

Connection

Binghamton Chapter, United University Professions



From the Chapter President

Serious Challenges Greet Our Return

by Darryl Wood
Anderson Center

We begin a new academic year with clouds on the horizon. From infrastructure to budgets, the campus is facing serious issues.

We ended last spring with serious budget problems facing the State of New York and SUNY. The governor called the Legislature back in session late in the summer and SUNY is now faced with cuts approaching \$150 million. It is still unclear what the impact on our campus will be. There has also been talk about mid-year cuts as well. This particular problem has not been faced by SUNY since the late '80s when Mario Cuomo was governor.

UUP worked all during the spring

and over the summer to mitigate these cuts and was only partially



successful in these areas. SUNY returned to many of its old ways by not forcefully arguing for its own survival. We may need your assistance again if further cuts are announced. We

are also in conversations with the campus Administration on all this and will report what we hear.

So far, the Administration has reiterated its longstanding opposition to any dismissals of current employees. They have continued to focus on preserving the academic

side of the campus with selected hiring in various areas on campus. Enrollment increases may exacerbate all this. We are hearing from both Academics and Professionals that support staff, of all types, are stretched to the "breaking point."

These stresses have been made worse with the implementation of Banner and BU Brain this fall. It appears, at least from early reports, that the system is not robust enough to handle all the needs of our campus. Campus employees are not the source of this problem.

The fall semester began first with a dearth and then a plethora of water. A system problem forced the campus to disseminate a "do not drink the water" advisory just as

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Greening Our Economy

by Assemblywoman
Donna Lupardo

Everywhere we turn, people are thinking "green." But what does this mean for our economy in the Southern Tier? Local economies that use "green" principles:

- invest in research and development of clean, renewable energy for economic growth;
- are actively developing a "green collar" workforce;



- understand that agriculture is a major economic driver, with vast potential in terms of the production of local foods and for renewable fuels; and

- are more energy efficient and environmentally friendly....

The good news is that here in

Broome County and in the Southern Tier we are already leading the way in many of these areas. Our university and community college, county and local governments, manufacturers, homebuilders, engineers, architects, farmers, energy consultants, environmentalists, policy makers, etc. are all playing an important role in advancing these "green" ideas. The one thing we have yet to do is incorporate these "green" efforts into

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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.

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Individual Development Awardees

Congratulations to the following faculty and staff, whose projects were funded by the Individual Development Awards program for July 1, 2007, through December 31, 2008.

The deadline for the next round of funding is October 10, 2008, with funding decisions announced by Halloween, for projects occurring January 1, 2009 through June 20, 2009.

(JD)

Ellen Badger
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Sandra Card
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Linda Tuyn
Jian Q. Wang
Julie Wang
Brandy Wilson
Thomas Wilson
Patricia Wrobel
Mohammad Younis
Lei Yu

Parking Ticket Grace Period Continues

(From BU Dateline) Ticketing for “no decal or permit” remains on hold for faculty, staff and students until Monday, Sept. 15, to allow time to purchase permits or receive pre-ordered permits via campus mail.

However, ticketing for commuter-lot violations, such as parking overnight, began Monday, Sept. 8.

Permits and decals can be purchased from Parking Services on the ground floor of the Couper Administration Building or from the Information Booth on Center Drive between 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. Monday through Friday.

Permit applications that were mailed in by faculty and staff are being processed and sent via campus mail. The campus will be notified on Dateline when all of the applications have been processed.

Want a Direct Say? Talk with Us

by Jim Dix
Chemistry Department

The Internet is a wonderful thing, especially when it comes to looking up information. For example, did you know that *US News & World Report* says our profession is a career offering “strong outlooks and high



job satisfaction?” That the Provost of the West Virginia University resigned last June after “high-ranking academic officers” apparently revised the academic record of the daughter of West Virginia’s governor? That a “cross-divisional team of more than 60 people” worked throughout the summer on the new Binghamton University website?

Back in the last century (circa 1995), information was harder to come by and was often disseminated person-to-person. Then (as now on the Internet) one had to weigh the information by the authority of the information provider. Clearly, inane ideas such as Saddam Hussein having anything to do with 9/11 would have never gained much traction then. Ha!

UUP Binghamton is so last century in its information gathering. Our community is small enough so that we can mostly figure out what is going on by talking with one another and weighing what we say. Talking amongst faculty is how UUP developed its list of academic issues for the coming year (see page 4). Talk with me if we have left out any issues you think are important. Later this year there will UUP chapter elections. If you want a direct say in what issues UUP addresses and how we address them, run for the Executive Board!

**Talking amongst
faculty is how UUP
developed its list of
academic issues.
Talk with me if we
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are important.**

One of the academic issues that could severely impact academics is the state-mandated budget cuts, amounting to several million dollars here at Binghamton. The budget cuts are a fait accompli, and the best we can do is to accommodate them. President DeFleur has stated that the majority of cuts will be felt

outside Academic Affairs, preserving as much as possible the academic mission of BU. Given DeFleur’s previously stated and realized priority for Academic Affairs (e.g., increasing full-time faculty lines), the current statement of prioritization of budget cuts is authoritative. Academics will not be spared, but we will be hit with less of a blow than the other four divisions.

More disturbing on the list of academic issues is the administration’s continued chipping away at faculty prerogatives. A student threatens the University with a lawsuit over a grade and the Administration pressures faculty to change the grade; to meet enrollment targets, an administrator overrides a faculty decision on non-admissions to a graduate program; curricula developed by faculty are rejected by administrators. These are not random samplings from unreliable sources on the Internet, but actual cases last year communicated person-to-person to UUP. They come authoritatively. The cases don’t quite rank with that of the West Virginia administrator actually changing student grades, but it is a tangled web that is woven.



Executive Board Deliberates New Agenda

At the start of each academic year, the Binghamton Chapter Executive Board holds an exceptional dinner meeting to “brainstorm” issues and priorities for UUP attention in the upcoming year.

Board members, pictured in the photos here and on page 5 at the current year’s meeting on August 27, are Serdar Atav, Jim Dix, Fran Goldman, Joe Goldman, Linda Lisman, Linda Morales, Bob Pompei, Tony Preus, Patrick Regan, David Stone, Mary Beth Willis and Darryl Wood.

A summary of the priorities among academics prepared by Jim Dix is printed at the right. (Professional concerns are discussed in Fran Goldman’s articles on pages 6-7). How would you like these issues to be resolved? What other issues are there that we need to address?

Let us know (dix@binghamton.edu; frances@binghamton.edu); or better yet, run for the Chapter Executive Board, yourself, and participate in this process. Elections will be held later this year.

Summary of Academics’ Priorities

- Usurpation of faculty prerogatives: Administration officials continue to pressure faculty to change grades and reverse decisions made on academic grounds.
- Salary inequities and compression: recent statistical data from UUP Central indicate unusual trends, such as salary inversion (the longer one works at Binghamton, the less money one makes).
- Resources: budget cuts and reallocations have decreased support for departments, increasing workload on faculty and staff, decreasing the services departments can offer, and hindering departments’ academic mission.
- BUBrain/Banner: the new system increases faculty workload (e.g., final grades have to be entered into Banner by hand, there is no spreadsheet import function); there are security holes (staff in one department can change data in another department); the help center is swamped with calls.

More meeting photos on page 5



Help Shape the Future — Vote

If you haven't heard, there is a presidential campaign going on. I would bet you would prefer not listening to all the ads on radio, seeing all the ads on television and listening to all the pundits telling you what is wrong with the candidates.

We, unfortunately, live in a political world and our lives are largely affected by what our elected officials do, and don't do, when 'representing' us. From school budget votes to presidential contests, your involvement in these processes is essential if elected officials are to truly represent us when they make decisions. UUP strongly encourages you to become involved in the political world.

If you haven't already done so already, register to vote. If you are a New York state resident, you have until October 10, either post-marked or in person, to register to vote in the general election on November 4. If you are a Pennsylva-



nia resident, you have until October 6, to register to vote in the general election.

If you are already registered, vote and encourage your friends

and colleagues to register and vote. If you are not registered, do so and then vote.

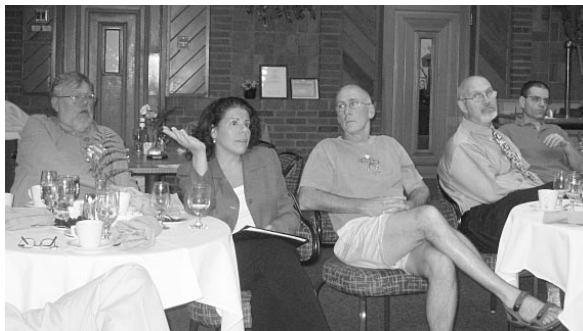
Your actions do matter.

DMW

Executive Board Deliberates New Agenda

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In August, the Binghamton Chapter Executive Board met to "brainstorm" issues and priorities for UUP attention in the upcoming year. If you have issues you would like to see addressed, contact Jim Dix (academics: dix@binghamton.edu) or Fran Goldman (professionals: frances@binghamton.edu).



U.S. News: SUNY Among Nation's Best

(From the SUNY website, Aug. 27, 2008) State University of New York schools earned top rankings in the 2009 edition of "America's Best Colleges" <<http://colleges.usnews.rankingsandreviews.com/college>> by *U.S. News & World Report*, including four in the top 12 public master's universities in the nation and four in the list of top national universities.

In addition, SUNY Old Westbury was ranked second in the category of most-diverse liberal arts school, and SUNY Geneseo was seventh on the list of up-and-coming destinations for students.

"These national rankings reflect the quality, accessibility, affordability and diversity of a SUNY education," said Interim SUNY Chancellor Dr. John B. Clark.

VP Marino To Visit Campus October 21

On October 21, John Marino, UUP's statewide vice president for Professionals, will again be visiting campus. While part of his time will be spent letting you know how the new contract can help Professional staff, he is also more than willing to answer questions on other areas of concern, such as promotion and salary increases, permanent appointment or performance programs.

It is also a wonderful opportunity for him to hear about other concerns and issues so that he can take them back to SUNY and the Governor's Office.

Please mark your calendars for October 21 from noon-1:00 in UU-324.

(FG)



John Marino

Professional Staff Elect Reps for Two Panels

Members of the UUP professional staff have elected Nancy Lamberty, Janice McDonald and David Stone to the Committee on Professional Evaluation. They will serve a two-year term along with management representatives, who are to be named by the president.

You have also elected Sara Ballard, Scott Geiger, Don Guido, Beth Kilmarx, Miriah Lane, Tony Poole, and Phyllis Terzella to the College Review Panel. Members of this committee will serve either a one-year or two-year term. The staggered terms will provide a mechanism for continuity by having new and seasoned members on the committee each year.

Thanks to all who took the time to vote for your colleagues for these very important committees.

(FG)

DSI — It Is important to Ask!

It is once again time for the awarding of discretionary salary increases (DSI). As you all know from the letter distributed by the vice presidents, the DSI is a way in which management recognizes the outstanding performance of professional staff over the past year. While each area and division have different procedures, there are two ways in which this can happen. One is for your supervisor to recommend you and the second is for you to write to your supervisor outlining what you have done over the past year that makes you worthy of being considered for DSI. From the evidence that I have received over the past several years through the DSI survey, it is apparent that most of you rely on your supervisor to do the asking. But it is perfectly acceptable to make your own case, and I would encourage you to do that.

(FG)



Administrators Float 'Alternative Work Options'

by George McKee
Library

In early June, there was an exchange among Chapter Executive Board members concerning a communication ("Alternative Work Options" — i.e., 10 months for 12) from the campus vice presidents. In response to SUNY's budgetary dilemma, it had been proposed, "while maintaining academic excellence as a priority ... that we explore alternative work schedule options."

Justifiably, colleagues feared this would lead to a reduction of the support of academic excellence, if not its actual scholarly performance; and at the Executive Board meeting in August, we were treated to the idea of a "perfect storm" of approaching bureaucratic failure, caused by the degrading of the classifications of colleagues in academic support, the reduction of their hours, and the increasing workload of enrollments and new information systems (viz. Banner).

Obviously, any modification scheduling should be accompanied by consideration not only of employee compensation but also of the related workload — and here is a role for administrative leadership: fix the system before you cut the budget.

Nonetheless, as someone who has long advocated the general availability of reduced annual obligations for 12-month colleagues in libraries in SUNY — who in fact called for it openly in these pages of UUP newsletter more than 15 years ago (!) — my perspective on the development is positive, and my contribution to the recent exchange follows.

Certainly, colleagues should not allow themselves to feel pressured to change their contractual obligation in anyway whatsoever — and UUP needs to be very sensitive about

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Banner Implementation — Issues and Concerns

by Frances Goldman
Asian-American Studies

With the beginning of the semester, the disappearance of CICS, and the need to begin to utilize fully Banner and the BU-Brain, I have been hearing from our members about a multitude of issues surrounding their use: their being down and not available, the fact that one must hunt to find something as simple as an instructor's class list, overall dissatisfaction from students, faculty and staff alike, and, most importantly, the labor intensive nature of Banner for the end user.

It is not an easy system to master with multiple screens and strange names such as SFAREGS and SFASRPO; it requires a large learning curve.

In addition, all staff were prom-



ised on-time training and support, but recent events seem to contradict those promises. Apart from some perfunctory classes from the CC Training Center, the support that has been available has come mainly from a few in the Registrar's Office who have been working tirelessly to help the rest of the campus adjust to this new technology.

On some level, the introduction of Banner brings back the not so pleasant memories Oracle had on the campus community. At least when Oracle was put into place, help was more readily available and from a variety of sources and places and not from just one area. One would have

hoped that the campus administration learned from this experience, but apparently those lessons, if learned, have been forgotten with the Banner project.

This leaves one to ponder why the Administration decided to implement this new program without sufficient time, training or resources. Change is a cultural phenomenon as well as a technical one and in order for those who must use new technologies on a daily basis to be comfortable and knowledgeable, there needs to be communication, training and a sense that it will improve things.

Being told that "once we learn it we will love it", doesn't help in the here and now when staff are frustrated with trying to enroll a student or add a major.

Administrators Float 'Alternative Work Options'

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defending the employee's prerogative in these situations. The pay cut can be quite significant in going from 12 to 10 months. But the benefits are remarkable, too: an additional two months' leave while continuing to earn vacation at the usual rate over the remaining 10 months.

An important downside of these arrangements is for supervisors who often (usually) do not get any benefit, compensation or other administrative credit (whatever that may be) for the two-month loss of staff. The idea that 10-month contracts be made available routinely to 12-month library staff — at the option of staff — went down in flames 15 years ago, in my opinion, for this reason and the anxiety among non-participating colleagues in the libraries that they would be required

For academic support staff willing to trade pay for time, is a ten-month contract feasible?

to pick up the load during the absence of those on leave. Therefore, persons who work closely with 12-month colleagues might wisely consider the impact on workplace morale of opting for a reduced annual

obligation, if it is available to you: are supervisors going to be expected to minimize the impact and any ensuing collegial resentment?

Although the additional leave might be considered a sort of "leave without pay," the University administration has in the past sought to encourage reduced annual obligations by the arrangement of a proportionately reduced pay level throughout the year, so that the checks keep coming. That could be useful.

All in all, these situations offer an intriguing example of how interests within the administrative bureaucracy become divided between upper level administrators and active supervisors (who are, by and large, UUP). The effective reduction of administrative workload ought to be an objective of both.

Serious Challenges Greet Our Return

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students were moving in. Even though the administration went to extraordinary lengths to provide support to incoming students and employees, there were still reports of scattered problems as bathrooms and water fountains did not work. Immediately after this problem was solved, an aging water main burst underground digging a hole several desks could comfortably sit in. Facilities employees, both UUP and CSEA, worked throughout the night

to correct the problem and clean the mess created in numerous buildings on campus.

Both of these problems point to a need to invest in the aging infrastructure on campus. Funds for this are dependent on two items. First, the campus has to see this as a priority and, second, the state has to provide moneys to respond.

While you may see many of my comments as negative, and largely be correct, they also point to the dedication of all the employees here

at Binghamton. It was through your efforts that the governor and our legislators heard of the importance of SUNY to the State of New York. It was through your efforts that the systems related to Banner and BU Brain are as successful as they are. And it was through your efforts that we got through the water problems we faced just a couple of weeks ago.

It is your dedication and commitment to Binghamton that makes us great and will keep us there.

Greening Our Economy

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a unified economic strategy.

According to an editorial in the *Press & Sun-Bulletin* (3/25/08), "The Southern Tier region really needs to develop a business and residential environment that's as attractive as its natural environment."

A unified effort to develop and promote a local green economy could very well make our area unique in Upstate New York; making the area more attractive to investors, young professionals and residents of all ages.

The list of our "green assets" is long. We have an educated workforce that can easily be retrained for the "green collar" jobs that will soon be in demand. Many of our educational institutions are actively engaged in

building curriculum for the engineers, architects, electricians, sustainability planners, etc. of the future.

We are very lucky, for example, to be the home of BAE, producer of the propulsion drive for hybrid buses. And Binghamton University's Innovative Technology Complex, along with the Center for Advanced Microelectronics Manufacturing, are developing the next generation of green technology.

Our agricultural assets, often taken for granted, are now in focus as the demand for locally produced food has increased dramatically. We have the Regional Community Food Project, Cornell Cooperative Extension, the Farm to School Program, farmers markets and neighborhood

gardens. We are very fortunate to have access to fresh, farm-grown and -raised food with abundant supplies of water.

In my role as a member of the State Legislature, I am committed to bringing diverse interests together to promote synergy and coordination of green economic developments. I have also passed legislation such as the State Green Building Construction Act, which requires that all state building construction (or substantial renovation) use green building practices. The bill awaits the governor's signature. I am also promoting adaptive reuse of historic buildings like the 150-year-old "Castle" which is slated to become the home of SUNY Upstate Medical's Binghamton Campus.

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