

Connection

Binghamton Chapter, United University Professions



King Calls for Additional \$50 Million for SUNY

In a remarkable statement to the Senate Finance and Assembly Ways and Means Committees on February 5, SUNY Chancellor Robert L. King broke ranks with the Pataki administration and called for an increase in funding of \$50 million beyond the essentially flat SUNY budget proposed by the governor. King also called for a complete restoration of the governor's proposed cut to EOP. A complete version of his testimony is available from the UUP office, X7-4382 or uup@binghamton.edu. It forms a strong affirmation of concerns which UUP has been advocating over the last five years.

... My message to you today is simply that our state-operated and statutory colleges need additional operating budget resources if we are to continue to provide New York students with access to higher education and maintain the improved quality of that education. We simply can no longer assure you or the people of New York State that both goals can be met without additional operating resources...



Chancellor King

An increase of \$50 million would enable us to repair much of the damage that was done and provide all campuses with some increased revenue...

We have pared back our expenses as far as anyone can reasonably expect. A just-published report on university efficiency and effectiveness clearly demonstrates how well we have done with limited resources. But all efficiency eventually affects quality – and I am here, today, to tell you we are that point, academically and financially... We are asking you this year to restore those funds that were not provided in the enacted budget so we can make whole those campuses who contributed to solve the crisis [created by last year's budget]...

The number of full-time faculty

members has declined despite the enormous growth in enrollment. Our campuses can no longer stretch their budgets to hire these professors, relying instead on adjunct faculty. Although part-time faculty often do a marvelous job teaching, they do not advise students, develop curriculum, conduct research or participate in campus governance activities...

I urge you to find the resources necessary to restore the \$820,000 reduction contained in the proposed budget [for Educational Opportunity Pro-

grams] so we can maintain this important program at its current level...

We look forward to working with you to adopt a budget that preserves the extraordinary gains SUNY has made in enrollment, in quality, and in advances to the body of knowledge that improve the quality of life here in New York... Unfortunately, we were not able to secure this level of funding [last year] and this caused a considerable disruption in our campus budgets, a disruption that still exists even now... And, we have achieved a lot. But it was only through the remarkable efforts of our faculty and presidents and staff that we have been able to manage so well through this past decade. Unfortunately, our run of successes may be drawing to a close... we are now seeing clear signs that our campus budgets, stretched so thin these past few years, are nearing the breaking point...

UUP Frozen Out of Parking Lot

by Jim Dix and Fran Goldman

Parking at Binghamton University has always been somewhat of an egalitarian affair. There are no special faculty-only lots, no student-only lots, no reserved spaces for administrators. A permit allows one to look anywhere on campus for a space (excluding spots in paid parking lots, and spots for the handicapped, state vehicles, and the like).

That is, until recently. The new parking lot to the southwest of the Events Center, lot F3, is now restricted to students and others that have hang tags. This represents the

first instance of a student-only parking lot – no faculty or professional staff allowed! Members of UUP (and CSEA) currently pay a registration fee of \$20, but no parking fee. No parking fee means no hang tag, and no hang tag means you can't park in lot F3.

As many of us will recall, parking has been a contentious issue be-



Translation: faculty and staff, you can't park here!

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Editor

George D. McKee
gmckee@binghamton.edu

Circulation Manager

Beth Kilmarx

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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.

UUP Chapter Officers

Darryl Wood
dwood@binghamton.edu
President

James A. Dix
dix@binghamton.edu
Vice President for Academics

Fran Goldman
frances@binghamton.edu
Vice President for Professionals

Edward Shephard
Secretary/Treasurer

Jeanne Eichelberger (Co-chair)
Mary Beth Willis (Co-chair)
George McKee
Darryl M. Wood
Grievance Committee

Dennis Selzner
Labor Relations Specialist

Kathy Zentz
Chapter Assistant
uup@binghamton.edu

Chapter phone 777-4382

From the Chapter President

Movin' Along with UUP

Chapter Membership Rises Sharply to 90%

by Darryl M. Wood

You, the members of the Binghamton Chapter of UUP, are doing a good job! Membership in UUP is up from a year ago to almost 90%. Your having joined UUP is a signal that you believe in the mission we have outlined – protecting your jobs, rights and benefits. More importantly, you also believe in the goals we have been striving for during these past few years – protecting SUNY from budget cuts, politicization, and reduction of access.

Your membership will also bring you the opportunity to vote on the contract once it is negotiated – fee payers cannot vote. It also sends a powerful message to the campus administration and SUNY-Central



about your support for UUP. That support is especially important as we negotiate a new contract and advocate with our elected officials for additional funds to sustain public higher education in New York State.

If you would like to join, go to the UUP web site, <http://www.uupinfo.org>, and follow the links for Welcome/Join to complete an application.

You should also be congratulated for your contributions to VOTE/COPE, NYSUT's non-partisan political action fund. As part of NYSUT's 500,000 membership and more than \$5 million in VOTE/COPE funds, UUP's message – your message – is clearly heard in Albany.

UUP is currently in the midst of a campaign to sign up new contributors. As of late December, Binghamton had contributed more than 10% of the statewide increase and raised our campus' participation by more than 30%. Your payroll contribution of only a dollar or two makes a significant difference.

If you would like to add your voice, please call the chapter office, X7-4382, and we will send you a card. Again, your voice will make a difference in Albany.



'Shout for SUNY'

BU chapter members call for full funding at a UUP rally at the State Capitol in Albany Jan. 30. L to r: Darryl Wood, Beth Kilmarx, Jeanne Eichelberger, Jim Dix, Ed Chidester.

What Kind of School Are We? – Part 2

by Rob Van Buskirk
Dept. of Biological Sciences

I was recently reminded of Professor Dix's column in the last issue of *Connection* (November 2003) that challenged staff, faculty and administration to make decisions about our future. I had complimented Jim about his article, and he asked that I consider writing a guest editorial as a sequel to this challenge to all of us to define our future as a University.

I had the opportunity to represent the Innovative Biotechnologies Center during an interview with candidates for the position of vice president of research here at BU. One particular issue was space allocation in the sciences. One candidate simply agreed that this was a political issue; while another candidate said that he has addressed the problem successfully using an Excel spreadsheet. I feared that the latter candidate might ask me an embarrassing question. And he did!

“What is your current space allocation policy in the sciences?”

With a reddish tinge to my face I explained that while I have been here now two decades, I am confused about the space policy at the University. The “policy” was once controlled by individual science departments, and now it may be controlled by the administration. But if this is the case, it is unclear how space is currently controlled and what the 5-year plan is for optimizing research space in the sciences.

The conversations then focused on research versus teaching. All of the ORC directors at the interview agreed that it is critical to preserve our teaching quality, but it is incumbent on us to further develop our research activity. This latter emphasis should, in part, direct the University's future hiring plan. But having stated this fact, I feared that one of the candidates would ask me yet another challenging question. And he did!

“What is your current Univer-

**We need a rational
plan for allocating
space and
hiring faculty**

sity hiring plan?”

I sidestepped the question using jargon often employed by political candidates and referencing one of my more recent experiences downstate. I explained that I had been invited to do an external review of the Biology Department at a downstate NYS university. The department in question felt that it should hire new faculty based on teaching needs. The administration felt that hiring should be thematic or clustered in nature: the department would identify a current area of

strength and propose to the administration that all new hires will be identified based on their *probable* contributions to this new theme. Building faculty in this thematic area should, in turn, increase the reputation of the University as a whole.

Once we couriered the news of the administration's wishes to the department, the department embraced the message positively and responded, “We didn't know we could hire in this manner.” There may be similar wishes by our administration at BU that, once known by the faculty, will be equally as well received.

I present only two issues that need to be addressed and for which policies should be considered. But it would be folly to do so now without a fundamental 5- and 10-year plan put forth for the University as a whole. All of us can provide input into this plan by completing the

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From the Vice President for Academics

Pie in the Sky– Sayin' Don't Make It So

by James A. Dix
Chemistry Department

The Middle East crisis will be solved by May of this year. The US budget deficit will show a surplus next year. Binghamton University will create ways to reduce cost per student and simultaneously improve quality.

Which one of these improbable statements does the BU administration think is true? According to the PowerPoint slides presented at the University Forum last month, it's statement number three. Now I may be just an unfrozen caveman university professor, but it seems to me that *just saying somethin' don't make it true.*

Did the 4% cut in the BU instructional budget this year in any way improve quality? Did the lack of an increase in full-time faculty in the face of a 20% increase in enrollment over the past 10 years lead to an improvement in quality? Is there any way to reduce cost per student and improve quality? Let me count the ways: 0.

And then there was the forum slide that BU will create “high tech/”



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Major Media Filtering Keeps Labor Stories Hidden

by Hilton Baxter
Harpur College Office

In 1989, researcher John Tasini studied ABC, NBC and CBS for a year to see how much coverage was devoted to workers' issues. He found it amounted to a dismal 2.3 percent of all coverage. In fact, all three networks carried only 13 minutes of coverage on workplace safety for the entire year! The worst offender was NBC Nightly News, which devoted a total of 40 seconds to worker safety. This is not surprising, since its parent corporation, GE, has an appalling work safety record.

— Jeff Cohen and Norman Solomon, *Through the Media Looking Glass: Decoding Bias and Blather in the News* (Monroe, Mass.: Common Courage Press, 1995. p. 125)

You're not likely to see information like this in a mainstream newspaper, and even less likely to see or hear it on commercial television or radio, and it doesn't take much imagination to figure out why. The news sources which people depend on have biases, one of which is to minimize attention to stories that might embarrass their owners or advertisers. Self-censorship in profit-driven news media is a behind-the-scenes factor every citizen should be aware of.

Mainstream news isn't biased just about what gets covered, but who gets to talk about it. When you watch or listen to a news program, or read an article, it's interesting to consider who hasn't been interviewed or given a chance to discuss their perspective.

• For example, one would think that a media criticism show like CNN's "Reliable Sources" would include guests with a wide range of critical viewpoints. Media watchdog organization Fairness and Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR) analyzed one year of the show and found that women were significantly underrepresented (less than one-



third as many female guests as males), ethnic minority voices were almost non-existent, and citizens' groups received no representation at all.

See www.fair.org/reports/index.html

Citizens' groups represent what citizens care about, yet one wouldn't even know such organizations exist from "Reliable Sources." And workers are the vast majority of the news media's audience. Shouldn't a significant percentage of reports (if not the majority) cover the conditions workers face in their jobs, the challenges they (we) face, wage issues, and so on? But usually, most media treat these topics as minor news, hidden or ignored.

• Here's an aspect of the grocery store worker's strike (in progress at the time of this writing) which you might not learn about from mainstream news sources:

Major grocery chains claim they need to "stay competitive" in order to compete with the Wal-Mart stores encroaching on their territory and undercutting prices - yet Vons', Ralph's and Albertsons' combined profits are 91 percent higher than they were four years ago. Further, only about 25 percent of these supermarkets need to compete with a Wal-Mart in a given area. In terms of

profitability, each of the Big Three surpassed Wal-Mart in the Fortune 500. Meanwhile, 15 corporate executives earned \$70 million last year amongst themselves.

See www.alternet.org/story.html?StoryID=17040

• Here's an "undiscovered" news story that could affect UUP members more directly:

Economists studying workforce issues say as many as a third of the jobs lost since 2000 were white-collar, ranging from computer programmers to accountants, engineers and lawyers. Indeed, the big story may be how corporations are "offshoring" the very jobs pro-globalization politicians and academics have long said are the American laborer's salvation. Offshore outsourcing of white-collar jobs is easier than moving factories overseas. With no [physical] products involved, there are no tariff issues. And should one outsourcing country develop political troubles, the contract can be shifted to another provider in a different country. Meanwhile, with few U.S. white-collar workers unionized, resistance is minimal.

<inthesetimes.com/comments.php?id=412_0_2_0_C>

• A similar outsourcing process may threaten government jobs, including academic positions, even as it strengthens those who outsource the jobs in the first place:

Bush has proposed opening up 850,000 federal jobs - about half of the total - to private contractors. And while doing so may or may not save taxpayers much money, it will divert taxpayer money into private sector firms, where the GOP has a chance to steer contracts towards politically connected firms [those which contribute to the GOP. For example, Florida] Gov. Jeb Bush, the president's brother, has outsourced millions of dollars' worth of work formerly performed by government employees to private con-

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Hidden Stories

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tractors. There's little evidence that doing so has improved state services, as the governor's own staff admits. But it has vastly improved the financial state of the Florida Republican Party.

See <www.washingtonmonthly.com/features/2003/0307.confessore.html>

Many mainstream news sources are sensationalistic, shallow, and barely do more than repeat what a limited selection of sources says. But there are news organizations that go deeper than that, or at least pay attention to wider ranges of issues (such as union and education topics). Many of these alternate news sources are small, non-profit groups, focusing on investigative journalism (rather than "source" journalism – simply reporting what a source says, usually at a news conference). In addition to those already cited, here are a few:

<www.projectcensored.org>
Media research group at Sonoma State University which identifies news stories of social significance that have been overlooked, under-reported or self-censored by the country's major national news media.

<www.motherjones.org>
An independent nonprofit dedicated to investigative reporting publishes a bi-monthly magazine.

Radio Host Goodman Coming to Campus Feb. 26

Amy Goodman, host of the radio program Democracy Now!, aired locally on WSQX, will be at the BU Anderson Center on Thursday, Feb. 26, 7-9 p.m.

Her topic is "Independent Media in a Time of War and Elections." Attendance is free and open to the public.

<www.thenation.com>
Self-described "unconventional wisdom since 1865," a weekly magazine (biweekly July-late September) and online.

<www.commondreams.org>
A daily compilation of "newsclips" for those deluged with information but without time to scan or read it all, highlighting perspectives that are increasingly hard to find in corporate-dominated media.

<www.truthout.org>
Similar to Common Dreams (above).

<www.globalissues.org/TradeRelated/Corporations/Labor.asp>
The labor section of a web site with over 5,000 links to articles, web sites, reports and analysis, a comprehensive starting place for those interested in human rights, environmental, trade and geopolitical issues.

No media or web site is perfect, but there are ways to get a more complete picture of trends and events that affect our work, workplaces, families, community, country and world.

At the UUP Legislative Luncheon in Albany Jan. 20...



BU Chapter member Bob Pompei, right, greets Barry Grodenchik, Binghamton alumnus and state assemblyman.



Darryl Wood, right, BU chapter president, and Assemblyman Bob Warner share concerns over the politicization of the SUNY Board of Trustees.

Parking in the Woodlands, Revisited

by Laurie M. Kasperek
Biology Department

I read Julian Shepherd's article, "Parking in the Woodlands: View of the Auto Environment," in the UUP newsletter *Connection* (November 2003) with interest and plenty of agreement.

Having come to Binghamton University from Cornell University's Center for the Environment seven years ago, I have witnessed the expansion of Binghamton University's runoff due to increased numbers and sizes of parking lots and loss of natural buffers – all of which do not begin to address the real parking issues. Cornell University presents a model for possible parking control that is right in our own backyard.

Cornell University is a commuters' university. Its faculty, professionals, staff, and graduate students live in a multi-county area, traveling many miles to work and class each day. My daily commute of 50 miles one way was not the longest drive by far. In the early '90s, Cornell realized it had a serious parking problem. Cornell's traffic department made an innovative experiment – one that worked so well, they were still using it 10 years later, and are, hopefully, still using it now.

The Cornell solution

Cornell wrote for a grant and received monies to implement an expanded bus service for all faculty, staff, and students of the university. They contracted with the local Ithaca bus lines to provide increased routes and times of runs. Anyone holding a university ID of any type was allowed to use the bus within Tompkins County for free – any time, any day.

For commuters living outside Tompkins County, they contracted with independent bus services in those counties to make at least twice daily runs to and from the Cornell campus. The riders of these routes had a portion of the monthly cost



subsidized by Cornell, and the remainder was automatically deducted from their pay. When I was a part of this program, the split was \$20/\$40 bi-weekly for service from Owego. A very fair and acceptable rate, considering the amount of gasoline, wear, and frustration saved.

Additionally, any commuter participating in the program was issued six free "tickets" to park legally on campus each semester. This meant that, for the days when one really did have to leave early, or one really had to stay late, one could drive one's own car without worry. It encouraged us to really prioritize when we needed our car on campus. Many of us found we never used all our six free parking passes.

The last piece of the program, one that broke down the last barrier, was the "emergency ride" component. Any employee in the program could call for an emergency ride home in the event of a family emergency or illness that made waiting or riding the bus unendurable or unacceptable. The "emergency ride" would take employees to their homes (even if in another county) or their cars (again, often parked somewhere else in another county or along the county

bus route).

Cornell immediately felt an easing of the parking crunch and many employees flocked to participate. Our bus from Ithaca to Owego was always nearly full and those of us who rode it gained a sense of camaraderie one doesn't get sitting alone in individual cars. Seven years later, several people I met on the bus, from very different areas of campus, are still close friends.

Supervisors were all cognizant of the needs of their staff to catch their buses, and worked well across the campus to be flexible in their demands and work schedules. Yes, for me, taking the bus added a half hour one way to my commute beyond what it would have been if I did the driving myself. But add a minimum of 20 minutes walking up the hill from the parking lot and two tanks of gas a week – hands down, the bus was a savings.

Would a similar plan work at BU?

In speaking to fellow employees and hearing people talk about the tight to non-existent parking on campus, it is clear that most drivers to the BU campus feel that one of the attractions of BU over other large universities is the perceived freedom of being able to go off campus during the day. While this was very true up to a couple of semesters ago, those days are very clearly becoming a thing of the past.

We are fast approaching the congestion of other large campuses. Once a parking spot is found, especially on Tuesdays and Thursdays, we are not eager to give it up by going out for an errand at noon, or out to eat on the Parkway. We have already begun to think of *not* scheduling doctor appointments on those days. We are already fast becoming "trapped" on campus during the day.

Our BU mentality still seems to be one of seeking the freedom to come and go at will – I see students who clearly live close to the Univer-

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Survey Shows 166 Professionals Got DSI Awards

by Frances L. Goldman
Asian and Asian American
Studies Program

I would like to thank all the professionals who returned the DSI survey. Your responses were much appreciated. By returning the surveys, you directly assist in UUP's ongoing efforts to ensure that our constituents are aware of the DSI guidelines and have access to all relevant information.

One hundred and ninety-eight surveys were returned. Of those that responded, the data indicated that a large number of you received not only the July 15, 2003, memo from the vice presidents, but also other information from your supervisory chain regarding the process and criteria.

However, it appears that in Academic Affairs the number of employees who received information from their supervisory chain was

less than in previous years.

Based upon data from those who responded, a total of 166 professional employees received DSI awards (26 under \$500; 133 between \$500-\$1,000 and 7 over \$1,000).

It was also interesting to note that the greatest number of professional employees did not make a personal request for consideration but relied on their supervisors to put them forward for a DSI. Noteworthy was the fact that 49 professional employees were informed of the award by their supervisor prior to receiving the president's letter, while 78 were not. This strongly suggests that more work needs to be done in this area.

In addition, most professional employees are aware of the method for



determining awards in their area or department. The results of the survey, including the statistical data, were sent to the president and vice presidents.

I have had several inquiries concerning the reassignment of parking spaces near the Events Center. Although it is true that only those who have paid for parking on campus may use these spaces, which includes students and those faculty and staff who pay for the parking garage, I have been assured that an equal number of parking spaces were created in the same general vicinity for faculty and staff who do not pay to park.

Despite the fact that "warning only" notices have been placed on vehicles, it would seem that this modification in parking arrangements should have been communicated to the University community prior to the changes.

Parking in the Woodlands, Revisited

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sity or to a bus stop still choose to bring their car to campus. BU does not have the attractive college town environment that makes walking a short distance to pick up a quick supply or eating off campus just as close as 'a walk across campus' would be. Clearly we can never cover all the locations of employees and students with bus service, but we can make a very solid attempt to provide enough incentive to make riding buses attractive.

There are many employees who would welcome the "freedom" of not needing to bring a car onto campus every day – provided that the bus routes were expanded, included free fares for faculty and staff, and were very highly dependable as to several

choices of pickup and drop-off times. If a bus ran, for instance, four times per day up Powderhouse Road with a stop within a reasonable walk of my home, you bet I would take it – I can't begin to tell you how many dings and dents my vehicles have gotten over the past seven years in these tight spots; I can't begin to tell you the number of times my mirrors have been pushed out of position by passersby – but then you also experience all this! A dependable free bus ride down the Parkway would allow more noontime freedom than what is presently the situation.

Applying the Cornell solution would require some creative thinking and funding (grant searches and negotiation with the county) and would require all faculty, staff and

students to reconsider their personal sense of "freedom" as commonly portrayed by their vehicles.

Witnessing the destruction of the beautiful and necessary buffer of old trees in the grove by the new Events Center was depressing – especially the speed in which it was a *fait accompli* (shades of J.R.R. Tolkien here).

Clearly, 100 new spots will not solve problem. With tangible incentives, we need to encourage everyone not to drive a personal vehicle every day. I again admonish BU to investigate other methods of parking reduction – rather than parking lot construction – and also admonish others to offer innovative suggestions to reduce the number of vehicles, while still preserving a sense of freedom.

What Kind of School?

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forthcoming UUP survey about the future of the university, and by input into the Binghamton University Strategic Planning Initiative through its web site (http://provost.binghamton.edu/Strategic_Planning_Page.htm).

Our future must be carefully designed so that our unique strengths are preserved (teaching excellence) and our future research successes maximized. It is my strong opinion that the latter can be done successfully only if we consider thematic hiring a priority in the sciences and ensure that these designated research themes integrate in lockstep with current research strengths of the other University Centers. To quote Dr. Dix's article, it will necessitate the collective efforts of all of our staff, faculty and administration to help "this university become the kind of school we want it to become."

Parking Lot

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tween UUP and the BU administration. Some time back, the administration wanted to impose a parking fee on faculty and staff. UUP went to arbitration and prevailed: no parking fee for UUP members. It looks like the administration wants to open another can of parking worms. For faculty and staff to park in lot F3, we have to pay a parking fee.

Binghamton University (née Harpur College) has always had charming quirks, one of which has been the shared experience of faculty, staff, students and administrators hunting around for a parking spot at 10 a.m. on a Tuesday. Designating lot F3 as student-only parking lot brings us one step closer to being just another state university. What's next – special spots for the university president, vice presidents, deans, and department chairs?

Pie in the Sky– Sayin' Don't Make It So

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high touch" instructional delivery. Presumably this refers to the pop book of the same name, in which the author, John Naisbitt, talks about Western society's enthusiastic adoption of high tech (cell phones, instant messaging, e-mail) and concomitant longing for high touch (languid social intercourse). It appears that the administration wants us to cover both bases: deliver instruction electronically and at the same time spend lots of face time with students. All with a reduced cost per student.

I guess what irks me most is the reactive nature of this university: Oh, the state has cut our budget again, woe is us, so let's see how we can save some money. And then the disconnect begins: we will nonetheless increase the quality of education, we will increase enrollment to get more tuition money but not hire new full-time faculty, and so on. Hello?

I suppose there are limitations on what the administration here can do, since it ultimately reports to the SUNY Board of Trustees, and the Board of Trustees has become radically politicized by appointments made by Pataki.

We, as members of UUP, have no

such restriction, and we can adopt a much more proactive stance. By the end of this semester, I will have traveled to Albany and back six times, pounding home the message to state legislators that SUNY has to be fully funded and full-time faculty lines have to be restored.

Want to get in on the proactivism? Go to <http://uupinfo.org/>, click on "Fax" or "E-mail Your Legislators," and send the letter "2004-05 SUNY Executive Budget Impact" to your state legislator. Let's not be satisfied with the hand dealt to us by the state, but demand that the state give us a new deal.

What's Your Vision?

All recipients of this newsletter are urged to contribute to UUP's Binghamton University *Vision Survey*. If you have not already done so, please go to: <http://www.uupinfo.org/survey/vision.html>

**Thanks,
DMW**

United University Professions
Binghamton Chapter
LSG 516
Binghamton University
PO Box 6000
Binghamton, NY 13902-6000