

UUPers have strong showing at AFT higher ed conference

UUP went well represented at the American Federation of Teachers' annual conference on higher education issues.

Close to two dozen UUPers joined higher ed academics and professionals from across America March 5-8 in Miami, participating in the AFT conference, "Generating Power: Mobilizing the Union to Revitalize Higher Education." UUPers spent their time attending workshops and plenary sessions on topics ranging from academic freedom to ways to protect members as the economy continues its downward spiral.

Several workshops focused on issues important to contingent faculty, many of whom are worried about job security as campuses in New York and other states implement cost-cutting measures to make up for revenue cuts.

At the conference, UUP President Phil Smith, VP for Professionals John Marino and Stony Brook HSC delegate Ora James Bouey were workshop moderators. AFT President Randi Weingarten delivered the conference's keynote address on "Fighting for America's Future: It's Dollars and Sense."

And UUP was honored with the President's Circle Award, the highest of AFT's new Higher Education Political Action Awards handed out during the conference. UUP was one of 16 locals to win the honor.

The main theme of the conference was summed up during "Stronger Together," a



Above, UUP President Phil Smith addresses more than 400 AFT members during a plenary session at AFT's annual higher ed conference.

Right, VP for Professionals John Marino makes a point about the importance of effective contract language for professional staff during a workshop at AFT's higher ed conference.



March 7 plenary session discussion designed to promote intra-union solidarity. Smith, who moderated the session, urged the more than 400 members in attendance to work toward that goal.

"We can't achieve unity by hiding diffi-

culties and competing interests under the table," Smith said. "As difficult as this might be, we have to be in the open in confronting these issues to get past them."

Members listened as AFT Organization and Field Services Deputy Director Jessica Smith read results from an eye-opening survey of conference participants showing how their sometimes negative views of other members impede unity on campus.

"It's through learning that you break down the walls and eliminate barriers and effectively work together better," said Stony Brook HSC delegate Carolyn Kube.

Reminders/Upcoming meetings

- **March 20**—Entry deadline for the UUP 2008-2009 Journalism Competition
- **March 20-21**—Chapter Presidents/New Leaders Workshops, Saratoga
- **March 23-24**—NYSUT Comm. of 100, Albany
- **March 27**—UUP Executive Board, Albany
- **April 2-4**—NYSUT RA, Buffalo
- **April 23**—UUP Executive Board, Albany
- **April 24-25**—2009 Spring DA, Albany

Daily Freeman—March 10

The budget and SUNY

<http://www.dailyfreeman.com/articles/2009/03/10/opinion/doc49b18f228dafc220715542.txt>

Among the numerous aggrieved members of the Family of New York in this winter of our state budgetary discontent are the State University of New York and its students.

Seeking to close a projected \$15 billion gap in a \$121 billion state budget, state leaders have imposed a \$620 increase in annual tuition on SUNY students. Fully 90% of that increase is being garnished for the state's general operating expenses, with the campuses retaining only a paltry \$62.

Advocates for SUNY object. Students, for instance, took their grievance to Albany last week.

SUNY New Paltz President Steven Poskanzer makes a case that the use of an estimated \$122 million in extra tuition payments statewide to cover the state budget deficit is simply wrong. Poskanzer said the state's garnishing of the tuition revenue is akin to "using the university like an ATM machine for the rest of government."

Poskanzer says tuition money should "be used for what students are paying for and (should) not be diverted to other than what they are paying for."

Point taken. Tuition should be for education.

There is a practical virtue in restricting the use of tuition payments to education: It makes the strongest possible connection between that paying of hard-earned tuition money and the status of a student as a fully vested consumer of classroom instruction.

Simply put, you tend to value what you pay for and, consequently, are more likely to insist on getting your money's worth. In that way, a faithful relationship between tuition paid and education received imposes a transactional discipline that benefits both students and university. ...

The New York Times—March 2

Well-Regarded Public Colleges Get a Surge of Bargain Hunters

http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/02/nyregion/02suny.html?_r=1&hp=&pagewanted=print

Admissions officers at the State University of New York college campus here are suddenly afraid of getting what they have always wished for: legions of top high-school seniors saying "yes" to their fat envelopes.

Students are already tripled up in many dorm rooms after an unexpectedly large freshman class entered last fall. And despite looming budget cuts from the state, which more tuition-paying students could help offset, officials say they are determined not to diminish the quality of student life by expanding enrollment at their liberal-arts college beyond the current 6,000 undergraduates.

At SUNY New Paltz, as at many other well-regarded public institutions this spring, admissions calculations carefully measured over many years are being set aside as an unraveling economy is making less expensive state colleges more appealing.

(excerpts of selected newsclips)

The application deadline is not until April 1, but officials here conservatively predict 15,500 students competing for 1,100 spots, a 12 percent jump over last year.

Similar surges are occurring at public colleges and universities across the country, education experts say. ...

Private colleges, which are more expensive than public institutions, are facing a different problem: worried about losing students, they are trying to find ways to increase financial aid.

In the SUNY system, the biggest growth is at its eight four-year technology colleges, whose vocational degrees are in demand because of their practicality; they have seen 11 percent more applicants than last year. ...

The Legislative Gazette—March 2

UUP: SUNY budget cuts too deep

http://www.legislativegazette.com/back_issues/09-3-2_for_web.pdf

United University Professions members from SUNY campuses statewide gathered in Albany last week to meet with lawmakers and call for the restoration of higher education funding and the implementation of a progressive income tax.

UUP President Phillip Smith said, "This year we face the worst year we've had in a long time. The budget cuts that SUNY has suffered — and by the way SUNY took the largest hit — is a serious threat to the vital health of SUNY. We can't absorb any more cuts. The budget knife has gone deep into the bowel."

Smith said under the proposed budget cuts, students, faculty and staff would suffer and "quality academic programs are going to be seriously jeopardized." He warned that without restoration, the funding cuts could lead to class cancellations and possibly delayed graduation for some students, which he called "costly, unfair and intolerable."

Several lawmakers spoke at the UUP event and show their support for the state's university system and address the union's concerns. Senate Higher Education Committee Chairwoman Toby Ann Stavisky, D-Queens, praised New York public education saying it is a "Tiffany product at Target prices."

Stavisky also said as the economy changes it is becoming more of a "knowledge-based" economy and education needs to remain a top priority. "We've got to make sure we keep that iron triangle," she said. "Higher education has to be affordable, accessible and there must be accountability, or in other words, high quality. Those are the three key areas, and SUNY certainly fits the bill."

Assembly Majority Leader Ron Canestrari, D-Cohoes, told UUP members education is a top priority and the Legislature is aware that existing revenue streams are insufficient. He said taxing the wealthy will not be a complete solution but would be a "step in the right direction."

UUP says a progressive income tax, which would tax those with higher incomes at a higher rate,

would create more state revenue and reduce the need for spending cuts in the budget.

Senate Majority Leader Malcolm Smith, D-St. Albans, assured members the Legislature understands the importance of the university system and is not "hard headed" and can recognize when changes are needed.

Senate Minority Leader Dean Skelos, R-Rockville Centre, said the wrong message was sent to students when lawmakers voted to take 90% of the SUNY tuition increase away from the campuses. "As we move forward and look at the deficit reduction money that's coming in, we've had to prioritize that education is our number-one responsibility for our children and to make sure the money that was stolen from SUNY through tuition is restored."

Under Gov. David A. Paterson's tuition plan, 90% of the revenue raised through the recent tuition increase will go directly to the state and 10% will go back to the schools. The amount given back to campuses would increase each year as the state's economy improves, according to Paterson.

Paterson spoke at the annual SUNY luncheon the same day and addressed many of the same concerns but stressed the cuts he had made were necessary in the current economic situation and that they are not representative of a callous administration. "The cuts that hurt me the most were the cuts to SUNY because these are the institutions that house 438,000 students, 40 campuses that are going to get us out of this unseemly situation. And to have to do this at this time doesn't illustrate our inability to grasp that concept; it shows the desperate situation we are in."

Paterson went on to say that he is optimistic about the "dynamic" incoming SUNY chancellor, Nancy Zimpher. He said her strategies have been successful in other places and is hopeful she will bring the same success to New York.

UUP outlined its legislative agenda for the year, saying members want to see restoration of the \$148 million cut during the current fiscal year, an increase in SUNY's operating budget, the institution of a progressive income tax in New York and a replacement of the \$25 million cut from SUNY's three teaching hospitals with an additional \$40 million in support. Smith said UUP is calling on lawmakers with the hope they will "help SUNY stimulate the economy of New York state."

While speaking with reporters outside the luncheon, Paterson defended the actions he has taken so far regarding the budget and said even with federal stimulus money and a progressive income tax, the deficit would not be closed and it is important to focus on long-term solutions. "This gets me to the cutting phase they want to ignore," he said.

"If we just use the stimulus money to cover them for the next two years, they are doing the same thing many of these advocates have done to New York in the past," the governor said. "The debt comes due. I'll stay here until my partners in government, and I can bring you a deficit-reduction plan that not only balances the budget but sets a new culture of budget balancing in the future."