

## Legislative Information Day draws UUP members

UUP members responded to the urgent call for advocacy in droves, as more than 100 union members came to Albany on Tuesday (Feb. 24) for UUP's Legislative Information Day. The UUPers staffed campus exhibits festooned with posters as they



Photo by Mike Lisi

**Left**, Sen. Toby Stavisky speaks at UUP's Legislative Information Day as UUP President Phil Smith listens.

**Bottom**, Assembly Majority Leader Ron Canestrari greets UUP members from NYSTI — from left, Sarah Howes, Shannon Snyder and Christine Saplin.

expressing support for SUNY and understanding the University's role as an economic engine. Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith hinted that more funds may be coming SUNY's way.

"This Legislature is smart enough to recognize when in fact there may need to be some changes made. We understand the need to revisit some of what we've done," he said.

Agreeing with UUP that higher education has taken a hit in the governor's proposed budget, Sen. Toby Stavisky displayed her commitment to UUP and SUNY.

"We have to make sure that public higher education is affordable, accessible and of high quality," said Stavisky, chair of the Senate Higher Education Committee. "I can't agree with your slogan more, because SUNY is the solution."



Photo by Karen L. Mattison

Smith said. "SUNY can't absorb any more cuts."

Saying that SUNY hospitals are near the breaking point, Smith appealed to legislators to reject the governor's budget proposal to cut the hospital subsidy by \$25 million and instead increase it by \$40 million.

told legislators representing districts where their campuses are located how budget cuts are affecting them. The members joined with UUP President Phil Smith to urge lawmakers to restore budget cuts to SUNY and to increase the University's operating budget.

"SUNY students are already feeling the sting of budget cuts, from increased class sizes to canceled courses to delayed graduations,"

The UUP appeal extended to other issues, encouraging lawmakers to rebuff the governor's call to withhold the union's scheduled 3% pay raise this year, along with proposals to create a new Tier V pension plan, add a five-day lag payroll and merge NYSTI with The Egg.

Nearly three dozen lawmakers came to visit with the UUPers, and 15 of them spoke, all

### Advocacy push in home stretch

With the governor abandoning his original goal of having a new state budget in place by March 1, UUP is planning an ambitious political action agenda right through April 1, the day the new budget is due.

In addition to NYSUT Higher Education Lobby Day this coming Tuesday (March 3), UUP is planning a series of advocacy days in Albany on three other Tuesdays during March — on the 10, 17, and 31. But the advocacy plan extends beyond Albany. UUPers will schedule visits with state legislators in their home districts on each Friday in the month — March 6, 13, 20 and 27.

### Reminders/Upcoming meetings

- **Mar. 6-8**—AFT Higher Ed Issues Conference, Miami
- **Mar. 20-21**—Chapter Presidents/New Leaders Workshops, Saratoga
- **Mar. 20**—Entry deadline for the UUP 2008-2009 Journalism Competition
- **Mar. 23-24**—NYSUT Committee of 100, Albany (Tentative)
- **Mar. 27**—UUP Executive Board, Albany
- **Apr. 2-4**—NYSUT RA, Buffalo
- **Apr. 23**—UUP Executive Board, Albany
- **Apr. 24-25**—2009 Spring DA, Albany

(excerpts of selected newsclips)

*The Legislative Gazette* —Feb. 17

### Students consider Paterson's dire outlook

[http://www.legislativegazette.com/back\\_issues/09-2-17\\_for\\_web.pdf](http://www.legislativegazette.com/back_issues/09-2-17_for_web.pdf)

A SUNY tuition hike and the amount of that increase campuses will get to spend were key concerns of students, faculty and community members who last Thursday attended Gov. David A. Paterson's first state of the state town hall meeting for students at Morrisville State College.

Although the governor was questioned on a number of topics, the main issue students attending the event appeared to be concerned about was a \$620 increase in State University of New York tuition that was adopted as part of Paterson's \$1.6 billion budget deficit reduction plan. Students said they wanted to know why SUNY has taken such a hit in the state budget and why SUNY campuses would only be permitted to keep 10 percent of the tuition increase when Paterson admits to "shooting ourselves in the foot by decreasing funding to these institutions."

The town hall meeting in Morrisville was one of a series of such gatherings Paterson has planned around the state to hear from constituents about the problems they face and any ideas they have for helping to fix what he has called "the worst economic crisis in New York state history." The event, which focused primarily on higher education, was mostly upbeat despite the grim message the governor had for the audience. ...

Former student Government Patrick King, along with SUNY Morrisville President Ray Cross, moderated the discussion with Paterson. Although they did not have enough time to address all the questions they would have liked to, King said they did their best to bring everything together and cover as many areas as they could. ...

Still, the main issue most students interviewed after the meeting were concerned about was their tuition increase.

"I think we needed a real answer about the 90-10 split on tuition," said David Belsky, a spokesman for the SUNY Student Assembly. "I think they've been beating around the bush on the answer for a while and it's time we actually got answers instead of excuses. I think that's the one thing students demand."

Jim Engle, chapter president of United University Professions for SUNY Morrisville, said he was pleased with many of the things Paterson said about the importance of the SUNY system, but said the real test is whether those words turn into action.

"Everyone thinks they should help carry the load, but students shouldn't bear the entire load," said Engle, who attended the meeting. "If there's ever a time to help students it's now."

"These are the working class of New Yorkers that are getting hit the hardest, I don't think the pain is being spread equally across the state," he said. "This is where our future lies." ...

*Press & Sun-Bulletin* —Feb. 17

### BU weighs staffing reductions

<http://pressconnects.com/article/20090217/NEWS01/902170319/1001>

Some adjunct professors and staff members at Binghamton University might find themselves out of a job as administrators look for ways to cope with state funding cuts.

University leaders will first examine other areas for potential savings. Then, if more spending cuts are necessary, officials will decide whether to let some employees' appointments lapse. "Right now, we're not near that point," spokesman Ryan Yarosh said.

Already, 274 faculty and staff positions at the school have been left unfilled to save money.

"Having such a significant number of vacancies affects the university's ability to provide services both on campus and to our partners in the community," President Lois B. DeFleur said. "These positions also affect the community through a ripple effect since these individuals live, pay taxes and spend wages in our region."

University officials said it's too early to speculate about how many employees might be affected or when they would be notified. The state budget for 2009-10 hasn't been approved by the state Legislature.

The possibility that fewer professors will be teaching this fall means fewer classes would be offered, said Darryl M. Wood, president of the BU chapter of United University Professions. With fewer classes, students could have difficulty enrolling in required courses and might have to postpone graduation, he said. Plus, class sizes will grow, diminishing the quality of education at BU.

"These are real things," said Wood, house operations director at BU's Anderson Center. "This is not speculation at this point. This is going to happen."

The university has already taken \$6.5 million in state funding cuts from the 2008-09 budget. Gov. David A. Paterson's budget proposal for 2009-10 called for a 14 percent state funding reduction for BU, officials said. ...

### ~~The Chief~~ —Feb. 13 (subscription only) SUNY union leader rips call to forgo 3% raise Unfair request by Governor

United University Professions President Phillip H. Smith Feb. 4 slammed Governor Paterson's proposal to cancel his members' scheduled salary increases, telling a legislative hearing in Albany that it was "patently unfair" and undermined the collective bargaining process.

As part of his budget proposal, the Governor has moved to deny 3-percent raises for UUP-represented academic and professional faculty at the State University of New York that are supposed to be implemented in July. These would be the third raises in a four-year contract with the state the UUP signed in December 2007.

#### 'Illegal and Unconscionable'

"By unilaterally submitting legislation altering the terms and conditions of our contract, the Governor

has breached our formally executed and binding agreements," Mr. Smith told a joint legislative hearing on workforce issues. "In effect, the Governor is asking you to be a party to a process that is illegal, unconscionable and patently unfair."

Mr. Paterson has actually proposed that all state unions voluntarily relinquish this year's wage increases to help deal with the budget gap. Those unions' leaders have refused to do so, and by law he is prohibited from unilaterally withholding the raises.

Mr. Smith also protested several other aspects of the budget, specifically the Governor's proposal of an additional five-day salary deferral; the requirement that retirees and employees over 65 would have to contribute toward their Medicare Part B premiums; and the establishment of a more restrictive pension plan for newly hired state employees.

"If enacted, these proposals would reduce the annual income of our members by up to 10 percent this coming year and much more in future years," he said.

#### Threatens Legal Action

In a subsequent phone interview, Mr. Smith said that his union was priming for a legal battle. "We've filed a series of five grievances taking action against the plan," he said. "We will file improper practice charges. If the legislation is passed, we are probably going to file a lawsuit."

He also questioned how much Mr. Paterson would really save by reopening contracts. "[He] is looking for ways of closing the budget gap, and for all the state unions, the 3-percent raises would get him \$122 million, the 5-day lag would get \$121 million," he said. "It's really not a very large amount, and it strikes me as strange a few weeks ago when the Governor was asked about taking money out of the Rainy-Day Fund, which has about \$1.3 billion in it, he said, 'That figure is inconsequential.' If that's inconsequential, I'm trying to think of a word for what a fifth of that would be."

Mr. Smith said he was encouraged by the reaction of the State Legislature to his testimony and the UUP's outreach efforts. "We have lots of allies," he said. "The point that we've been making is that SUNY is unlike any other agency; we're capable of creating a positive economy in a number of ways. We've held a couple of lobbying events, and through fax outreach have sent tens of thousands of faxes. We hope we can get their vote when it all comes down to the end."

Although the Governor was originally hoping for the budget to be passed by March 1, Mr. Smith said that "people have hit the pause button waiting for the Federal stimulus package," which had bought the union a little more time. Like many unions, the UUP has called for income tax hikes on the wealthiest New Yorkers as an alternative to the Governor's plans. But Mr. Smith, in contrast to his City University counterpart, also supports the Governor's proposal to raise tuition at SUNY, with 80 percent of that raise covering state aid cuts being made, and the other 20 percent going directly to the University.