

Connection

Binghamton Chapter, United University Professions



Let's Revise the Strategic Plan!

by **Jim Dix**
Chemistry Department

It has been interesting to see the campus reaction to the Strategic Planning Council's Strategic Plan draft document (http://provost.binghamton.edu/strategic_plan.htm). Themes about the plan's deficiencies have emerged from discussions in the Faculty Senate, and in meetings with the provost, deans, and faculty. Some of these themes are technical, mostly centering around the perception that the document is neither strategic nor a plan. But there are some substantive themes that emerge.

One of the themes is the weakness in formulating a comprehensive strategy and plan for one of our core competencies: undergraduate education. The plan makes the usual proposal to use educational technology to do more with less, but by and large we view the draft Strategic

Plan as speaking primarily to the graduate and research end of our mission.

Another theme is the trepidation about just how much growth the Strategic Plan proposes. According to the draft, we are "small enough to want to grow." (Did you know that's what we want?) "In order to increase ranks of faculty through hiring, we should continue to increase enrollments in existing programs," and "The prevailing assumption should be that the University must consider when to open a new school or

program, not whether to do so."

And then there is disagreement about resource allocation. The draft Strategic Plan states that "resource allocation to the Graduate School should be increased to enhance its ability to serve the institution's growing needs."

In fact, we academics and professionals have been telling the Strategic Planning Council (1) that undergraduate education is actually important enough to be addressed comprehensively, (2) that we don't want

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From the Chapter President

Political Recollections

by **Darryl M. Wood**
Anderson Center

The current political situation reminds me of growing up in the late '60s and early '70s. We were stuck in Vietnam with young Americans dying every day, poverty running rampant and many questions being raised about our president. My favorite band, Chicago, came out with a song in 1972, "Dialogue, Part I and Part II," whose lyrics have stayed with me for over 30 years.

You may remember Robert Lamm's still relevant opening words, "Are you optimistic 'bout the way things are going?" with the response, "No, I never ever think of it at all." I continue to wonder where our country is going and whether we have



made mistakes we won't admit to.

"Will you try to change things, use the power that you have? What is this power you speak of and this need for things to change? I always thought that everything was fine." We are told that everything is fine, that the economy is going in the right direction, that civil liberties should be abridged in the name of fighting terror and that another tax cut for the wealthy will solve many of our problems. Maybe I have been

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Dump Warner

It's been noted that our State Assemblyman, Bob Warner, features the BU campus in his re-election campaign ads. But what's Bob done for BU lately? "Nothing!" according to Darryl Wood, BU Chapter President. He couldn't even find it in his wisdom to support the legislative override of the governor's veto of funding for important BU programs in 2003. (See UUP endorsements, page 3.)

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The editor welcomes letters and other comments of interest to the Binghamton Chapter.

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Hype Is a Poor Basis for Decisions

by **Jim Dix**
Chemistry Department

The political season is upon us. Luckily, living in New York, we have been spared the brunt of the political war waged in the media: given that venerable institution, the Electoral College, and its winner-take-all approach, New York will cast all of its votes for the Democratic candidate for president. And, as that convicted felon Martha Stewart used to say, that's a good thing.

Despite the seeming irrelevance of a New Yorkers' vote for president, we nonetheless seem to ponder about how to cast our vote. Just how is the decision made? In an interesting essay in the *New Yorker* a while back, Louis Menand of the CUNY Graduate Center argues that few voters make informed, independent, issue-based political decisions. Instead, decisions are made based on words and images, promulgated by campaign managers, that resonate in one's social context. The words and images leading us to vote one way may in fact be against what we really believe in or be against our self interest. How else can one explain why anyone who works at BU would vote for Bob Warner, one of the few people in the state Legislature who has consistently voted against reversing Pataki's vetoes of funding bills for SUNY.

Here at Binghamton, we don't vote for BU president, but in some senses we are a microcosm of the larger political arena. We are presented with words in the BU web home page proclaiming we are among the

elite; words in a *Pipe Dream* letter from the dean of the Graduate School claiming that graduate students earn an average of \$21 per hour and are therefore well paid; and words in a Strategic Plan saying BU "provides all students with exceptional opportunities for faculty mentoring and individual interactions." Like the effect of political machinations during election season, we may come to believe such things, especially if they are presented in our BU social context.

This reminds me of a fable attributed to Abe Lincoln. Honest Abe was chewing the fat with a farmer, and said, "If I told you that a dog's tail was a leg, how many legs would a dog have?" The farmer replied, "Well, then the dog would have five legs." Lincoln replied, "Well, no, the dog would still only have four legs. Just because I call a tail a leg doesn't make it one."

Proclaiming BU to be among the elite doesn't make it so: we are ranked at the bottom of the 25th percentile of all universities nationwide; six of the nine University of California schools are ranked above us and we're tied with a seventh. Proclaiming graduate students to be well paid doesn't make it so: the *Chronicle of Higher Education* states that BU has the lowest stipends for English graduate students in the country. Proclaiming all students have exceptional opportunities for faculty mentoring doesn't make it so: in Chemistry, as elsewhere on campus, we cannot offer independent study to all our majors because we don't have enough faculty.

These claims may resonate with us because they fit in with the social context of our work. We teach here, and if someone proclaims that this University is ranked near the top, pays our graduate students well, and takes care of all of our students,

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UUP Endorsements Based on Record, Not Party

by **Robert Pompi**
Physics Department

UUP joins New York State United Teachers (NYSUT) and American Federation of Teachers (AFT) in the endorsement of candidates who have supported the aims and mission of public higher education. We do not endorse candidates in every race despite the fact that individual members might feel very strongly about a candidate.

We joined AFT in their endorsement of the national presidential ticket of **Kerry** and **Edwards**. This endorsement was based upon the candidates' documented voting records on the expansion of higher education opportunities with Pell Grants, loan forgiveness, and tuition tax credits. On key issues of concern to education, Senator Kerry voted our way 97% of the time.

We endorsed Senator **Schumer** because of his support of Pell grant enhancement, his opposition to those aspects of the Homeland Security Act which limited our freedom to pursue intellectual pursuits in either libraries or in our choice of reading matter, and his actions on behalf of our members who were having unnecessary visa difficulties.

We have also endorsed:



Donna Lupardo, Democratic candidate for State Assembly and a BU alumna, talks with UUPers Jim Dix (Academic VP), right, and Bob Pompi at a fundraiser for Maurice Hinchey on Sept. 19 at Mountain Top Park, Town of Binghamton.

Congressman Hinchey
Congressman Boehlert
State Senator Libous
Donna Lupardo for State Assembly.

The endorsement process is very open in that we attend a meeting with our UUP and NYSUT colleagues from across the state in August at NYSUT headquarters in Albany. We have available the voting record of every NYS member of Congress, and the state Assembly and Senate. We identify overriding issues of concern to the educational



Congressman Maurice Hinchey, second from right, in discussion with UUPer Beth Kilmarx, at his Sept. 19 fundraiser.

community and vote to either endorse or not endorse a candidate based on how the candidate voted on these issues. We do not take a position on an open race, one in which no candidate has a record of performance. Since we endorse based upon record, a new candidate for office seldom receives an endorsement unless the incumbent has strongly disappointed the educational community.

This is the case in Broome County where we have endorsed Donna Lupardo for the Assembly over the incumbent Robert Warner.

Last year, we desperately had to override the governor's veto of several legislative add-ons which preserved TAP, EOP, and a capital improvement program for SUNY. Robert Warner refused to join in the override and thereby lost our endorsement. However, Senator Tom Libous did vote for the needed veto override. Consequently we now endorse his candidacy for the Senate.

UUP's support of a candidate is based exclusively on the candidate's record of support for higher education issues we deem important for the success and further development of SUNY.

Occasionally the Binghamton UUP Executive Board votes to endorse a candidate running for a local office. After reviewing the candidacies of Vince Pasquale, **Barbara Fiala**, and Jeff Kraham, the Binghamton UUP Executive Board voted to endorse the winner of the Pasquale-Fiala primary. In the past, when we have made simple requests of Mr. Kraham to do something like join the coalition of mayors and county executives in support of SUNY, he has declined.

We endorse both Democrats and Republicans. Our only issue involves public higher education and SUNY. Please remember to vote on November 2. We sincerely hope you will consider our endorsed candidates when it comes time to pull the levers.

The Facts about IDA Eligibility and Health Insurance Benefits for Part-Timers

by Beth Turcy Kilmarx
BU Campus Part-Time
Concerns Representative

At one time or another, just about every UUP employee in the SUNY system has had a question or two about their union benefits and/or their eligibility for certain UUP sponsored programs. Whether UUP employees contact their campuses' HR offices or union officials, they should all receive accurate and up-to-date information from either source.

However, confusion about benefits and program eligibility does arise periodically, particularly when the questions involve part-time employees.

For example, Jim Dix, vice president for academics, was recently contacted by a new part-time faculty member. This individual had a question about health care benefits and also asked Jim about eligibility for an Individual Development Award (IDA).

On arriving on campus last summer, the faculty member had erroneously been told that there was no such thing as health benefits for part-time faculty/UUP members. It was a good decision to try to verify this misinformation with a UUP official. Here are the facts about IDA and health care benefits eligibilities for part-time UUP employees:

If you are a professional employee, then the IDA activity must have occurred or will occur during the time that you are employed and represented by UUP.

For health insurance, if you are paid at a salary rate that is \$11,142 or more during the period of July 2, 2003, and July 1, 2004, or \$ 11, 532 or more between July 2, 2004, and July 1, 2005, then you are eligible for health insurance while you are employed. If you are paid at a rate that is less than these amounts, then you are not eligible for health insurance.



If you are an academic employee whose professional obligations are primarily other than teaching classes, then the criteria described above for professionals apply for the IDA and health insurance benefits.

If you are an academic employee who teaches fewer than two courses in a semester, then the IDA activity must have occurred while you were employed. You are not eligible for health insurance.

If you are an academic employee who teaches two or more course in a

semester, then you are eligible for 26 weeks of health insurance, and the IDA activity must take place while you were covered by the health insurance (not just during the semester while you were teaching). This is the 26-week rule in the IDA announcement. Please note that if you teach two or more courses for two consecutive semesters, then you are eligible for a full year of health insurance, and the IDA activity could take place anytime during that year.

There's a good lesson to be learned here: read the collective bargaining agreement and double check information with your union representatives.

Another source of accurate information is the *Guide for Part-time Employees*. The guidebook contains pertinent information on many different topics including hiring, appointment durations, appointment types (temporary, term or continuing/permanent), direct compensation, Flex Care accounts, pensions and health care insurance when you retire. This handbook is free. To get a copy, please contact Kathy Zentz in the UUP chapter office <uup@binghamton.edu>.

De Russy Quits Committee but Remains a Trustee

SUNY's most outspoken trustee has resigned her chairmanship of the trustees' Academic Standards Committee because she said the administration is blocking efforts of the policy-making board and she "will not be dictated to" by administrators, according to Michael Gormley in the *Albany Times Union* (Oct. 16).

In her letter of resignation, addressed to SUNY Provost Peter Salins, De Russy claimed that he and Chancellor Robert King are "out of order... This is a trustees' com-

mittee. The trustees, not you and the chancellor, set the agenda. Further, it is not your place or the chancellor's to refuse to report or comply with members' requests. ... I cannot and will not tolerate the irregularities which have prompted this action; I cannot and will not be dictated to by system administration."

Gormley provided the following background to this interesting development. De Russy ran the committee that evaluates and helps set policy to raise academic standards

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Provostial Conversations Over the BU Strategic Plan

by **Jeanne Eichelberger**
Libraries

Like many, I was unsettled by the fact that the UUP survey results showed wishes and expectations on this campus to be considerably different from the future envisioned by the draft Strategic Plan for the University. So, I attended one of the meetings arranged by the provost for discussion of the Strategic Plan.

It was a Friday afternoon, and there were about 8-10 of us, including professional staff, faculty and at least one graduate student — in addition to the provost and two members of the committee which drafted the plan. Our lively discussion lasted over an hour and a half.

The future of instruction at BU arose repeatedly and with urgency. Faculty and students expressed worry that research and graduate programs are going to be developed at the expense of undergraduate instruction. In reply, it was said that the concern is unfounded: strong research and graduate programs, far from diminishing undergradu-

We all have serious unresolved questions.

ate programs, actually nourish them by providing high-quality graduate TA's and top-ranking scholars to instruct undergraduates and provide a stimulating academic atmosphere. Moreover, the original Binghamton vision as a university center in SUNY contained a more or less equal balance between the undergraduate and the graduate and research components; the undergraduate programs have been our primary focus until now, and it's time for the graduate and research programs to play catch-up.

There were questions about plans for developing and maintaining an adequate infrastructure, support staff and library resources, to support the projected new programs. The response to this was an assurance that the infrastructure will also keep pace and that it is not the purpose of the Strategic Plan to go

into that level of detail.

Faculty questioned the logistics of the interdisciplinary approach, including appointments in more than one department (said to be awkward) and the so-called "fluid" allocation of space and equipment to project-oriented groups which may disband after only a few years. We were told that the Strategic Plan does not go into this level of detail, and we shouldn't worry about it. The purpose of this plan was not to address logistical questions but to encourage people to think outside the box and take new approaches to things. When the time comes, the details will work themselves out.

The underlying main theme of the plan is clearly money. On the one hand, we have money problems and must address them creatively and immediately. At the same time, I sensed an undercurrent of malaise about the fact that money so clearly seems the primary driving force behind the Strategic Plan.

Comparing notes with colleagues who attended some of the other meetings, I find that we all have serious unanswered questions. Yes, this plan has a lot of energy, and it does contain interesting, even exciting, ideas that are well worth consideration. But as of now it seems short on specifics. I came away feeling as though the answer to our questions was, don't sweat the small stuff; it'll be OK. "Don't worry; be happy" is a nice, upbeat approach to life, but is it really a "strategic plan" we're talking about here?

De Russy Quits Committee but Remains Trustee

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at SUNY and has regularly sparred with the chancellor and his staff. This year, she battled King to provide data on SUNY academic performance included in a strategic plan called "Going Forward."

She told Gormley, "The chancellor vehemently objected to providing any of the documentation I requested." King then was "castigating me for daring to act as the trustee chair, and ordered me and the provost to follow his wishes for the agenda ... all of this in the interest of avoiding public disclosure and accountability."

De Russy has also railed against the chancellor's private meetings with the board to discuss tuition increases and other topics outside the public's attention by intention-

ally avoiding the state Open Meetings Law. She has said that the administration failed to provide her the information she sought on initiatives that would have raised academic standards and even compared the academic performance of SUNY and its campuses.

She also told Gormley she will remain a SUNY Board of Trustees member and continue to wage her battle against King, Gov. George Pataki's former budget director, and the rest of the board who, like de Russy, were appointed by the Republican governor.

SUNY spokesman David Henahan said the Academic Standards Committee sets its own agenda for the meeting, not the chancellor and the provost.

Any Changes?

Please notify the UUP office if you have a change of address or a name change. Unless you give us this information directly, we are unaware of the change. You can e-mail our office at uup@binghamton.edu or contact Kathy at 74382.

Open Meeting on BU Campus Vision Survey Conducted by UUP, Sept. 21



Stephen Straight (left) and Paula Russell



From left: Jim Dix (academic vice president of the BU Chapter), Anne Convertino, Karen Fennie, Katie Ellis, and Ingrid Husisian

Political Recollections

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wrong in my concern about our country.

“Does it make you angry the way war is dragging on? Well, I hope the president knows what he’s into, I don’t know.” I thought the mission had been accomplished many months ago when that plane landed on the carrier. I guess the continued bombings and deaths are part of some other action the president does know about that we don’t.

The final lyrics to Part I are: “Thank you for the talk. You know you really eased my mind. I was troubled by the shapes of things to come. Well, if you had my outlook your feelings would be numb, you’d always think that everything was fine.” Having listened to our president, maybe I should think that everything was fine. He keeps smiling as he tells me to believe in him. How can I not trust someone who is so compassionate?

Part II begins, “We can make it happen, We can change the world now, We can save the children, We can make it better.” I have always believed that collective action can achieve much, that the world can always be a better place, that our

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to grow very much, and (3) that resources should be put into our teaching mission; but this should come as no surprise, for we are the very same people who filled out the UUP Vision Survey (<http://uupbinghamton.org/survey.htm>), which addressed those very same themes. Our response to questions 6, 7, 12, 14, and 16 of the Survey clearly indicates that we view our teaching mission as very important; our response to question 5 of the Survey indicates we perhaps want to grow a little bit, but not a lot; and our response to questions 12 and 13 indicates that resources should be put into teaching.

When I hear something that goes against a preconception I’ve formed, I may tend to discount what I’ve heard. But then I hear the same thing in a different context, and I tend to take what I heard more seriously. We have now told the Administration in two separate contexts what we want the University to be five to ten years from now. We can’t change the UUP Survey results, but the Strategic Planning Council can change its Strategic Plan. Let’s hope they listen carefully to what we have said, both in direct response to the draft plan and in the Survey, and change the Strategic Plan accordingly.

**Tuesday,
November 2 is
Election Day. You
can make it better!
But only if you vote.**

children are the most important people and that our role is to make it better. I hope you believe the same.

Tuesday, November 2, is Election Day. You can make it happen, You can change the world now, You can save the children, You can make it better! But only if you vote.

Voting: It's Your Right — and Duty

by **Frances L. Goldman**
Asian and Asian American
Studies Program

Our president proudly proclaims to all that we are a democracy and, as such, our model is one that should be replicated worldwide.

On some level, isn't that why we are now fighting in Iraq and Afghanistan? Aren't we being told that by providing for a free and democratic Iraq and Afghanistan our country will be safer? If this is true, then we should surely exercise our right to vote to keep democracy at home as well.

But as citizens, do we actively participate in the one process that helps to guarantee that democracy prevails — voting? The answer unfortunately must be, not to the extent that we should. For

years, voter turnout at national elections has been poor, not to mention what happens for state and local level elections. We have all heard the excuses or made them ourselves: "my vote doesn't really count;" "I do not like any of the candidates;" "it really doesn't affect me," etc.

Article I of the Constitution specifies the qualifications for and the manner in which members of the Senate and House of Representatives are to be elected. Article II lays out the parameters for the election of the President.

It is interesting to note that the Founding Fathers were generally not in favor of the masses having the



right to vote which helps explain the existence of the Electoral College's role in presidential elections. It took the passage of six amendments (the Fifteenth, Seventeenth, Nineteenth, Twenty-third, Twenty-fourth and Twenty-sixth) before all U.S. citizens were guaranteed the right to fully participate in the electoral process. Thus, it is important that we acknowledge and continue to give legitimacy to those who fought for the right of all Americans to be able to play a direct role in the election process.

Thomas Dye asserts that elections give legitimacy to government. Help in making sure that our government is held accountable by exercising your voting privileges on November 2.



Benefits Information for New Staff

UUP has recently been participating with the Benefits Office in the New Employee Orientations for Professionals.

Starting in September, 2004, a UUP representative from the local chapter has conducted a brief introduction of our UUP organization on campus to these new professional employees. We want to instill a sense of belonging on campus and that UUP is here to help become better acquainted with the campus community and with our organization. The importance of becoming a member of UUP is also discussed during this introduction.

The schedule of upcoming orientations for New Professional Employees for this Fall is as follows:

Benefits Office Conference Room
Tuesday, November 9, 10 a.m.
Tuesday, December 7, 10 a.m.
Wednesday, December 22, 10 a.m.

For current professional employees who are not members (fee payers) and would like to become a member, please contact Ed Chidester, Membership Development Officer 7-2048 or e-mail echidest@binghamton.edu for more information.

Ed Chidester
Business Office

Help Wanted

Most of us know that nursing home employees work very hard and often for unreasonably low pay. This means that they can use the help of unionization more than many other folks. (Union employees make about 20% more on average than comparable non-unionized workers.)

Locally, the S.E.I.U. is working at organizing employees of the Vestal Nursing Home. They have asked that any of us who know employees or residents, and would like to offer information that might help the organizing effort, get in touch.

The UUP Board has approved this effort. Please contact either UUP Board Member Stan Scobie (669-4683), or Board President Darryl Wood (777-2908); they can put you in touch with the appropriate people at S.E.I.U.

New Lots Open Only to Those Who Pay Up

by Jim Dix and Fran Goldman

Did you know that Binghamton University has built seven new parking lots in the past year, adding 844 new parking spaces? Well, before we all jump for joy, did you also know UUP members are forbidden to park in these new spaces?

It's true: the lots are restricted to those who have a paid parking hang-tag, which UUP members don't have because we don't pay for parking. We just pay to register our cars.

Our agreement with the state says that the Administration cannot decrease the total number of parking spaces or charge for parking without negotiation with UUP, but says nothing about new parking spaces. The Administration can decide to do whatever it wants with them. It has decided that UUP members can't park there unless they pay.

What's to be gained from not letting us park in the new lots? It's not at all clear to us, so we went to talk to BU Vice President for Administration Tony Ferrara, on whose desk the parking buck stops. Ferrara's response is that the Administration is responding to comments made at the University Forum two years ago and to comments from the campus community at large.

These comments indicated that some members of the campus com-



munity would be willing to pay for more convenient parking. By restricting parking in new lots now, the Administration retains flexibility in what the new lots can be used for in the future. If the new lots were to be put in the pool of UUP-available parking now, because of our contract with the state, they could not be restricted at some later date.

This response indicates a change

in the Administration's parking philosophy. Historically, almost all parking spaces on campus were available to anyone. The change is to have the new lots be restricted in some way. What the eventual restrictions will be is not clear.

Ferrara said that what lots are restricted, who will be able to park in the restricted lots, what the charge will be to park there, and other related matters are still being worked out. The changes will, of course, be within the parameters of UUP's contract with the state.

And what's with the reconfiguration of the lots down by the Events Center? Apparently, gates will be installed, so that those parking lots can be sealed off for special events at the Events Center. People already parked there will be able to get out, but people who want to get in to park in those lots after the gates close will have to pay. Additionally, gated lots provide flexibility in reconfiguring parking sometime in the future.

So there you have it: significant parking restrictions are now and will be part of campus life. Let us know what you think.

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Making Decisions

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well, I for one feel like adopting that world view. But it's a warped reality field. It ain't necessarily so.

As we make decisions about who to vote for next week, we should make informed, independent, issue-based decisions. Let's hope the decision makers on this campus follow the same procedure when they make decisions about our University.