because, well, we *are* a ~~college~~ university. Social scientists have been studying complex organizations (like the university) for generations and their work can serve as a guide to the future. One of our tasks is identifying our niche. A narrow niche refers to highly specialized activities that have smaller potential markets and consequently less (but often stiff) competition. Our graduate program in History Museum Studies is a good example of a narrow niche program. In contrast there are general niches—activities for which there is high demand and thus many players in the organizational field, and correspondingly high competition and numerous potential ~~consumers~~ students. In principle, a college should strive for a healthy mix of both types of program: narrow niche programs from which academic reputation and a sense of identity can be forged as well as general niche programs that attract enough students to pay the bills.

Another concept from organizational theory offers a cautionary tale: institutional isomorphism, or the tendency for organizations in the same field (in our case, higher education) to become increasingly similar to one another. As mandates from above require ever more uniform procedures and our own quest for best practices pressure us to be like any other college, the distinct qualities of what makes SUNY Oneonta a special place get lost in the piles of paperwork and ever-changing acronyms of power. Every college in upstate New York is facing a demographic slump in college-age students and a diversifying population. Not surprisingly, every campus touts their uniqueness by adopting the same best practices to address these issues and in doing so become not-so-unique after all. Mandates from SUNY Central have a similar effect: every SUNY is about service learning, internships, and high-impact teaching practices. To the outsider, what is the difference between SUNY Broome and SUNY Oneonta?

A number of years ago I suggested a strategy by which the college market its identity by emphasizing and enhancing the one thing other SUNY colleges cannot: location. Two generations ago SUNY New Paltz was a funky college town on the edge of the Catskills, but today it is at the leading edge of a continuously expanding New York Metropolitan Area. (Ulster County was classified as such in 2003). As New Paltz transforms from the college town an hour or two north of the suburbs to a growing suburb itself, Oneonta is increasingly the funky college town an hour or two north of the suburbs—and this is a good place to start. For the nature curious, as opposed to the nature-committed, our own College Camp offers the illusion of nature (lots of chipmunks) in a forest where getting lost means you trudge downhill, cross a field, and walk the road home. These are safe little mountains where an un-naturized student can learn to play Heidegger at her or his own pace. (Indeed, my own children actually prefer our trails to others in the region as it is here that they can have lunch on Rattlesnake Rocks, take a picture at the Dinosaur Tree, and jump on the Philosopher’s Stone on the way back to the Union. Too bad there are no signs at these locations). At the end of the day, there are bars and restaurants and bars

downtown that lend themselves to a lifestyle that many, from city and country alike, would find enjoyable. This is who we are, and we can attract students and faculty alike to such a laid back lifestyle.

Such a lifestyle and the image it (could) present can also inform programs. Declaring ourselves the “University of the Catskills,” we could bolster our commitment to this regional identity. SUNY ~~New Paltz~~ Oneonta could be a system leader in the environmental sciences broadly conceived. The region offers numerous case-studies about the long-term impact of deforestation and, due to farming (and its environmental impacts) moving to the Ogallala Aquifer, the long-term impact of reforestation. The region is also a case-study in the social and environmental costs of various settlement patterns: large-lot urbanization of the sort seen here is accompanied by higher carbon footprints and increased (and often costly) human-animal interactions. Beyond the natural and social sciences, the Catskills were the subject of numerous works of art and literature, informing in an outsized way the national cultural understanding of nature. Such museums as the Fenimore Art Museum (Cooperstown), the Arkell Museum (Canajoharie), and the Munson-Williams-Proctor Institute (Utica) have substantial Hudson River School collections, funded as they were by the Industrial Revolution that began locally in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Within a half-hour drive one can find the home of John Burroughs (Roxbury) and the grave of James Fenimore Cooper (Cooperstown). Instead of lamenting that Oneonta has miniature versions of some of our favorite stores we could emphasize what is unique about where we are, bolster programs to take advantage of our strengths, and market SUNY ~~New Paltz~~ Oneonta as a place where you can study during the day, hike on the weekend, and have Thai or pizza or sushi before meeting friends at the local watering hole.

The Granola Strategy should also inform our interactions in the community. It is a recognition that students choose a college university not only by the strength of its academics, its fitness center, and its sports offerings, but also by its community. SUNY Oneonta not only offers the community a niche market of over six thousand students, but also hundreds of faculty and staff with extensive expertise and disposable incomes. Targeted direct investments such as off-campus apartments downtown, an events center or exhibit space, and/or a business incubator could transform a good downtown to a great one—and the college itself would benefit from a desirable downtown.

This is just my opinion, of course, and it is perhaps unsurprising that an Environmental Demographer such as myself would view the world through the lens of territory and population. What is important is for others to express their own visions of SUNY ~~Cortland~~ Oneonta, to have a genuine discussion of who it is we are and what it is we want to build here. In order for any plan to have a meaningful chance of success, before any committee can form a noteworthy proposal, and before any firm can develop a practical plan, we need to answer those basic questions: who are we? What do we want to build here?



UUP Websites and Disclaimer:

Statements made in UUP Oneonta publications 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 at

<http://www.oneontauup.org/> The UUP Oneonta Chapter website is constantly updating, evolving, and

expanding. The State UUP website is located at <https://uupinfo.org> Contact us at oneonta@uupmail.org It

contains information about member benefits and many other important topics.

Statewide UUP- Current Events:

SAVE THE DATE!

Mark Your Calendars! Brooklyn Needs Downstate Rally February 29, 2024, 12 PM at SUNY Downstate!

SUNY is pursuing a plan that will ultimately close SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University Hospital (SUNY Downstate Hospital). This plan is poor public policy, which will reduce health care in Brooklyn, undermine the hospital's central mission, and harm the Brooklyn communities it serves. Furthermore SUNY's "transformation" plan for Downstate will negatively impact medical education, which provides a pipeline of doctors and medical professionals to New York hospitals statewide. While this is a plan that directly impacts our Downstate members, it will no doubt have a ripple effect on the health care available to all New Yorkers. Additionally, if SUNY were to execute a plan that closes a major facility in the system, many SUNY campuses could become vulnerable to a similar outcome.

UUP members work every day to improve, support, and protect the lives of patients at SUNY Downstate Hospital – and together we can remind New York State that an attack on one is an attack on all! I am calling on UUP members across the state to stand together in the fight to stop the closure of SUNY Downstate. This hospital serves the unique needs of Brooklyn and New York City, will YOU stand with your colleagues to stop the closure of SUNY Downstate Hospital?

Brooklyn Needs Downstate Rally!

WHEN: Feb. 29, 2024 at Noon!

WHERE: SUNY Downstate, 450 Clarkson Avenue, Brooklyn, NY

REGISTER TODAY [HERE!](#)

Buses and other available travel-related accommodations are noted on the [rally registration page!](#) Please note that buses will only be available if we have enough people **registered by Feb. 14th to get on the bus!**

Visit the Brooklyn Needs Downstate campaign webpage for more actions and information by going to: <https://uupinfo.org/BrooklynNeedsDownstate/>

Thank you all for joining together to make sure that our voices are heard!

In solidarity,

Frederick. E. Kowal, Ph.D.,
President
United University Professions

Student Loan Forgiveness Workshop:

We will be offering virtual Members Only Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Clinics on the following date:

Wednesday, February 28, 2024 from 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM via Zoom.

To attend one of the virtual Members Only Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) Clinics, you must pre-register here: <http://go.aft.org/StudentDebtClinicRSVP>. From the “student debt clinic” drop down menu, please select the UUP clinic that you are interested in attending – they are labeled “UUP [Virtual Student Debt Clinic] [date] [time].” In the affiliate field, type in the full name of our local (United University Professions), and it will autofill after a few keystrokes. Registration is first come, first serve, and we must cap attendance for a single clinic at 125 participants in order to ensure that we are able to provide maximum assistance to attendees. Registration will close 48 hours prior to the virtual clinic. Register Now!!

- Wednesday, Feb. 28: 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.

Click [HERE](#) to register.

Pre-Retirement Workshops set for February

Pre-Retirement Workshops on Tuesday, Feb. 13 and Thursday, Feb. 15. The hour-long sessions are virtual and start at 7 p.m. The first session, on Feb. 13, will cover health care, Medicare and sick leave credits. The second, on Jan. Feb. 15, will cover union benefits (dental and vision) and union membership as a retiree.

Click [HERE](#) to register for the workshops or for more information.

Love Your Benefits Workshop:

“Love Your Benefits “ UUP’s Know Your Negotiated Benefits webinar is scheduled for Tuesday, February 13, 2024, at 12:00pm.

Learn all about UUP’s extensive benefits package and other discounted services.

Please use the link to register:

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1iSU14ElueCEVk_ilwn2Gnqx0QJzUo_73OwoSAb4yDWA/edit

If you have any questions, please contact Lisa McNeil at 518-640-6632 or by email at lmcneil@uupbenefits.org

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### Chapter Needs Volunteers:

Are you interested in Serving on the DEI Committee?? We are looking for volunteers.

Contact: [Oneonta@uupmail.org](mailto:Oneonta@uupmail.org)

Chapter Meetings and Events for the Semester- Spring 2024:

February 22<sup>nd</sup>- 12-1pm Le Cafe Morris Complex- RSVP NOW! [Oneonta@uupmail.org](mailto:Oneonta@uupmail.org)

March 28th- 12-1pm Le Cafe Morris Complex

April 25<sup>th</sup>- 12-1pm Le Cafe Morris Complex

May 23rd- 12-1pm Le Cafe Morris Complex

Coffee Hours: TBA

Chapter Special Workshops with the LRS- Labor Relations Specialist- Chris Sielaff:

March 21- Performance Programs- Otsego Grille Morris Complex

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**Cancelled/Postponed! Feb 29<sup>th</sup> Critical Decisions-12-1pm Otsego Grille Morris Complex.  
To those of you who signed up, we will let you know the new date when we have it.**

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**UUP Oneonta Chapter- Executive Board Contact List:**

**Executive Board Officers:**

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