

Pension plan advisory

Gov. Paterson has signed into law a bill that establishes Tier V, a new public employee retirement plan that will reduce benefits for most state employees hired after Jan. 1, 2010.

If you are already enrolled in a retirement plan, this new tier will not affect you. If you are not currently enrolled in a retirement plan and want to maximize your benefits options, you should act before Dec. 31 to enroll in the existing pension plan for which you're eligible.

Please contact the benefits administrator at your campus for more information.

Reminders/Upcoming meetings

- **Dec. 24-Jan. 3**—Office closed for holiday recess
- **Jan. 8-9**—NYSUT Higher Ed Council, NYC, FIT
- **Feb. 2**—UUP Advocacy Day, Albany
- **Feb. 4**—UUP Executive Board meeting, Albany
- **Feb. 5-6**—2010 Winter DA, Albany
- **TBA**—UUP Legislative Info Day, Albany

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Union Label & Service Trades Dept., AFL-CIO

UUPers continue building coalitions



Photo by Brian Tappen

UUPers from Upstate Medical University and Cortland discuss budget concerns with Sen. David Valesky during a meeting in his Syracuse office. Pictured from left are David Hollenback of Cortland; Bob Fluck, Dawn Leadley and Dave Peckham, all from UMU; Sen. Valesky; UMU Chapter President Carol Braund; and Richard Kendrick of Cortland.

UUP members continue to reach out to various groups, building coalitions to protect and enhance state support for SUNY.

A recent example of coalition building took place at Purchase, where UUP partnered with NYPIRG to host a student/legislative forum focusing on the need for increased state funding for public higher education.

“SUNY has already taken an enormous hit from previous budget cuts,” UUP Purchase Chapter President John Delate told the forum, referring to the \$410 million in state funding sliced in the last two years. “We understand these are challenging economic times, but SUNY has already taken more than its fair share of reductions. It’s more important to fund this economic engine than deplete it further.”

A crowd of about 75, mostly students, heard Delate make his case, along with three state lawmakers from Westchester who were in attendance. Sen. Suzi Oppenheimer and Assembly members Amy Paulin and George Latimer pledged to work to ensure that public higher education

receives proper funding.

UUP is actively forging coalitions with students at a number of other campuses, including Cortland. Student government representatives were invited to join chapter members at a Dec. 10 district meeting with Sen. James Seward.

Two Cortland Chapter members joined UUPers from Upstate Medical University at a Dec. 4 district meeting with Sen. David Valesky in Syracuse.

“Health care and education should be the last and least to be cut, not the first and most to be cut,” Brian Tappen of Upstate told Valesky.

Also Dec. 10, five UMU Chapter members sat down with Assemblywoman Joan Christensen in her Syracuse office to express their concerns. Christensen agreed with UUP that proposals to allow SUNY campuses the power to set their own tuition rates and to sell or lease campus property should not be approved. She said that the current oversight powers of the Legislature in such matters should be preserved.

times beacon record —Dec. 11

UUP scholarships for SUNY students

UUP is looking for qualified SUNY students to apply for its annual \$2,000 scholarships. This article appeared in seven Suffolk County, Long Island weekly newspapers owned by Times Beacon Record Newspapers:

The UUP College Scholarship Fund awards are given annually to as many as four outstanding SUNY undergraduates who exhibit dedication to the goals and ideals of the labor union movement. To qualify, students must be full-time undergraduates enrolled at a SUNY campus.

Full story available at:

http://www.northshoreoflongisland.com/Articles-i-2009-12-10-82416.112114-sub_UUP_scholarships_for_SUNY_students.html#222

TIMES UNION —Dec. 11

How we saved New York \$35 billion

In an op-ed column, Gov. Paterson defends his decision to secure passage of Tier V. The new public employee retirement plan will reduce benefits for most workers hired after Jan. 1, 2010:

For years, New York has sweetened its public employee pension system. When times were good, we made financial commitments that were unsustainable over the long term. As a result, government costs have grown out of control and property taxpayers have had to foot an ever larger bill. This system is pushing local governments to the brink. We simply cannot afford it anymore.

New York's public employees — our police officers, firefighters, teachers, prison guards, and other public servants — deserve a secure retirement. However, an unsustainable retirement system benefits no one. We must ensure that our public employee pension system is affordable for the taxpayers who support it.

Full story available at:

<http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=876723&category=OPINION>

The New York Times —Dec. 10

College dropouts cite low money and high stress

A report released by a nonpartisan research group finds that most students do not complete their studies on time because they can't balance school with their need to work to support themselves:

While 2.8 million students enroll in some form of higher education each year, most do

(excerpts of selected newsclips)

not proceed straight through to graduation.

Only one in five of those who enroll in two-year institutions earn an associate degree within three years, and only two in five of those who start four-year colleges complete their degrees within six years.

"The conventional wisdom is that students leave school because they aren't willing to work hard and aren't really interested in more education," said Jean Johnson, executive vice president of Public Agenda. "What we found was almost precisely the opposite. Most work and go to school at the same time, and most are not getting financial help from their families or the system itself."

Full story available at:

<http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/10/education/10graduate.html?scp=1&sq=college%20dropouts&st=cse>

The New York Times —Dec. 8

Binghamton campus grieves for slain professor

Faculty and students at SUNY Binghamton mourn the loss of retired UUP member Richard Antoun, the victim of a deadly stabbing that occurred in his campus office:

One after another, students and faculty members at Binghamton University trickled out of a classroom lab that had been converted, for convenience and tragic necessity, into a grievance room for the day.

On Friday, Dr. Antoun was killed in his office by a student who repeatedly stabbed him, according to authorities. On Monday, the first full day of classes since the killing, Dr. Antoun's office was locked and the light was off; a single lavender-colored flower was at the foot of the door.

Full story available at:

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/12/08/nyregion/08binghamton.html?_r=1&scp=1&sq=Binghamton%20campus%20grieves&st=cse

THE BUFFALO NEWS —Dec. 7

Buffalo's control board gets new member

UUP VPA Fred Floss is appointed to a state control board that oversees Buffalo's finances:

Gov. David A. Paterson has appointed Frederick G. Floss to the Buffalo Fiscal Stability Authority. Floss is on leave from his post as professor of economics and finance at Buffalo State College to serve as vice president for academics of United University Professions in Albany. The union represents faculty and staff on SUNY campuses across

the state. ...

Floss said he believes his experience in economics and finance will be an asset to a panel that must approve all major spending by the city. The Kenmore resident said his involvement with the union has given him experience forging compromises and fostering working relationships with different groups of people. Full story available at:

<http://www.buffalonews.com/258/story/886178.html>

THE CHRONICLE OF HIGHER ED —Dec. 7

Safer but not immune: an intervention-team member discusses how campuses handle threats

The murder of a retired Binghamton faculty member sparks renewed debate about campus safety:

It wasn't a secret that the graduate student suspected of murdering an anthropology professor at Binghamton University last Friday was upset.

The suspect, Abdulsalam S. al-Zahrani, apparently had said some troubling things to his roommates and others in the weeks before the fatal stabbing of the professor, Richard T. Antoun.

Full story available via paid subscription at:

<http://chronicle.com/article/A-Safety-Official-Discusses/49374/>

TIMES UNION —Dec. 7

State is cheating SUNY students

In a letter to the editor, a UUP member at UAlbany, Marty Manjak, criticizes the governor for sweeping most of the revenue from a SUNY tuition increase:

Gov. David Paterson's decision to reduce the state's contribution to SUNY by an amount equivalent to 90 percent of the tuition increase is a cynical and egregious breach of faith. The trustees approved the tuition increase as part of its annual budget request presumably to partially offset the tens of millions of dollars the governor cut from the SUNY budget. The increase was supposed to compensate for a portion of those cuts in an attempt to maintain standards and services at SUNY schools.

Full story available at:

<http://www.timesunion.com/AspStories/story.asp?storyID=874731>