



## **President's Report for UUP Binghamton Chapter Executive Board / General Meeting – February 12, 2025**

### **A Moment of Silence for Bonnie Cornick**

Before I begin my report, I want to take a moment to honor the life and contributions of **Bonnie Cornick**, a longtime and valued member of the Binghamton University community and UUP. Bonnie began her service at Binghamton University in 1972, working in what was then the School of Advanced Technology, which later became the Thomas J. Watson College of Engineering and Applied Science. Over the years, she held various roles, always carrying out her work with dedication and care. At the time of her passing, she served as an Instructional Support Assistant at Watson College and was also a Co-Building Administrator for the Engineering Building.

Bonnie was also a UUP member and served as UUP's representative on the Parking and Transportation Stakeholders Group, ensuring that our chapter had a presence in discussions affecting the university community.

She was a kind and steady presence at Binghamton for many years, and she will be remembered by those who worked alongside her. Let's take a moment of silence to honor Bonnie and her contributions.

### **Chapter Elections and Leadership Appointments**

We have several important leadership roles to fill:

- VP for Academics: Tejpreet Chadha has left the university, leaving this position vacant. Later today, we will accept nominations to appoint an Acting Vice President for Academics.
- Acting Secretary: We will also appoint an Acting Secretary to ensure that chapter records and meeting minutes are properly maintained.
- UUP Representative for the Parking and Transportation Stakeholders Group: We will appoint a new representative for this role today. Bonnie Corning previously served in this capacity, and we recognize her dedication to this work. May she rest in peace.

Strong leadership is essential to our chapter's success, and I encourage all of you to think about who can step into these roles to help keep our chapter moving forward.

### **Governor's Proposed Budget**

The Governor's proposed **\$252 billion state budget** includes **\$138 million in new funding for SUNY**, which is a positive step forward. We are pleased to see new operating aid, funding for full-time faculty hiring, and capital funding increases. However, there are still areas that need

improvement, and UUP will be advocating for the Legislature to **make this a better budget** for SUNY and our members.

Key points from the **Executive Budget**:

- **Operating Aid**: An additional **\$114 million** is included, but it is allocated as a **block grant** to SUNY System Administration rather than being directly appropriated to distressed campuses. UUP will **continue to push for direct funding** to the campuses that need it most.
- **Full-Time Faculty Hiring**: The budget includes **\$53 million** for full-time faculty hires, which is a positive continuation. UUP will advocate for **this funding to also cover full-time professionals**.
- **Hospitals**: **\$100 million in operating aid** is included for SUNY Downstate, along with **capital investments for SUNY hospitals**, but the budget **does not cover debt service or employee fringe benefit costs**, which remain major concerns.
- **Educational Opportunity Programs (EOP)**: The budget **eliminates** additional funding for EOP programs, resulting in a **\$1.9 million cut**. Meanwhile, **funding for ASAP/ACE is increased**. While ASAP/ACE programs are important, we cannot allow this to come at the expense of the **historic and impactful EOP programs** that have long supported SUNY students. UUP will **fight to restore** full funding for EOP.

Overall, this is a **good budget**, but there is room for improvement. **We will continue to advocate for our priorities** and work with NY legislators to **secure better funding for SUNY, our hospitals, and our members**.

## **UUP Advocacy for SUNY**

Over the last two budget cycles, UUP's advocacy has directly contributed to significant increases in funding for SUNY and Binghamton University, ensuring better financial support for faculty, staff, and students. Our efforts have helped secure operating aid increases, capital investments, and additional faculty hiring lines.

In the past five years, UUP has become a prominent and effective voice in Albany politics. Through strong relationships with Senators and Assembly members, we have been able to punch above our weight in securing funding and policy wins for our members. This is a testament to the hard work of our members and leadership in consistently fighting for higher education funding.

Next week, many of us will travel to Albany for UUP Advocacy Days on Monday and Tuesday, February 23 and 24. This is a critical opportunity to push for improvements in the Governor's budget and fight for the funding our campuses and hospitals need.

A huge thank you to those traveling to Albany to advocate for UUP and SUNY:

- **Andre Mathis**
- **Patrick Doyle**
- **Lisa Gallagher**
- **Rachel Parsons**

- **Troy Norton**
- **Robert Mess**
- **Peter Knuepfer**
- **Rosemary Collier**
- **Nikita Robinson**
- **Samantha Lauth**
- **Brendan McGovern**

Your commitment to this work is invaluable, and our chapter deeply appreciates your time and effort.

## **The Road Ahead: SERA as a Path Forward Amid a Non-Functioning NLRB**

The **National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)** is facing an unprecedented crisis.

Following **President Trump's termination of General Counsel Jennifer Abruzzo and Board Member Gwynne Wilcox**, the NLRB has been left without a quorum and is now unable to function. With only two out of five required board members, the agency cannot issue rulings, enforce labor protections, or oversee union elections.

Additionally, several major corporations, including Amazon, Starbucks, Tesla, and SpaceX, have ongoing court cases arguing that the NLRB itself is unconstitutional. In the past, the NLRB has defended itself against such challenges, but with the Board now under Republican control and legal uncertainty surrounding its very existence, it is possible that the agency will concede these cases rather than fight them. This could lead to the Supreme Court striking down the NLRB altogether, effectively eliminating federal labor protections for private-sector workers.

### **How This Opens the Door for SERA**

For decades, the **NLRA (National Labor Relations Act)** has preempted state labor laws, meaning that states like New York could not enforce their own private-sector labor laws because federal law took precedence. However, **preemption only applies when the federal agency is actively enforcing the law.**

With the NLRB now paralyzed and potentially facing elimination, there is a **strong legal argument that preemption no longer applies**, allowing New York to step in and enforce its own labor laws through the **State Employment Relations Act (SERA)**.

### **Why SERA is a More Worker-Friendly Law than the NLRA**

The **NLRA**, passed in 1935, was **politically compromised from the start**. To gain the support of Southern Democrats and business interests, the law **excluded entire categories of workers from labor protections**, including:

- **Agricultural workers** – Left out to appease Southern legislators who wanted to maintain exploitative labor practices in farming.
- **Domestic workers** – Excluded for similar reasons, disproportionately affecting Black and immigrant workers.

- **Independent contractors** – A rapidly growing workforce today, intentionally kept out of federal labor protections.
- **Supervisors and public sector employees** – Barred from organizing under the NLRA.
- **Railroad and airline workers** – Covered under a different, less protective law, the Railway Labor Act.

By contrast, **SERA**, enacted in 1937, was designed to **expand labor protections** to those left out of the NLRA. **SERA provides a broader and more labor-friendly framework for collective bargaining** in New York State, covering workers the NLRA ignores.

### Implications for Labor Organizing in New York

With the **federal government failing to protect labor rights**, SERA provides a **clear legal pathway for workers in New York to organize and collectively bargain**. If the state moves to **enforce SERA in the absence of the NLRB**, this would:

- **Give new rights to excluded workers**, including farmworkers, domestic workers, and independent contractors.
- **Allow New York State's Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) to handle private-sector unionization**, replacing the role of the NLRB within the state.
- **Set a precedent for other states**, potentially leading to a wave of state-led labor protections in response to federal inaction.

### Next Steps: What Unions Can Do

Given the crisis at the NLRB, **unions in New York should begin filing organizing petitions under SERA** to test its enforceability. If employers challenge these filings in federal court, the **legal argument would center on whether a non-functioning NLRB still holds preemption over state labor law**.

Recent Supreme Court decisions, such as **Glacier Northwest v. Teamsters**, have **already weakened federal preemption**, opening the door for stronger state labor laws.

This is a pivotal moment for the labor movement in New York. **If SERA is allowed to stand as the governing labor law for private-sector workers in the state, it could fundamentally reshape the future of unionization and collective bargaining across the country. Now is the time to act.**

### Federal Policy Challenges – Discussion

I have set aside **20-30 minutes at the end of our meeting** for a discussion on the impact of **recent federal policies under the Trump administration**. These policies include:

- **Funding freezes**
- **Restrictions on DEI initiatives**
- **Broader implications for labor and education**

This discussion is an opportunity to **assess how these changes are affecting our members** and explore **possible actions we can take as a chapter**.

## **Upcoming Events & Reminders**

- **Beat the Winter Blues Event – March 26, 2025, from 4-6 p.m.** – We still need four volunteers.
- **Labor Education Initiatives** – Continuing efforts to educate and empower our members.
- **State Budget Advocacy** – We will be organizing outreach efforts to **urge the Legislature to improve the budget** for SUNY and UUP members.

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Thank you.

**Brendan McGovern**

**President, UUP Binghamton Chapter**