

Notes  
Emergency Executive Board Meeting  
Tuesday, September 21, 2021  
10:00 a.m. Via Zoom Conferencing

Present: M. Allington, R. Andrews, S. Capobianco, T. Chronopoulos, C. Kovacs,  
D. Kunkel, S. L’Hommedieu, B. McGovern, R. Mess, A. Morris, A. Wang, S. Young

Guests: C. Sielaff, Labor Relations Specialist

The meeting began at approximately 10:05 a.m.

Chris Sielaff: I apologize for being late, I was meeting with a group of Academic Librarians. A proposal on the table would be that UUP is agreeable to the work mandate returning to voluntary but also agree to encourage, not ask its members to volunteer. So, I had six different drafts of email to send to everyone yesterday, but never found the right opening to send it out. Thoughts in general. UUP had several demands of management, the principal of which, we do not want management to unilateral assign work out of title and create a workload issue for UUP members. We wanted compensation and that they look up other sources of labor. Make offers to part-timers, retirees, maybe temp agencies, students. Seek voluntarism and a viable option to supply the labor. UUP always owns its messaging. The degree to which it is a strong encouragement vs. an encouragement. It is up to the chapter and up to Alan who would write it. What are the alternatives here? We go back or we are unwilling. Do they pull the offer and continue the expectation of staff to perform the work? People are now performing the work. In terms of sticking to our demands, we can file an improper practice with PERB, but we are not going to get a hearing or conference until December. In the meantime, everyone is going to have to do their assigned duty. Are we going to accept something we don’t want to do and encourage people to sign up in terms of work being voluntary?

Stephen Capobianco: It is not a money issue. We have the money. They can’t get people to do it. That’s been said to me in my former capacity and stated to us.

Chris Sielaff: Almost universally they always have the money. All kinds of money, and we have demanded compensation. Comp time or monetary compensation. The proposal that was made didn’t include it. It is up to them if they want to offer it. Part time, temp, student workers, they will have to provide compensation. If you are doing an assignment during normal hours, they can’t pay you extra service. The work is going to wait for you when you get back to your normal obligation. That is why we suggested comp time. Some type of compensation. Apparently, they think they would rather not. They would rather not assign the work and make it voluntary.

Donald Kunkel: Roll the clock back. Had they not done this and approached UUP saying we need to solicit some additional support would you mind sending out to your members the request for voluntary time to do this. I think UUP would have. What would our UUP members get as a benefit? Always negotiating how big a piece of pie. We will send out some sort of memo to members in exchange for comp time off or doing it on the weekends with some monetary

numerations. If we are not going to get something for taking on additional work. I can't support that. As a group we should go back and have some other points addressed before we make a decision.

Alan Wang: I agree with that. I don't know what else to say.

Chris Sielaff: We have three options:

1. Indicate we would except what has been offered with no form of compensation, voluntary and send memo of encouragement.
2. We would like it to be voluntary. In order for us to encourage it, you need to incentivize it. If you attach an incentive, we will send out an encouragement.
3. No we will never send out encouragements to our members and stand in as PR for management. Thanks for the offer, but we still think you should make it voluntary. UUP is against sending anything out to our members.

It seems like you are in favor of option 2. See if we can get comp time or another incentive.

Brendan McGovern: Stephen says there is money to go around. Yesterday we complied a strong letter with PSS to send out, did you get to see that letter? The administration is feeling this. We are in a pandemic situation is it against the union?

Chris Sielaff: I think everyone knows. No one likes this. I think in this case we are dealing with a practical situation and in a sense bargaining with ourselves. What is UUP willing to do to get relief for members who are assigned work that they don't want to do? Are we going to stand strictly on principal, or are we doing to say we will swallow the bitter pill encouraging voluntarism to our members if it will provide relief to those affected?

Sarah Young: People are angry and scared. Their health is on the line as well. I appreciate your laying out the three options. A small caveat messaging we can do. We have been asked by management. It makes me feel a bit more comfortable. Our messaging holds a lot of weight with members. I think we need to ask to incentivize that. Go back and ask for an incentive. I would love to meet again. We have to go back to the table and ask that.

Chris Sielaff: On the safety issue no one will be assigned the meal delivery and mail delivery work and that is non-contact. It is not the case. They will not have to come in contact with anyone with COVID. No one would be forced to take this assignment. We have asked to be incentivized, comp time, telecommuting and monetary. The answer on paying people to do this was no. Not if assigned during workday. They will on weekends but not given during the workday. They can't get it through the Office of the State Comptroller. We have to understand we are really talking about comp time and that is the extent that we can get. It seemed to hold some weight with them. Joe seemed to think it was justified. I don't know why they decided to go in a different direction. If they are willing to give comp time, we will be willing to. It is abundantly clear they have a choice. We are requesting them at the request of management and it should not affect their obligation. Make the point that UUP fought tooth and nail against the original assignment.

Andy Morris: I'm sorry I am late. One thing with thought and consideration we are responding to almost a two-year pandemic. What happens when there is a flood and refugees are in the gym and the campus is short-handed? Will the administration tap us again? Anything they declare an emergency they will need bodies. I am already a COVID volunteer and have been thinking, hearing, and reading reactions. What happens in the next emergency? The main campus is now dealing with a sewage issue. Will staff be asked to bring in port-a-potties? Our decisions will set a precedent for the future.

Chris Sielaff: Wrap up in our language that puts parameters around this type of situation; and acknowledge that this is a COVID response and that there will be no further expectation about this in the future. We can craft a written agreement that puts parameters around what if another emergency happens in the future.

Renee Andrews: I would say that is something. What is the duration, how long? Not all of us have a job in which we sit at the desk. Or can make time to get a COVID test. Work comes first.

Chris Sielaff: The point we made clearly for professionals is there is no extra eight hours in a month to donate to the University. Because you are all professionals, the work is going to get done. That is why we pushed for comp time. Even if volunteering, it is going to impact your workload. It doesn't go away, it is waiting for you.

Stephen Capobianco: A person in CSEA and her colleagues are not only angry and frightened but also entirely mentally preoccupied by this now. They are fully distracted and unable to concentrate. Can people who have signed up and been notified of their shift not attend?

Chris Sielaff: If you completely and do not wish to go, opt out to this person and we will take you out of this schedule. If they wanted to. The vast majority were told by the President to do it. They did agree that people would be able to walk back with the commitments.

Brendan McGovern: I agree with option two. In the larger issue and from reading chats there is a lot of pissed off people on campus right now. For the first time to this extent ever the administration is hearing it. In the heart of the pandemic on a daily basis from the summer and in between, many people were working 12-14 hours per day. There is very low morale right now and of trust in the administration. When thanks came for this who did it go to? It went to the faculty. The professional staff was an after thought. There is frustration in professional staff. There needs to be a long-term way to address that.

Chris Sielaff: I agree with Brendan. The first step is to understand from people what their main concerns are. Professional concerns open forum, so they can speak their peace and share experiences. We should come up with a plan to address inequity or just in general the way professionals are treated differently. The fact that PSS elected officers to whatever titles they have are not permitted the same degree as Faculty Senate are. It should be people to serve in equivalent positions. Other ways talking amongst ourselves, approaching work in a way that isn't a constant donation of our time. What degree can we roll this stuff back? They do not tell

us to work on weekends, but we decided to do so. Cultural things as well as structural. First thing is by hearing from people and then put a plan together.

Brendan McGovern: Chris you and I and maybe Alan too and Don with your experience we can work out some kind of a formal forum. Quickly within the next week in a half or two weeks, while people are still inflamed about these issues.

Chris Sielaff: Alan and chapter leaders are going to go back to management and say we appreciate the movement to return to voluntary status and would be agreeable to sending out an encouragement to UUP members if there is some sort of incentive, probably comp time on the other end of the voluntary duties. If we have that, we will do the other thing.

Donald Kunkel: The message needs to come from UUP and not management that they send out.

Chris Sielaff: I have spoken separately with Joe, and we can bring it up again. If they in the future every send out something that said UUP in it, they need to send us something to review. The next time it won't be just a strongly worded letter from Alan. Next time it will be something harsher. That was completely incorrect for them to do that.

Claire Kovacs: What is CSEA doing? We are two separate unions, but we should be aware of what we are all doing. They were also named. And stronger in term of numbers of unity.

Chris Sielaff: We don't know. Alan could send an inquiry to the CSEA President. Management is looking for a universal solution. I propose paying from their side hazard pay or hero pay. I think they can, but they told us they couldn't. Maybe that was why they didn't include comp time. CSEA doesn't receive comp time.

Donald Kunkel: They also get paid overtime pay, which we don't.

Brendan McGovern: Don't they get in trouble if they put in for it even if they work it?

Chris Sielaff: I think they have to be directed to. They probably need affirmative approval. Those are all CSEA questions and contracts are different, and the nature of their work is different. We want to stand in solidarity as much as we can. We certainly would.

Andy Morris: A quick comment and question. I volunteered for the COVID response calling team during the summer when fulling staffed with volunteers assigned to a shift and no testing going on so literally no one to call day after day. When fall came it was very badly mismanaged. One or two people could have handled the summer. That's part of what contributed to the drop off. It was so badly managed. My question is what are the other University Centers doing? Are any others responding the way we have?

Chris Sielaff: No other SUNY campuses are assigning this work. I do agree the way that they handled their volunteer efforts on the front-end last summer and last year poisoned the weather for many volunteers. They were basically treated like garbage. There was a bad interaction with the people running it. They didn't get support from supervisors when it came to dealing with

their normal obligations, all this turned them against volunteering. I wasn't respected the first time around why would I go back again and volunteer. Other campuses even last year did more on the compensated labor side of this question. They extended the full time equivalent of part timers more regularly to meet the demand, brought in other workers, employed retirees. They didn't handle things well despite conversations in labor management every month. This system of voluntarism is not sustainable, not long term, and not a good way. They are stuck with the circumstances that they have.

Brendan McGovern: It is the way staff are treated on this campus. It is a culture on this campus. At least try and get messages to them. You cannot do this. You can't treat people in this way. Getting something together would at least give a release valve for them to release their steam and feel like they are being heard.

Donald Kunkel: A professional concerns meeting in the very near future. I would be willing to help.

Sarah Young: We need to talk about one union. Probably a longer-term conversation. Staff talking about being disrespected, we have a problem here. Not listening or making themselves available to listen. We have to think about an organizing perspective. We are committed. I agree with Brendan.

Bendan McGovern: What really showed me how the staff is feeling, within the last week I heard not once but repeated calls from a person a party-line person who is very pro administration in all aspects who is suggesting maybe UUP and PSS should do a one-day sick out type of a thing. I'm not advocating that. When this person has been demoralized, they have gone too far. We have to stand up for our members.

Chris Sielaff: I think we have in this instance. They could redirect our work. And we didn't do that. We didn't take it. Thanks to the members and workers for not taking it. Everyone knew it was wrong and shouldn't have been done that way and said so and chapter leaders responded.

Tina Chronopoulos: I think that I'm not really sure. Am I the only faculty? Ok. I'm just struck by what Sarah said. The fact that so few faculty know what is going on. It is partly structural, but then that is the nature of academics. Some were afraid to speak out. Getting people to sign the letter to Harvey said I don't want to piss off Harvey. I agree we need to bridge that divide. PSS they don't show up but do show up to Faculty Senate. I think it is important that we find a way of working it out. Bridge that gap.

Andy Morris: In 20 years I have never volunteered to work at Commencement. In other institutions, staff were asked to march along-side faculty. Staff were brought in and served at graduation. Staff were pushing people to handicapped areas. I didn't want to take part in that. So I can watch regalia faculty members march in a procession? An example of how we are taken advantage of. How we are here to serve and support faulty and this has been made clear by the current situation.

Chris Sielaff: UUP has a responsibility by bridging whatever people see themselves as part of one. Management whether they intended to or not drove a wedge into this. It is so natural for

them to react this way; they just did it. The goal wasn't to drive a wedge in, but they did it any way. They see the professional staff as the fixers. We have some work to do on the UUP side to build solidarity. Some ways have gone away because of COVID. You can't gather as a group. Socially or formally, that has been difficult. We should look for ways to build solidarity. By taking action, or when we are able to in the future when social events are returned. It is critical. We can't be divided. Anything that we missed? Does anyone have any questions before we hit 11?

Andy Morris: Just a comment. I don't know what the comp time policy is for professional staff. We have had half a dozen policies regarding it. It is not consistent. No fighting the club. You didn't bring it up because there was no comp time.

Chris Sielaff: In 2002 Sylvia Hall issued a memo on non-holiday compensatory time. We can circulate it. I think not every boss is practicing it the same way. There is a policy that at least HR works under. We can send it around to the degree that people are following it.

Andy Morris: We spend hours for recruiting. Driving there and back. Time spent in hotels. We were told there was no comp time. Occasionally there were directors that allowed some. In 15 years, I've never seen a comprehensive policy. We were told in 2002 there was no comp time policy for professional staff.

Chris Sielaff: Moving forward we should assert these rights and take them up to the degree that things have happened in the past. They have happened. They presented this policy to me and kind of enforced it. We can do the same. If we all agree we are using it, we can use it. On every campus all the different supervisors utilize comp time and some grant liberally, but others never ever get it. It is a fight worth having.

Brendan McGovern: This is a terrible situation, but there are opportunities as well. People wonder what the union does for them. This is our chance. Alan's letter went a long way in showing members what the union does for them. These are the issues that they looked to. What have you done for us?

Chri Sielaff: I think we have an understanding on how the chapter leadership is going to proceed, and we will keep everyone up to date on how things go. If we need to reconvene, we will. Hopefully we get a yes. We will see how they respond.

The meeting ended at 10:58 a.m.