



## MINUTES

*UUP Binghamton Executive Board Meeting*

Wednesday, September 15, 2021

11:30 a.m. – 1:00 p.m., UUP 324 and Zoom Conferencing

**Present:** M. Allington, S. Atav, T. Chronopoulos, P. Doyle, C. Gelderloos, J. Goldman, C. Kovacs, D. Kunkel, S. L’Hommedieu, S. Massey, R. Mess, B. Roth, A. Wang

**Present Attending Virtually:** L. Gallagher, B. McGovern, N. Pages

**Guests:** C. Sielaff, Labor Relations Specialist, M. Gunter

**Guests Attending Virtually:** S. Bunch, A. Melione, S. Miranda, E. Mosher, Y. Nghoh, N. Robinson, A. Taylor,

The meeting was called to order at 11:35 a.m. Chapter President Alan Wang welcomed all to the September 15, 2021, Executive Board meeting. Zoom Conferencing was also available due to the COVID-19 Virus and campus request to social distance.

1. Vote to approve Minutes from the May 12, 2021, meeting  
Donald Kunkel **MOVED TO APPROVE** the May 12, 2021, Executive Board Meeting Minutes. **SECONDED** by Robert Mess. **MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENT.** Alan Wang advised guests participating via Zoom that votes are restricted to Executive Board members.
2. Pass the Hat for the Sunshine Fund  
The Sunshine Fund was set up to use for purposes that would not be covered by the Chapter Allocation, such as get-well gifts and retirement gifts. The Executive Board has been passing the hat for the last eight years (unless meetings were held virtually). It is voluntary and up to members if they want to contribute or not. \$41.00 was collected at the September 15, 2021, meeting.
3. Treasurer’s Report (Joe):
  - a. Approval of Monthly Financial Reports for May, June, July, and August 2021
  - b. Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget Actuals Report, September 2020-August 2021Treasurer Joseph Goldman reported the chapter is doing well financially, and the end of the year budget balanced and was sent up to Albany. It is hoped that the Chapter spends more money this year. Robert Mess **MOVED TO APPROVE** the May, June, July and August 2021 Monthly Financial Reports and the Fiscal Year 2020-2021 Budget Actuals Report, September 2020-August 2021. **SECONDED** by Sean Massey. **MOTION PASSED WITHOUT DISSENT.**
4. Chapter Officers’ Report:
  - a. Vice-President for Academics (Benita)  
Vice-President for Academics, Benita Roth greeted everyone and reported she has been angry over the past ten weeks. She added most people know the utter

ugliness shown by the administration. In their minds COVID-19 ended on August 2. They won't accommodate those who apply for ADA saying in-person teaching is an essential part of academics. There was also a message that went out to some faculty telling them they hadn't submitted their proof of vaccinations and testing. Evidently the Provost's secretary sent out the message using cc's rather than bcc's, and the Provost said no one's privacy was violated because the list was incorrect. This was followed by the President's statement two days ago with the administration lying by not telling the truth and making a unilateral move without consultation with UUP or CSEA and probably the Faculty Senate, although Benita has not reached out to them.

Rather than a report, Benita stated she is reserving her time to make a motion for a resolution. The first draft of the proposed resolution was read, and considerable discussion followed. It was asked about the collective bargaining agreement. Labor Relations Specialist, Chris Sielaff explained it is the Taylor Law and terms and conditions of employment are governed in the Taylor Law. A better understanding of what the Board is trying to accomplish with the motion was asked, as a fair amount of this person's peers believe the request from the President to have folks support the efforts to keep this campus open are correct. The issue is centered around the leadership and how they attempted to solve a problem that changes literally by the moment by expanding the pool of volunteers. How it happened is probably the voice we are discussing here, but we are trying to find a way to keep this campus functioning and viable. Although these concerns are legitimate and a group of great people have been carrying the biggest load, the fact the administration has forced voluntarism is a problem. It is happening because of poor planning and not allocating the proper resources. It was also strongly stressed that a fair amount of people do not think mandatory volunteerism is appropriate and are upset. The fact faculty were exempted appears to be deliberate, as a means not to rile up faculty or at least the Faculty Senate. Terms and condition of work cannot unilaterally be shifted and changed.

It was stated Professional Staff Senate was made aware of the volunteerism issue on Friday, September 10 during a conversation with the President and Provost. There was no discussion of the directive, and some believe it is not a PSS issue but rather a UUP issue. Another member heard at last Friday's Town Hall there were prescreened questions, and the comments were turned off although it was supposed to be an open forum. It was explained that Friday's meeting was switched to a webinar format to accommodate the number of people, which is one of the reasons the questions were turned off. It was added it was a shock to the Professional Staff Senate leadership when the directive was announced. It is also the impression by some professional staff that there is a two-tier system, although faculty work on their seven-year tenure and professional staff work towards their seven-year permanency.

Other comments followed such as this is a shady process, cruel behavior, people are frightened, especially those who do not have permanent appointment. It was also commented the President's tone seemed to be condescending towards professional staff. It was asked if Chapter President Alan Wang received anything a head of the announcement. Alan replied he was given a five-minute

meeting with Human Resources a week prior to the announcement. He was told that HR was going to put a draft together for UUP to look over, but that never happened. Labor Relations Specialist, Chris Sielaff added he was in this meeting with Alan and the conversation lasted maybe three minutes. It included the suggestion there hadn't been enough volunteers to cover COVID shifts, and they may have to direct some people to do the work. He added if UUP had been notified in advance, objections would have been raised. This blind-sided the professional staff and the UUP leadership. Chris stated chapter leaders have spent a good portion of their time triaging this issue and have been receiving numerous emails. Alan sent his response to the UUP listserv, and an emergency Labor Management meeting is scheduled for Friday to press for some sort of resolution. Benita added there is a draft letter circulating which she can discuss with members. To paraphrase the draft, the mandatory volunteerism directive is bullshit, and Benita believes the Executive Board should put out a statement of solidarity. There needs to be a united front.

Labor Relations Specialist Chris Sielaff stated no one is saying COVID is not a problem and shouldn't be addressed as it is not going away. Chris added he doesn't think UUP is opposed to having a larger pool of people to do the work; but directing and enlisting actual volunteers are two different things. Where terms and conditions apply, it is in everyone's interest that they are respected. The employer should negotiate. Employee organization should be done in a collaborative way rather than in a unilateral way. Hopefully UUP leadership can meet with administration and come to a conclusion.

As there was no further discussion, **Claire Kovac called the question of the following resolution:**

*The Binghamton Chapter of United University Professions stands in solidarity with all our members, professional and academic, against administration actions where terms and conditions of work that should be negotiated are unilaterally and unfairly changed. We refute the administration's claim that UUP was involved in this decision and express our serious concerns over the continued use of forced "volunteerism" by primarily our professional members to compensate for inadequate planning. All of our members' rights need to be respected at all times.*

The Resolution Passed with all **YES VOTES EXCEPT FOR 1 NO VOTE, AS THE RESOLUTION IS WRITTEN.**

- b. Vice-President for Professionals (Brendan)  
Vice-President for Professionals, Brendan McGovern reported two major issues have emerged during the past few weeks. The first is the remote work agreement implemented by SUNY. There is a lot of bad blood on campus. In summarizing emails and direct conversations, professional staff feel it was a disingenuous policy designed to be rejected and there is much frustration. The second is the current issue with the forced volunteer work policy dropped like a bombshell on Friday with no advance notice at least to professional staff. Those are the main issues that have consumed Brendan's time. He added he has never received so many emails and contacts in his entire time at BU.

- c. Officer for Contingents (Renee)  
Officer for Contingents, Renee Andrews did not attend so no report was given.
  - d. Officer for Retirees (Bob)  
Officer for Retirees, Robert Mess reported he has not had a lot to do yet. He was contacted by a few retirees and directed them to the correct places. A meeting was scheduled for next Monday in the TAU room but has been rescheduled for some time in May.
5. Committee Reports:
- a. Newsletter - call for articles  
Chapter President Alan Wang announced there will be a fall newsletter and articles are needed. Alan, Benita, Sean, Serdar, and Chris agreed to submit an article. Alan will send a call for articles to the UUP listserv. Newsletter Editor Mac Gunter announced projected deadlines for the fall issue. In order for the Newsletter to go out on November 22, the call for articles to the membership should be sent from Alan as soon as possible. November 8 will be the final deadline for submissions. The final layout should be submitted to Mac by November 17, which will give Mac time to review it one more time. David Skyrca should be contacted to see if he will continue to assist.
  - b. Membership  
Chapter Membership Development Officer, Donald Kunkel reported he has been meeting in person biweekly with new employees and has been progressing on a regular basis with New Employee Orientations in person. One concern he has is that HR is disassembling NEO packets and removing the dental, vision and membership cards. Donald requested that HR leave the cards in the packets. Donald added if this continues, he will ask UUP to send the benefits packets directly to the Chapter Office, and he will distribute them in person. Brendan McGovern reported the membership committee will be meeting shortly with Danielle to try and grow the Chapter membership. He added he and Donald have been attending NEO's. It has been positive, with the majority joining at that time.
  - c. Outreach  
Brendan McGovern reported that outreach at this moment has eclipsed timewise due to the inability to focus on it because of other emergency situations that have arisen on campus. Brendan hopes to give a larger report at the next meeting.
6. President's Report:
- a. The next Delegates Assembly will be held on October 15-16 at the Hyatt Convention Center in Rochester, NY (Statewide is still deciding if this will be in person due to COVID)  
Alan Wang announced the Fall Delegates Assembly will be held virtually.
  - b. Regional (10/20/2021, full day) and Chapter (10/6/2021 - 11:30 AM -1 PM) level meetings with Statewide Negotiations Team  
Benita Roth announced the regional meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> is open to delegates for the most part and will have a component open like a town hall for member input.

The meeting on the 6<sup>th</sup> is open to the entire membership. Benita added she is on the Statewide negotiating team. She encouraged people to let her know if they want something.

- c. Discuss Statewide Committees and updates on who is assigned to what Committee  
Alan announced that most empty spots are filled, but if anyone wants to join a committee to let him know and he will send your name to Statewide.
- d. Statewide membership database update  
There was no discussion on this agenda item.
- e. Committee updates for Chancellor's Advisory Committee (CAC), Campus Committee on Professional Evaluation (CCPE), College Review Panel (CRP)  
Alan announced there is a tie for the fourth spot on the College Review Panel.

7. Chapter Business:

- a. Discuss COVID related issues:

What are people seeing in their units/departments around COVID mitigation? Discussion followed regarding the wave of student positive COVID tests. Faculty are unclear what to do if a student in their class tests positive. In one instance a student was told they couldn't get an appointment at Decker to be tested for at least a week. The student bought a rapid COVID test from the store and tested positive. It has been over a week since the faculty member asked the Provost for guidance, and the person has still not heard back. Another issue is the lack of transparency with no information regarding air quality and no campus COVID dashboard tracker.

What would be critical to them should the university "pivot" back to all online? President Stenger has stated unequivocally the campus has no intention to go back to remote learning in any way. Labor Relations Specialist, Chris Sielaff agreed the campus doesn't plan to go remote, but no individual campus made that decision last year. At that time there were established thresholds and the decision to close came down from the State. He added as campus thresholds are no longer being used, UUP should probably start asking for those types of parameters.

University's policy/approach to ADA accommodations (or lack thereof!) for those at high/increased risk for COVID infection and severe health outcomes if infected.

Discussion followed regarding the rejection of requests for ADA accommodations, even with a doctor's note as the President's stance is in-person teaching is an essential function.

Administration's "volunteer" mandate for all staff members due to reluctance/lack of staffing for various COVID duties.

This item was discussed in Agenda item 4a.

- b. Discuss Claire's idea from Cortland MAC

Executive Board member Claire Kovac announced after the Spring Delegate Assembly, she began talking with some members on an action coalition team at SUNY-Cortland to host some meetings to talk about what unions are and why they are important as we approach contract negotiations. Cortland used selections from two books over the summer, and Claire stated she would like to set up a similar reading structure at Binghamton. Responses from the Board think this is a good idea. Claire will draft a formal proposal including a budget to be discussed at the October Executive Board meeting.

- c. Discuss items from the August Labor Management meeting  
Benita announced she appreciates there are people in management who have been working hard. She stated they need directions from the top to work with UUP so that problems can be solved. Benita added most of the people from HR we meet with are exhausted, and this does not have to do with us but from the leadership they are dealing with and things they are being asked to do.
- d. Discuss items for September 27 Labor Management meeting  
It was suggested all items discussed at the September 15 Executive Board meeting should be discussed at the September 27 Labor Management meeting.

It was advised that members should be aware of guidelines regarding COVID and quarantine. If you have a child in school who gets quarantined unless your child tests positive, vacation leave accruals would need to be used. Labor Relations Specialist, Chris Sielaff stated there are many complicated questions with regards to COVID quarantine and advised members if they find themselves in this situation to contact UUP or Human Resources. He also advised members to ask for documents. It was suggested more information on this topic should be given to all members. Chris agreed to write an article for the fall Newsletter detailing this information.

- 8. Adjourn  
Benita Roth **MOVED TO ADJOURN. SECONDED** by Robert Mess. Meeting adjourned at 12:57 p.m.

**The next Executive Board meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 13, 2021, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. in U UW-324.**