

Connection *uup*

Binghamton Chapter, United University Professions

Summer Blockbusters at the BU Multiplex

by **Jim Dix, Fran Goldman,
and Serdar Atav**

Shared services across SUNY, the BU Challenge Grant proposal, more tuition dollars (?), contract negotiations: Over the summer, these four initiatives gained considerable momentum, enough momentum to appear as large, impending blips on our radar screen.

Shared Services

In the middle of June, the SUNY Board of Trustees passed a resolution called “Effective Resources Alignment through Shared Ser-

vices.” In the past month, the implications of this resolution have started to become clear.

Each of the 32 state operated campuses has been placed in one of 12 groups. Our group has two campuses: BU and Upstate Medical University. Each group of campuses is expected to implement at least shared administrative services, enhanced procurement effectiveness, and (!) realignment of academic programs and course offerings to improve academic quality and delivery along with administrative efficiency.

How this will play out with BU

and Upstate is not at all clear. We already have some collaborations through the Clinical Campus, where third and fourth year Upstate medical students take clinical training at Binghamton. Questions remain: In the future, will BU be expected to teach classes for the first two years of medical school, perhaps using online methods? As part of shared services, it looks like three pairs of state-operated campuses will eventually each share a president: Canton and Potsdam, Morrisville and SUNY IT (Utica-Rome), and

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Campus Construction Season One of BU’s Busiest

by **Karen Fennie
Physical Facilities**

Summer 2011 was one of the busiest construction seasons in Binghamton University’s history. The projects had a major impact on campus since many took place or are taking place at central locations. The work is part of the current five-year, \$550 million dollar capital plan approved by the governor and state legislature.

While some projects—such as the renovation of the southern portion of the Lecture Hall, classroom renovations in the Library, the Newing residential halls and Chenango Champlain Collegiate Center and improvements to the Memorial Courtyard—are complete, others

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Binghamton Chapter newsletter
Number 78 September 6, 2011

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An official publication of the Binghamton Chapter of the United University Professions, Local 2190 of the American Federation of Teachers, AFL-CIO, and affiliated with New York State United Teachers; the Binghamton Chapter is a member of the Broome County Federation of Labor.

The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors or of the Binghamton Chapter and are not necessarily the opinions of United University Professions.

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

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From the Chapter President

Being There: About Faculty, Zucchini and Administrative Consultation

by Jim Dix
Chemistry Department

President Bobby: *Mr. Gardner, do you agree with Ben, or do you think that we can stimulate growth through temporary incentives?*

Chance the Gardener: *As long as the roots are not severed, all is well. And all will be well in the garden.*

President Bobby: *In the garden.*

Chance the Gardener: *Yes. In the garden, growth has it seasons. First comes spring and summer, but then we have fall and winter. And then we get spring and summer again.*

President Bobby: *Spring and summer.*

Chance the Gardener: *Yes.*

President Bobby: *Then fall and winter.*

Chance the Gardener: *Yes.*

Benjamin Rand: *I think what our insightful young friend is saying is that we welcome the inevitable seasons of nature, but we're upset by the seasons of our economy.*

Chance the Gardener: *Yes! There will be growth in the spring!*

Benjamin Rand: *Hmm!*

Chance the Gardener: *Hmm!*

President Bobby: *Hm. Well, Mr. Gardner, I must admit that is one of the most refreshing and optimistic statements I've heard in a very, very long time.*

President Bobby: *I admire your good, solid sense. That's precisely what we lack on Capitol Hill.*

(Dialogue from the movie, *Being There*)

For the first time in about ten years, I spent the summer in Binghamton. One of the joys I experienced

was planting a garden in the back yard, and watching it take root and produce a veritable phantasmagoria of colors and shapes and objects that I could eat. It took a long time to get the garden in shape, by sifting rocks out of the soil, adding all sorts of amendments, pulling weeds. But now, I'm eating these luscious tomatoes and zucchini and zucchini and zucchini.

You probably know where I am going with this. Binghamton University is currently planting the seeds for what we will be like in the near and mid-term future. We are pulling up the soil around campus and planting new buildings. Decisions we make now will determine what BU will be like 50 years from now. It is critical that we make the best possible decisions, to reap the best possible fruit and vegetables of our labors.

The best possible decisions are made transparently, with wide consultation. A good example of this kind of decision making is that used to determine how to spend \$550 million in capital funds at BU (summarized in Karen Fennie's article on page 1). The University held open meetings on the Facilities Master Plan and actively solicited input on the plan. Although the meetings were sparsely attended, the transparency and consultation were clearly there. It was inspiring to contribute to and see the outlines of what Binghamton will look like for the next 50 years.

Other management decisions, however, lack transparency and consultation. For example (as described elsewhere in this newsletter), did you know that by 2016, BU plans to use its \$14 million increase in "income" (obtained by admitting 2,000 additional students at higher tuition) to hire 150 new faculty mem-

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Online Teaching and Faculty Workload Issues in the Days of Budget Austerity

by A. Serdar Atav
School of Nursing

As budgets for higher education institutions are slashed across the country, universities are desperately trying to do more with less. With fewer adjuncts and teaching assistants, most faculty are teaching more crowded classes. Exacerbating this situation are new initiatives and programs in some schools and departments at BU for distance learning and online teaching that increase faculty workload.

From the perspective of faculty members, online teaching, especially asynchronous teaching, is more labor intensive and time consuming. Those of us who have taught online courses have experienced the ordeals of dealing with a virtual classroom environment that is in session 24 hours a day seven days a week, requiring an inordinate amount of dedication and time.

Binghamton has been rather slow to offer online courses or programs. As a result, unlike some other uni-

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bers? Who made that decision? How was that decision made? Who was consulted on that decision? My answers to those questions are: I don't know, ditto, and certainly not me or UUP.

Now is the time we should be able to influence what kind of university BU will be.

If we don't think strategically and tactically about what we want, and work to get what we want, we may have growth in the spring but find that we have planted one too many zucchinis.



Serdar Atav

versities that have dedicated offices and staff for distance learning, we lack even the basic software and hardware infrastructure. Indeed, some technologies exist in certain classrooms, but at the moment, other than the rudimentary capabilities of Blackboard, there is no University-wide supported software for online teaching. Faculty who teach online courses are experimenting with Blackboard, Camtasia, Elluminate or Skype with little or no training or technical support.

UUP has a vested interest in faculty workload issues related to online teaching and distance learning. The time and effort devoted to an online course may well exceed a traditional course and therefore, the workload of the faculty member may need to be adjusted accordingly.

The situation gets even more complicated when some faculty members are asked to teach an online section of a traditional course taught in a classroom. In this sort of scenario, the faculty member teaches the traditional course in the classroom to regular students and then teaches the same course to an entirely different group of students via distance learning. Using two entirely different pedagogical techniques, the faculty member basically teaches two courses covering the same content. If these two courses are listed under the same course name and number, then they may be counted as a single course towards the faculty load.

In the absence of any clear policies or guidelines for the contribution of online teaching to a faculty member's teaching load, UUP is concerned that the expansion of distance learning will further tax faculty who already carry heavy teaching loads. In these days of budget austerity, faculty may feel reticent to speak up about their workload, especially if they are not tenured. In order for UUP to take proactive steps, we need to hear from faculty members who teach online courses. We encourage faculty members to contact their UUP officers to voice concerns regarding online teaching and other matters.

State Police Warn of E-mail Hoax

(From *BU Dateline*, Aug. 18)

New York State Police have received complaints about spam that appears to have hit a large number of e-mail addresses. The e-mail has an attached file containing a traffic ticket (Ticket-064-211.zip) that contains malware. Some, but not all, recipients report that the malware was caught by their anti-virus software.

If you receive such an e-mail message, delete it immediately and do not open the attachment, which has several malicious capabilities and could take control of your computer. ITS reminds everyone to avoid opening attachments from unknown users or suspicious e-mails from trusted sources.

Summer Blockbusters at the BU Multiplex

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Cobleskill and Delhi. We are in the middle of a presidential search. Will we be expected to share Upstate's president? And most importantly from a union perspective, what impact will shared services have on academic and professional jobs here at BU?

Internationally and nationally, shared services among higher institutions have encompassed mostly business and IT activities with some examples of shared library services. The focus on realignment of academic programs and course offerings in the SUNY system pose a serious concern, particularly from the perspective of autonomy and academic freedom. Furthermore, in some institutions of higher education, consolidation of IT and business services has involved outsourcing, resulting in a decrease in jobs. Will the same thing happen at BU when shared services are implemented?

The implications of shared services are still very unclear. We are closely monitoring developments to evaluate the impact on the terms and conditions of our employment, as well as broader impact on the academic mission of the University.

NYSUNY 2020

On August 9, Governor Cuomo signed legislation to implement the NYSUNY 2020 Challenge Grant Program. This legislation authorized \$80 million in new state capital funding, matched by \$60 million from SUNY, for the four university centers, for a total of \$35 million for each campus. (The legislation also included an increase in tuition; see below.) To receive the capital funding, each university center had to write a proposal stating what they would do with the money.

BU has submitted its proposal (although recently, BU's web site lists the proposal as "under revision"). The original proposal combined the \$35 million from SUNY and the state with \$70 million gen-

Not much of the additional construction is for classroom space to teach an increasing number of students.

erated by BU (\$20 million from a capital gift campaign, \$40 million in corporate and in-kind donations, and \$10 million in cash reserves), for a total of \$105 million in new capital construction costs.

Over the next six years, BU would use the capital funds to construct a new Health and Natural Science Research and Instructional Facility "to connect Binghamton's expertise in the natural sciences with its growing infrastructure in engineering and biotechnology to create new medical and life sciences technologies." The new facility would be constructed next to the ITC.

\$15 million of the funds would be used to equip the Center for Excellence under construction at the ITC. The equipment will "enable the exploration of a broad range of topics at the intersection of the healthcare sciences and technology in areas including chemistry, biochemistry, physics, health and life sciences technologies, psychology, advanced materials and sensor technologies, computing and systems research."

Finally, BU would use \$2 million to construct a new regional economic development center that would be located in downtown Binghamton. The center would "provide economic development resources and expertise for businesses and organizations throughout the Southern Tier

and the I-81 and I-86 corridors."

Whew. That's a lot of new stuff for BU, coming on top of the hundreds of millions of dollars of construction already done on campus as well as construction for the new expected law school. The construction would certainly enhance BU's research presence and its presence in the community.

However, one has to question some of the decisions the University has apparently made. Spending \$105 million on new construction is not going to do much good if the operating budget of the University (cut by 1/3 over four years) continues to decline. We may have new buildings, but not have the money to light them. And not much of the additional construction is for classroom space to teach an increasing number of students.

Also, using \$10 million of Binghamton's cash reserves for capital construction doesn't appear to be a good use of the reserves. Capital construction costs should be borne by the state, not by the campus. A much better use of the reserves would be to enhance the educational mission of the University (for example, hire new faculty, keep professional staff, and offer more student counseling).

And how did this \$10 million in cash reserves suddenly appear? Given the dire straits the campus has been in, why did the administration not use these reserves to shore up our budget? It doesn't make much sense to save for a rainy day when a flood of biblical proportions is occurring.

More tuition dollars

The legislation containing the NYSUNY 2020 provisions also allows campuses to raise tuition up to \$300 per year for the next five years. The legislation did not include differential tuition, whereby university centers could increase tuition more than the other state-operated campuses. However, university cen-

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ters were allowed to increase their fees by \$75 and increase tuition for out-of-state students by 10%. The UUP statewide leadership has been against differential tuition, but this looks like the proverbial camel's nose under the tent.

The tuition increase this year amounts to about \$80 million total increase in operating funds to the state-operated campuses. This may seem like a real increase until one realizes that the state cut the operating funds for this year by \$100 million, so we really don't have an increase, but just less of a decrease. The intent of the legislation is that the increase in tuition would not result in a concomitant decrease in state aid, so next year, we should have a real increase in operating funds.

Given that Binghamton's budget for this year was set at the beginning of the last academic year, it looks like we have new money to use in key areas. The amount of new tuition money at Binghamton this year is somewhere between \$3.5 million to \$7 million, depending on who one asks.

We have not received word yet on how BU will allocate this money. Two likely areas: BU has a structural deficit this year, and some of the money could be used to reduce that deficit; and funds could be used to grow the faculty. From UUP's point of view, however, the top priority should be to reverse the tide of non-renewals of professional staff for budgetary reasons.

BU's plans for spending tuition dollars in succeeding years are revealed in its NYSUNY 2020 proposal. The plan is increase enrollment by 2,000 students by 2016, eventually providing an additional income of \$14 million per year. The increased tuition money will be used to hire 150 new faculty members; to fund "infrastructure support services" for faculty members; to cover the increase in the Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) generated by

the increased tuition; and to support graduate tuition scholarships and stipends. Nowhere in the proposal is an explicit mention to hire professional staff to complement the increased number of faculty and students. Given that professional staff are key in the instructional and research mission of the University, coupled with the recent decrease in number of professional staff, the lack of explicit mention to hire new professional staff in BU's NYSUNY 2020 proposal is a grave oversight.

Contract negotiations

We're finally talking to the state about our new contract! On August 25 the UUP Negotiations Team and the state exchanged contract proposals. Details about UUP's and the state's proposals were sent to the membership in an e-mail message a few days ago. In a nutshell, the state wants to negotiate over salaries, health care costs, and length of the contract. In addition, the state wants to add an article to the contract about "Deficit Reduction Leave" (read

forced unpaid vacation leave). UUP's contract proposals are much broader than the state's, and encompass our suggestions from the lengthy information gathering period over the last 12 months.

Although we don't know the specifics of the state's proposals, it is not too hard to guess what they will be, given what is in the new CSEA contract and what is in the tentative agreement between PEF and the state. The "Deficit Reduction Leave" is another way of saying furloughs (forced unpaid vacation leave), if the new CSEA agreement and the proposed PEF agreement are anything to go by.

UUP does not bargain based on patterns established by other unions, nor do we negotiate in the press. There are many details pertaining to the contract that will have to be negotiated. These details on the contract negotiations will be sent via the UUP Binghamton listserv and also posted on the statewide UUP website (<http://www.uupinfo.org>) as they become available.

New 'Professional Horizons' Feature Will Highlight Creativity and Scholarship

by **Sylvia Rabeler**
Art History

With "Professional Horizons," we are introducing a new recurring segment in this newsletter, dedicated to recognizing the aspirations and achievements, of Binghamton University professional staff. Our goal is to heighten awareness regarding the professional, scholarly, often interdisciplinary and creative work being pursued by UUP professional staffers—work which often goes beyond the expected boundaries, of their regular positions. We hope this segment will inform and inspire, as well as open communication between individuals with common interests.

Beginning with the next UUP newsletter, we will follow a two-part

format consisting of one or two paragraphs about a featured professional, followed by a bulleted list of recent milestones achieved (as submitted) by all professional members. Milestones will include the publication of articles, attendance at conferences, the completion of degrees or training programs, scholarships, promotions, awards received, events in the arts, and the like. Since some people are shy about their success, we would like to ask you, all our readers, to contact us about colleagues, whose efforts you think should be recognized.

To our professionals specifically, *please* share your success with all of us. Send submissions to Sylvia Rabeler at srabeler@binghamton.edu.

Update on Campus Construction Projects

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will continue through the fall.

Information and recent photos of most projects can be found on the Physical Facilities website: <http://www2.binghamton.edu/physical-facilities/construction-news.html>.

This page is updated on a regular basis with project information and photos. The department shares information about significant construction activities such as road closures or electrical shutdowns via the Physical Facilities listserv and Dateline and B-line.

In addition, project coordinators and designers often meet before a project starts with building administrators and others when there are projects with big impacts. This was the case with the Central Campus Quad project, in which faculty and staff helped review construction areas and identify access issues.

Construction is dynamic and not everything can be anticipated, but Physical Facilities is committed to working closely with contractors to minimize impacts and inconveniences whenever possible.

Below are brief notes on some of the major projects. Contact Karen Fennie in Physical Facilities if you have any questions.

East Gym

Big improvements are underway at the East Gym. If you go to the link referenced above, you will get a sense of the expanded fit space area and the brighter feel to the oldest building on campus. This project will be complete for the spring 2012 semester.

East Campus Housing

The Newing residential buildings are complete, as well as the Chenango Champlain Collegiate Center. Hope you take advantage of the tours offered today! The co-rec field will remain fenced off until next year so that the turf can become well established.

Demo of the old Delaware and Chenango halls is complete.

Endicott Hall will be coming down soon. Most of the work right now is focused on the storm water management system and site utilities. Excavation will be underway before long, and steel for the new Dickinson buildings will start going up early next year. They will open in fall 2013.

Lecture Hall Concourse

The south portion of the Lecture Hall concourse was updated along with improvements to Lecture halls one and two. This is a much more colorful space now. There was a tremendous amount of work to accomplish in a very tight time frame, since 66 percent of the concourse was renovated. New seating for the concourse was ordered on schedule, but there were some manufacturing delays and we now expect to have this seating in place in the next few weeks. Bulletin boards will also be installed in the coming weeks. Next summer, the north portion of the concourse will be renovated.

Chenango Room

Much of the demolition work for this project is complete. The contractor will soon be putting up steel

for the expansion and begin reconstruction of interior spaces. The Chenango Room will re-open fall, 2012.

Central Campus Quad

The contractor on this project has made a lot of progress and is a bit ahead of schedule at this point. You can see the new fountain and work is underway on new walkways through the area. This work will continue into November. The contractor will return next spring to finish work with overall completion by fall, 2012.

Library Deck Addition

Steel for the addition was expected to arrive around Labor Day. The contractor has cleared the site and put in footings for the steel. This project will be complete in late fall, 2011. This new space will connect to the Jazzman's Cafe in the Library Tower.

Memorial Courtyard

This project involved painting the panels on the walls of the Fine Arts Building that face the courtyard. There were also improvements to the landscaping in the courtyard.

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Professional Staff Continue to Be Non-Renewed

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

I have met with several members of the professional staff over the summer who have been told that they are being non-renewed for budgetary reasons, while others have simply been told they are not being renewed, with no reasons given, after several years of satisfactory reviews.

While President Magrath has stressed that the administration will protect professional staff with permanent appointment (that is, there will be no retrenchment), this does not seem to hold true for those who do not have permanent appointment.

I have also heard of cases in which individuals have been hired at 95 percent so that their status gives them little protection from non-renewal because they are not full-time employees



and, according to the agreement between the State and UUP, can be let go with only a 45-day notice.

The largest majority of these individuals provide support services which directly affect stu-

dents and faculty. In an environment where the student body continues to expand—and there has been a tuition increase as well as additional fees as new sources of revenue for the campus—it is mystifying that the administration continues to target professional staff without permanent appointment.

While members of other bargaining units receive permanency in a relatively short time and thus seem to be immune from similar fates, professional staff in UUP must wait seven years before they reach this

milestone, and are thus vulnerable for non-renewal. The administration took advantage of this vulnerability over the past four years to help deal with budget cuts.

Now, with new sources of revenue, the continued non-renewals of professional staff for budgetary reasons borders on the unsupported, especially in light of the roles they play within the campus community and their willingness to take on more work and go above and beyond their performance programs.

While I do realize that it is management's prerogative to regulate the workforce as they see fit, it does appear that they had used this method to help keep the budget in line and are continuing to use this method despite the easing of the fiscal crisis.

Management, at the very least, should be more upfront about their practices.

Update on Campus Construction Projects

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Water Line Replacement

The contractor has completed installation of new water line at several locations on campus. Work will occur inside buildings, mostly in mechanical spaces, in the next couple of months. Site restoration is also taking place where new lines were put in. A hand rail will be installed along the walkway between the Library and Engineering Building. The new walkway from parking lot E to the Anderson Center should be complete in early September.

Athletic Fields Upgrades

Demo of court facilities and varsity baseball field is underway. The

courts will be repositioned in a north/south orientation. When complete, there will be 12 tennis courts, six handball courts and two basketball courts. There will be a new varsity baseball field with new dugouts, bleachers and press box. A women's varsity softball field will also be constructed on the west fields. The tennis courts on the east side of campus, which are open for use at this time, will also be replaced. The entire project is expected to take about a year to complete.

Additional Parking Near Library

Construction of additional parking space on the west and east side of the Library is continuing. We expect

this work to be complete by early September.

Donate to Hurricane Victims Via NYSUT

UUPers may make donations through NYSUT's Disaster Relief Fund at:

http://www.nysut.org/cps/rde/xchg/nysut/hs.xsl/members_6990.htm

Please help any way you can.

Appeal Committee for Professionals Seeks Volunteers

by Fran Goldman
Asian American Studies

UUP is seeking interested individuals to serve on the College Review Panel Committee. The committee's membership serves on a two-year rotating basis, and this year two positions will be open. This committee, as outlined in Appendix A-28 of the current agreement, directly relates to issues of salary increases and promotion for professionals.

Under the provisions of the appendix, a decision at each level below the president must be made within 45 days of a proposal being forwarded for either a "promotion" (defined as a change in title, SL, and salary) or a "salary increase." If no decision is made within that time frame, the proposal is regarded as "denied" and the professional employee can appeal that decision to the College Review Panel. The College Review Panel is a committee of professionals elected by professionals that reviews denied requests and makes a recommendation to the president of the university.

If you wish further clarification on the committee, the complete text of Appendix A-28 is available in the agreement, pages 99-108, or on the web at <http://uupinfo.org>. Just click on the Contract at the bottom of the page and follow the links to the appendix.

If you are interested in participating, please contact Kathy Zentz, Chapter assistant, at 74382 or e-mail her at uup@binghamton.edu no later than **September 19** and let her know you would like to serve. Please also include a short bio that we can include so that those voting are aware of your experience.

If you have questions, please call me at 74938 or e-mail me at frances@binghamton.edu.

A Proposal: Three-Years-to-Permanency for Professional Faculty

by David Stone
Physical Facilities

The contract between the United University Professions and the State of New York provides for tenure in a position after a seven-year period for academic faculty and, in the case of professionals, permanency. Attaining these appointment levels requires meeting specific, and quite different, criteria in each classification; but although the length of time is the same, it appears to be based on the needs of academic evaluation. The period of seven years allows the academic to accomplish the research and publishing traditionally required for university tenure.

I question the value of such an extensive period of time for the evaluation of professional faculty.

Professionals do not, as a rule, engage in research and publishing as a requirement of their positions. The Professional comes with a set of skills and knowledge of current best practices and immediately fills the needs of the position. Educational pursuits are typically of a self improvement variety rather than the generation of new knowledge. It is because of this difference that I see the seven-year time period as exces-

sive for professionals. If one looks at this from the management perspective, how can so much time really be needed to recognize a failure to perform professional service at an acceptable level?

Therefore, I am advocating three years as a more appropriate time frame for permanent appointment of professional faculty. During this time, employees should have sufficient time to acclimate to the campus culture and prove themselves capable of handling the duties of the position. And the manager should be able to evaluate the employee and determine if expectations are being met.

Use of the three-year time frame improves the employment picture in a number of ways. Importantly, it allows much greater confidence on behalf of employees regarding their future with the University; it reduces instability for their loved ones; and it allows employees to concentrate on the duties of their position and increases job satisfaction. This also provides management with a level of confidence that the right person is in the position, and it allows managers to concentrate on other challenges within their areas of responsibility.

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