

Record ratification

UUP membership overwhelmingly approves new four-year contract

UUUP members have resoundingly ratified a new four-year contract with New York state.

The agreement — reached Dec. 19, 2007 — won the approval of 97.5% of the members who cast ballots. That set a record for the highest approval rate in UUP history, besting the 96.6% approval rate for the union’s previous contract in 2004. The American Arbitration Association conducted and tallied the ratification vote.

A total of 10,297 UUP members voted to ratify the new contract, while 249 voted against it. Thirty-three ballots were declared invalid.

“Our goal was to reach a fair and equitable contract for all our members — academic and professional, full-time and part-time,” UUP President Phil Smith said. “The overwhelming vote in favor of the agreement is a clear sign our members agree that this is a good contract that addresses their needs.”

Smith said the contract will also help SUNY become one of the finest public higher education institutions in the nation, a goal cited by the governor’s Commission on Higher Education.

“The competitive salaries and strong ben-



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efits contained in this contract will help attract and retain top-quality faculty,” Smith said.

The vote culminated a two-year process that began with a suggestion form mailed to all members and a listening tour that included stops at every chapter to gauge members’ concerns. Representatives from each of UUP’s 33 chapters were appointed to form the union’s Negotiations Committee.

The Negotiations Team, headed by VP for Academics Fred Floss, recently concluded another round of chapter visits to explain the tentative agreement and to answer any questions before the vote.

“The concerns we heard from our members guided us toward reaching a pact that responded to their needs,” Floss said.

Smith and Floss thanked both the Negotiations Committee and Team for their dedication and hard work in shaping the framework of the contract.

The new agreement runs from July 2, 2007, to July 1, 2011. It calls for salary increases in each year of:

- 3%, retroactive to July 1, 2007
- 3%, beginning in July 1, 2008
- 3%, beginning in July 1, 2009
- 4%, beginning in July 1, 2010

The agreement features other benefits, including:

- A one-time \$500 salary advance to employees who will receive permanent or continuing appointments, or a second, five-year appointment on their respective campuses during each year of the contract;
- A lump-sum \$500 payment to part-time employees who have worked at least eight consecutive years at their current campus;
- Location stipends increasing up to \$3,026 for employees in the downstate area and up to \$1,513 for employees in the Mid-Hudson region;
- Discretionary salary increases of 1% in each year; and
- A \$200 contribution per eligible employee by the end of the contract to the UUP Benefit Trust Fund, which covers dental and vision benefits.

The contract holds off any percentage increase in the portion members pay toward their health insurance premiums, and calls for only small increases in co-pays.

The pay bill covering the added costs in the contract will be submitted by the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations (GOER) to the Legislature for approval, and then to Gov. David Paterson for his signature.

Once that process is completed, the state comptroller’s office will set dates to distribute retroactive paychecks and paychecks reflecting raises.

Reminders/Upcoming Meetings

MAR 15 — Entry deadline for UUP’s 2007-2008 Journalism Competition

MAR 17-18 — NYSUT Committee of 100, Albany

APR 4 — UUP Executive Board, Albany

APR 10-12 — NYSUT RA, New York City

MAY 1 — UUP Executive Board, Albany

MAY 2-3 — 2008 Spring Delegate Assembly The Desmond, Albany

(*excerpts of selected newsclips*)

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER EDUCATION — March 13
New York's new governor seen as friend to higher education, may pick up where Spitzer left off
<http://chronicle.com/daily/2008/03/2026n.htm>

New York's higher-education leaders started off the year with good news from their governor, Eliot Spitzer, who used his annual address to lawmakers to propose adding 2,000 faculty members to the state's public universities and creating a \$4 billion endowment for the institutions.

Just last week, the Democratic governor touted the endowment plan during a conference call with presidents and trustees from the state's two public-university systems, the State University of New York and the City University of New York (*The Chronicle*, March 6). Even though New York faces a projected budget deficit of \$4-billion, Mr. Spitzer told the higher-education leaders he wanted to "see if we can make this happen."

Now that Mr. Spitzer has announced his resignation, which follows allegations that he was a client of a high-priced prostitution ring and is effective on Monday, the state's colleges will have to try to push the governor's proposal without him. The sudden turn of events this week shocked many college leaders, as well as officials across the state, and left Mr. Spitzer's higher education agenda in limbo.

Many college officials described Mr. Spitzer as a governor who was shaping up to be a champion of higher education, which he was also seeking to improve. Among other actions, the governor convened a state commission to recommend ways in which New York could bolster the quality of its universities, and use both public and private institutions to help fuel the economy.

The panel issued a preliminary report in December, urging the state to refrain from "overregulation" of universities, establish a \$3 billion research fund to support economic development, and create a "low cost" student-loan program, among other recommendations. The commission is scheduled to issue its final report by June.

John Simpson, president of SUNY Buffalo who has worked with Mr. Spitzer on higher education issues, said the news about the governor that broke this week "has certainly come as a surprise to all of us." But he said he remains confident that much of the momentum for improving higher education, and the way it contributes to the state economy, will continue beyond the Spitzer administration.

"The conversations on higher education and the interest the governor's had in SUNY and CUNY has called attention to the systems, their benefits, and their values in a way that is going to transcend whoever happens to be on the second floor in Albany," Mr. Simpson said, referring to the location of the governor's offices at the State Capitol.

The new occupant of those offices will be David Paterson, the lieutenant governor. A former minority leader in the State Senate, Mr. Paterson, 53, will be the state's first black governor. He is an adjunct professor in the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University.

University officials and faculty members in New York describe Mr. Paterson as someone who has been committed to broadening access to higher education and who has supported universities' calls for more full-time faculty members.

He also has spoken out in favor of creating an endowment for higher education, according to Jay Hershenson, senior vice chancellor for university relations at CUNY, who called the lieutenant governor "an outspoken advocate for higher-education opportunity."

Mr. Hershenson also described Mr. Paterson, who has spoken at CUNY graduation ceremonies, as someone who often displays humor and charm. As an example, he recounted one recent graduation speech in which Mr. Paterson joked with the audience that there were three types of university graduates: cum laude, summa cum laude, and "thank you, Lawd!"

Mr. Paterson, who is legally blind, also has sought to change how the New York State bar examination accommodates people with vision impairments, according to a profile of him that appeared in *The New York Observer* when he was running for office in 2006. A graduate of Hofstra Law School, Mr. Paterson never passed the bar exam in New York and told the newspaper that he felt he was not given adequate time to account for his disability.

Given how quickly the political landscape in New York changed, lawmakers and college officials said this week that it was too early to speculate in any detail about how much of Mr. Spitzer's higher-education agenda would be able to move forward without him.

In terms of the higher-education endowment proposal, at least, Assemblywoman Deborah J. Glick, a Democrat who is the chairwoman of the State Assembly's Higher Education Committee, said there remained "very strong support" among her colleagues for considering the concept. Lawmakers, though, will have to continue to debate how to finance the plan, she said, with many members voicing concerns about the idea Mr. Spitzer had floated of partially privatizing the state's lottery to raise funds.

She said she believed Mr. Paterson's perspectives on higher education generally align with the approach the state's Democrats take as a whole, which she described as being focused on ensuring high standards at institutions, broadening access to college, and reining in escalating costs.

"He's strongly committed to our public higher-education systems," she said of Mr. Paterson.

 — March 7

Albany, Binghamton deserve greater funding
<http://timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=669906&category=LETTER&BCCode=OPIN-ION&newsdate=3/12/2008>

I was disappointed to read the Feb. 24 Perspective column by the presidents of the

University at Buffalo and Stony Brook University in which, rather than supporting greater funding to improve the state university system, they advocate the narrow approach of only providing greater funding to their universities. One would have hoped they would not have taken such a narrow view.

While the universities at Buffalo and Stony Brook certainly warrant greater support, so do the research and teaching activities at University at Albany and Binghamton University. The University at Albany has unique resources in nanotechnology and public administration. Binghamton University is described by college guide books as the pre-eminent public university in the Northeast and is the most selective of the university centers for undergraduate admission. Certainly students and their families recognize Binghamton's excellence in teaching. Significant research also is conducted at both of these universities.

Rather than their parochial advocacy, one would hope that all SUNY presidents would both advocate for greater funding for the entire SUNY system, at least in line with what is average for state universities throughout the country, and, more importantly, for the freedom of each campus to set its priorities for spending, fundraising and tuition levels. This freedom would allow each campus to find its niche of excellence. ...

— Hal Rosenthal
Delmar

 — March 6

SUNY 'flagship' label concerns lawmaker
<http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=669518&category=REGION&newsdate=3/6/2008>

It's Hillary Rodham Clinton's knock on Barack Obama. It's also Ron Canestrari's knock on Eliot Spitzer's push for SUNY flagships.

"It fosters division among the system," said the Democratic assemblyman from Cohoes.

Maybe. But these days, the two schools that Spitzer named "flagships" in his State of the State speech — Buffalo and Stony Brook — are all about unity.

A University at Albany alum worried about how not being a flagship will affect his alma mater pointed out that the Buffalo and Stony Brook presidents recently met in New York City.

John Simpson (Buffalo) and Shirley Strum Kenny (Stony Brook) talked about what the flagship designation means and "how they might collaborate in realizing the potential of what a flagship university can be," Buffalo spokesman John DellaConrada confirmed Wednesday. ...

They would make the case for why SUNY needs more investment as a whole, he said, but also why "flagships may deserve even more consideration."

Assemblyman Ron Canestrari's take: "I think you can improve quality without creating an elitist institution." ...