

## **STATEMENT TO THE UUP-NEW PALTZ MEMBERSHIP**

Near the end of last semester, an email raising concerns regarding the union's work on behalf of its members was sent to the fac-staff list. This statement is intended to clarify the union's role with regard to the grievance/disciplinary process, and also to express our solidarity on issues that have recently risen to prominence nationally regarding sexual harassment.

### **Grievance/Disciplinary Process**

As the legally designated agent for our members, UUP has a binding responsibility to provide fair representation on behalf of *all* bargaining unit members. This means that when any member is subject to potential disciplinary action, regardless of the charges, and whether or not those charges may be substantiated, we are obligated to act on behalf of that member to ensure that the Administration observes the rules for discipline as negotiated in our statewide Agreement.

Determination of a member's guilt or innocence with regard to the facts of the case is a product of the disciplinary process itself, and neither the union nor its officers take any formal position with regard to the substance of allegations being brought forth against or in defense of any member. We probably all agree that anyone who has engaged in inappropriate behavior should be disciplined. But we should also recognize the importance of due process rights and the union's legal obligation to protect those rights. This process protects us all from unfair treatment if we ever find ourselves accused of misconduct.

### **Sexual Harassment and Bullying**

Sexual harassment, assault, and bullying can create a toxic workplace, and the rise of the #metoo movement has served to magnify attention to these issues within our society. These abuses are all too common everywhere, but it should be clarified that there no disciplinary cases involving sexual harassment, assault or bullying have been brought to the UUP recently. UUP officials, including grievance representatives, have handled other types of cases in accordance with our legal obligations as described above. But given heightened attention to these issues nationally, we have an opportunity to come together as a community to ensure a safe workplace for all. We are taking steps to improve practices within the UUP to ensure that all concerns are handled with the utmost sensitivity, even when we may be legally unable to address some member concerns.

The UUP-New Paltz Chapter is also planning a series of events in which members can raise concerns, questions, and comments in light of #metoo in academia, including:

- Invited speakers, including a talk on sexual assault and the suppression of action in academia by Dr. T. Nikki Cesare Schotzko scheduled for February 20, from 5-6:30 pm, in CSB Auditorium.
- Title IX workshop with statewide VP for Academics Jamie Dangler

- A teach-in or other event to facilitate community discussion on these important issues

**Communication Regarding Union Business**

We want to reiterate that the fac-staff list is not an appropriate place to conduct union business. However, we recognize that an open electronic forum for UUP members does not exist, and we are working to rectify that in the following ways:

- We are researching ways to communicate openly, since we cannot host our own open list serve on the New Paltz college servers. Please stay tuned for information about that.
- In order to ensure that UUP members feel heard, we plan to continue to hold open forums in which members are invited to share their concerns. With the unprecedented level of anti-union sentiment in our country, it is important that we see the vast number of constituents and concerns as a strength rather than an impediment.

None of the above suggested activities or policies is the sole prerogative of your elected officers and delegates—rather, *we*, together, are the union, and the union is only as strong as its members. The direction that we take next depends on all of us, collectively. Together, we really can make a difference. Divided, we will be left to fend for ourselves.

If any member should have a concern, whether about how they are being treated in the workplace, or about our union, they should feel free to contact any member of the UUP-New Paltz Chapter leadership, listed below, for assistance. The union is not any single individual, it is all of us—and we all endeavor to listen to and support each other.

In solidarity,

Beth E. Wilson,  
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and the

**UUP-New Paltz Chapter Executive Committee**

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