

**Fall 2025**



# Plattsburgh UUP Chapter Newsletter

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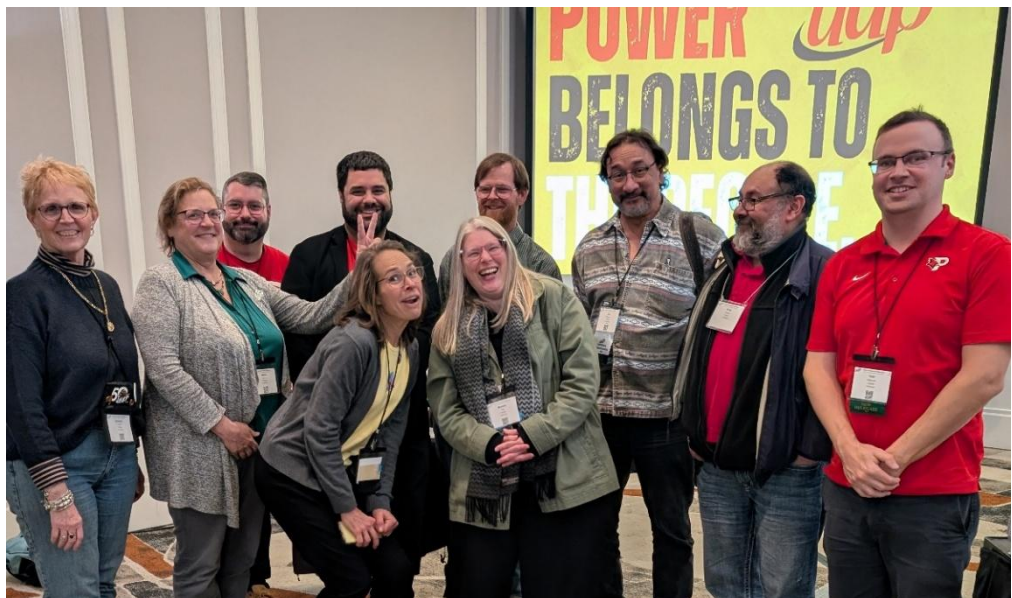
## Fall 2025 Delegate Assembly: October 23-25, 2025

The official photo of the Plattsburgh Delegation  
to the Fall 2025 UUP Delegate Assembly



From left to right: Ray Guydosh, Gerianne Downs, Shawna Mefferd Kelty, Jesse Decosse, Wendy Gordon, Ben Wright, Ray Carman, Kim Hartshorn, Rohit Rampal, Tyler Hargraves.  
(Photo by Michelle Toth)

... and the not quite official photo from the Fall DA



(Photo by Ray Guydosh)

# Notes, News, and Updates from our Delegates

## *From VP for Academics Shawna Mefferd Kelty:*

### **1. Women's Action Committee News**

The Women's Rights and Concerns committee has been renamed and is now known as the Women's Action Committee. The Women's Action Committee is in the planning stages of creating a symposium on women's labor, tentatively in Fall 2026. We hope that this will become an annual event that will be held on different campuses each year. Keep an eye on your inbox for the official date, official theme, and what will be the official inclusive Call for Proposals/Papers from UUP-represented Academics and Professionals. We are aiming to collaborate with other state-wide committees (Human and Civil Rights committees, Black and Latino Faculty/Staff Legislative, Contingent Employment, etc.) and other union allies (NYSUT and others). The CFP will include provocations on women's labor/labour, invisible labor, intersectional labor(s), women's physical and financial autonomy, welcoming panels, papers, case studies, histories, and other presentations, sharing our expertise and perspectives for the professional development of our professional and academic members and other union siblings (e.g., graduate student union members). We are so excited to create this opportunity. We'll keep you posted.

### **2. Plenary - Power Belongs to the People**

Question raised regarding the Taylor Law: "Have there been discussions with or are there currently NYS assembly/senators willing to go forward in revocation of Taylor Law's general strike restrictions?" No outreach to legislators to date. There was a select committee looking into allies; Bret Benjamin shared his report with leadership.

Regarding a General Strike: AFT has noted that there is not an insignificant amount of members with interest for a general strike. We have a desire to escalate/put more pressure on the state, HOWEVER....unless we can do it in a way that ALL unions (beyond UUP, beyond NYSUT) can participate, we don't have the power. The question is one of timing.

### **3. Jeri O'Bryan-Losee's report and PSLF**

Jeri's current numbers on Public Service Loan Forgiveness: \$16,011,045.43

If you have student loan debt, please register for one of her PSLF clinics.

### **4. North Country Retreat 2026**

Leadership from the NoCo campuses (Potsdam, Canton, Plattsburgh) and our lead organizer, Rob Trimarchi, started discussions for another summer retreat, focusing on issues specific to our region and campuses and ways we can build solidarity, visibility, and support for/with each other.

### **From VP for Professionals Gerianne Downs:**

The fall 2025 Delegate Assembly found us once again discussing topics such as workload creep, treatment of professionals by supervisors, benefits, and organizing as we head into negotiations for a new contract. Our current contract is up June 30, 2026. It's going to be more important than ever that our membership shows up in force and as a unit to rally for a fair and just contract, with reasonable salary increases, protection of our benefits, including eyecare and dental from the UUP Benefit Trust Fund. We need your help to push this new contract from table to agreement.

Chapter presidents and vice presidents discussed myriad topics during a lively Q&A with statewide leadership, including the upcoming virtual "Know Your Contract" workshops on key issues our negotiations team will discuss with membership. President Fred Kowal sent an email Nov. 4 detailing when each lunch-and-learn session will be held in the coming days. [Registration here](#) is required.

A key component to a successful request for a promotion and/or salary increase: Your performance program has to be current, and it has to show the scope and complexity of the work increase over a sustained timeframe. If you fail to document the changes to your performance program, you'll have nothing to demonstrate to the Professional Evaluation Committee on appeal. Do a self evaluation of your work requirements before you do your performance program and annual evaluation.

### **From Professional Delegate Jesse Decosse:**

During the Professional Delegates Meeting, SUNY Plattsburgh was recognized as one of the campuses with one of the highest completion rates on the professional's survey, at 34%. Only 10 out of 32 campuses have achieved a completion rate of 30% or greater. While this number is something for our campus to be proud of, it certainly does not tell the whole picture that a higher completion rate would. The survey is still open and available for UUP professionals to complete. The survey can be completed by visiting the following link: [UUP Plattsburgh Professionals' Workplace Survey](#)

Our campus goal is a completion rate of 50% or more. A higher completion rate will give the most accurate representation of issues faced by professionals in the bargaining unit. At a later time, SUNY Plattsburgh will be visited by labor relations specialists who will assist the chapter with analyzing the survey results and deliver a campus presentation which will be open for all professionals to attend.

## **From Academic Delegate Ray Carman:**

### **1. Academic Freedom & Artificial Intelligence Workshop**

The workshop began with a discussion of the many threats that AI poses to academia. These include threats to academic freedom (increases in government interference in the classroom, course standardization, micromanagement, and student complaints), workload-related concerns (maintaining professional discretion, budget cuts, understaffing, and workload pressures), and more general concerns (deskilling, academic integrity, management surveillance, data privacy, privatization/private vendors in public education, and automation of work). We then discussed the relevant language of the contract, which is included in Article 9:

- 9.1 It is the policy of the University to maintain and encourage full freedom, within the law, of inquiry, teaching and research. In the exercise of this freedom faculty members may, without limitation, discuss their own subject in the classroom; they may not, however, claim as their right the privilege of discussing in their classroom controversial matter which has no relation to their subject.
- 9.2 The principle of academic freedom shall be accompanied by a corresponding principle of responsibility.
- 9.3 In their role as citizens, employees have the same freedoms as other citizens. However, in their extramural utterances employees have an obligation to indicate that they are not institutional spokespersons.

### **2. Academic Delegates Meeting**

At the Academic Delegates Meeting, we reviewed the recent UUP member survey on artificial intelligence. I would like to share a few highlights from this survey. At the aggregate level, 38% of all UUP member respondents report AI poses a threat to their job, 64% believe AI is a threat to the jobs of their UUP coworkers, 51% think AI is a threat to the mission of SUNY, 70% say AI is a threat to their ability to educate students, 56% report AI poses a threat to their academic discipline, and 77% believe AI is a threat to other academic disciplines.

Breaking down these aggregate-level data to look at the differences between non-health science center academics and non-health science center professionals, academics are more likely to report AI poses a threat to their job (45%), the jobs of my UUP coworkers (68%), and mission of SUNY (62%), as opposed to professionals (32%, 62%, and 38%, respectively).

What can we do about AI right now? Ask questions! Particularly, we should ask administrators: How is AI being used? In what areas is AI being used? How might AI be interfering with our professional discretion? But we should also be asking ourselves: What assurances do we need about the use of AI?

## **From Professional Delegate Ben Wright:**

### **Notes from the Plenary Session:**

- UUP was the first to fight for downstate hospital in Brooklyn, which will be renovated now instead of closed.
- Please sign [this electronic letter to Governor Hochul](#) urging her to support a \$10 million increase to SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) which is needed to financially stabilize this vital public institution.
- UUP President Fred Kowal says to tax the rich now in NY
- Pro-union song, “We Shall Not Be Moved” was played. Listen to it [here](#).
- UUP is offering a cyber security Identity protection family plan benefit for \$12/month. This and pet insurance were recommended.
- NYSUT Pathways to Leadership project for our BIPOC sisters and brothers has been impactful. You can find more info [HERE](#).
- The last Advocacy Day had the best attendance yet
- Members encouraged to check out Beacon for Democracy: [beaconfordemocracy.org](https://beaconfordemocracy.org)

### **Notes from the Professional Delegates Meeting:**

- New workshop ideas were discussed
  - The idea of a “How to say no workshop” came up during a discussion about workload and performance programs. More training on Performance Programs is needed. Remember that Statewide can intervene in Performance Program and other issues-they are there to help
  - A “Supervising with Union Values Workshop” would be helpful as there is not enough education for supervisors, a conclusion previously reached by our Executive Board.

### **Notes from the DEI Committee Meeting:**

- There was a great discussion about the challenges of recruiting diversity hires
- HR knows where the minority job candidates are and how to find them
- We were reminded that an administration appointed DEI Officer (or VP) on a campus is there to protect the college, full stop
- A store on campus with products for folks of color and a Welcome Book for folks of color are imperative, *especially* for new hires
- African American Studies departments are a good means of organizing for DEI initiatives

## **Resolutions and Votes Passed at the Fall 2025 DA**

### **Reaffirming UUP's Commitment to Academic Freedom and Freedom of Thought and Expression**

UUP condemns such attacks on Academic Freedom, freedom of thought, and freedom of expression in the strongest possible terms; and will continue to vigorously defend and enforce our contractual rights to Academic Freedom and legal rights to off-duty speech; and will stand in solidarity with and support academic workers across the country and internationally who teach and generate independent knowledge for the global public good.

### **Resolution on Sustainability (substituted version)**

Which included a call for professional development, resources and support for faculty and staff in pursuit of sustainability goals and reaffirms UUPs commitment to environmental and climate justice and to work with students community partners, and environmental organizations to shape a more sustainable and just SUNY system.

### **Supporting Higher Education Leadership in Rejecting the Federal Higher Education Compact**

UUP calls on Chancellor King and other leaders in higher education to reject the "Compact for Excellence" along with any current or future offers of preferential treatment by the federal government in exchange for concessions or oversight limiting academic freedom.

### **Women's Rights and Concerns committee name change**

This was a UUP constitutional amendment. A request from the state-wide Women's Rights and Concerns committee to be renamed the Women's Action committee.

## **Plattsburgh UUP Chapter Executive Board Updates**

### **Exec Board Meeting Minutes and Labor/Management Meeting Notes:**

Visit the "Minutes/Agendas" page on the Plattsburgh UUP Chapter website for news and updates from the Chapter Executive Board:

[Plattsburgh UUP Chapter Minutes/Agendas webpage](#)

Here you can access minutes from Exec Board meetings and agendas from Labor/Management meetings.

## Contract Negotiations Update

UUP's Constitution stipulates that before negotiations can begin, our conceptual proposals must be approved by the Negotiations Committee.

On October 9 & 10, 2025 the joint Negotiations Committee and Ad Hoc Committees met with the Negotiations Team to review and approve UUP's Conceptual Proposals.



**UUP Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin**

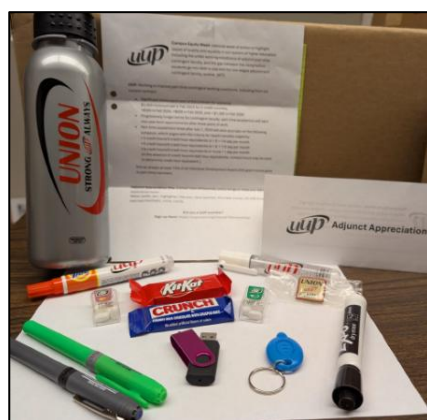
From the Plattsburgh Chapter, Michelle Toth as chapter president, Rohit Rampal as our Academic representative, and Tyler Hargraves as our Professional representative attended this meeting.

The Conceptual Proposals outline the scope of our bargaining agenda for the upcoming round. They identify each of the articles that UUP intends to open for negotiation, and they itemize a series of more specific bargaining proposals that we intend to pursue.

The conceptual proposals were reviewed, voted on, and approved. UUP is now officially set to go to the negotiations table with New York State as soon as the State is ready.

## Campus Equity Week

The last full week in October is designated by UUP as campus equity week with a focus on the disparities for contingent employees, those who have lower wages and do not currently have a path to continuing/permanent appointments.



### The Adjunct Appreciation Kit

Water bottle,  
Pen, Highlighter,  
Tide pen, Hand sanitizer,  
Dry erase marker,  
2G USB,  
Keychain flashlight,  
UUP pin,  
Mints and candy

Put your name in for the drawing by Oct. 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Statewide:** Higher Education Labor United (UUP is a member) hosted a free virtual screening of the independent film "Adjunct," followed by a live discussion with filmmaker and former adjunct Ron Najor on Sat. Oct. 25th. [Click HERE](#) to view the trailer from the film.

**At the Chapter:** 25 very cool Adjunct Appreciation Kits were assembled and raffled off.

*Please note that our adjuncts and lecturers (contingent part-time and full-time academic employees) make up 46% of all academics on our campus.*

## New Chapter Membership Development Officers (MDOs)

### Tyler Hargraves and Devin Brassard

We thank Shawna who for the past few years has served as both our membership officer and our VP for Academics. We are thrilled to give her a small break and announce our two new Chapter MDOs Tyler Hargraves and Devin Brassard. Both will be participating in activities and outreach for promoting membership and serving on the state-wide Membership committee.



Tyler is a UUP Professional and the campus Student Association Liaison in the office of Student Engagement.



Devin is a UUP Professional as the Admissions Technology Assistant for Undergraduate Admissions.

## UUP Employees at SUNY Plattsburgh

SUNY Plattsburgh has (as of the first week of Oct. 2025) 616 UUP represented employees.

- 443 (72%) are full-time and 173 (28%) are part-time.
- 373 (61%) are academics and 243 (39%) are professionals.
- Adjunct is the most frequent title for academics (132), and Sr Staff Assistant is the most frequent title for professionals (36).
- 199 (32%) have Continuing/'Tenure' (academics) or Permanent (professionals) appointments.

## Upcoming Chapter Events

### Professionals Lunch Meeting

Monday, November 17<sup>th</sup>

12:00-1:30pm

Warren Ballroom, ACC 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

*\*Lunch provided!*

[Register HERE](#)

Join UUP Statewide VP for Professionals Carolyn Kube, Labor Relations Specialist Kathy Briggs, Chapter VP for Professionals Gerianne Downs, and fellow Professional UUPers for a discussion on topics like performance programs, vacation time (requesting), and asking for promotions/raises.

### Academic Freedom Workshop

Wednesday, Dec. 3<sup>rd</sup>

12:00-1:30pm

Alumni Conference room, ACC 2<sup>nd</sup> floor

*\*All UUP members are welcome!*

[Register HERE.](#)

The work of higher education is under threat like never before. Alissa Karl, UUP VP for Academics, will lead the discussion on recent attacks on academic freedom at colleges and universities in the U.S. review the specific contractual protections that cover UUP employees who teach and engage in research. While there will be some repeat content from this past winter's Academic Freedom sessions, members are encouraged to attend again (or for the first time!) to discuss recent developments.

### Coffee & Breakfast Bites

Thursday, December 4<sup>th</sup>

8:30am – 10:00am

Beaumont Hall, hosted by Chapter Treasurer Sandra Rezac (Sociology Dept.)

Mark your calendars and come enjoy a little bite of breakfast, coffee, and camaraderie with your fellow UUP members. Don't miss out on this opportunity to network, share ideas and concerns, and strengthen our community.

# Feel the Need to Take Action?

## VOTE-COPE

A nonpartisan political fundraising that coordinates the voluntary contributions of members and supports NYSUT-endorsed candidates and campaign committees that are pro-public education and pro-labor.

No union dollars are used to support candidates or campaign committees.

You can contribute as little as \$1 or \$2 per paycheck.

Payroll Deduction Form [CLICK HERE](#)

### WHY SHOULD I GIVE?

VOTE-COPE funds help protect our **collective bargaining rights**.

VOTE-COPE funds give members and students valuable opportunities to deliver UUP's message to legislators by attending advocacy days, in-district meetings/events, and fundraisers.

VOTE-COPE supports candidates who fight to protect public higher education—our University, our students, our patients, our jobs, and our retirement benefits—regardless of party affiliation.

VOTE-COPE funds give us a voice against the formidable forces pushing to privatize our work and our campus resources.

VOTE-COPE funds allow us to challenge misperceptions and promote solutions to the real problems our campuses face.



The poster is red and white. At the top is the UUP logo. Below it, 'ADVOCACY DAY' is written in large white letters. Underneath, in smaller white text, it says 'Meet with members of the New York State Legislature to show support for the 2025 UUP Legislative Agenda'. A white wavy line separates this from the bottom section. The bottom section is white with red text: 'FEBRUARY 25, 2025', '9:00 AM - 4:00 PM', and 'NEW YORK STATE CAPITOL'. At the bottom left is a red double arrow icon next to the text 'SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER:'. To the right of this is a QR code.

**uup**

# ADVOCACY DAY

Meet with members of the New York State Legislature to show support for the 2025 UUP Legislative Agenda

**FEBRUARY 25, 2025**  
**9:00 AM - 4:00 PM**  
NEW YORK STATE CAPITOL

» SCAN QR CODE TO REGISTER:



## Sign Up for UUP Advocacy Day

The last two years UUP has been very effective, with SUNY getting significant increases in funding.

As the state budget situation gets more precarious it is even more important that we continue to ensure that SUNY colleges and hospitals continue to be funded and seen as the economic engines that can help the state.

Mon. Feb. 24, 5:30-7pm – UUP Legislative Reception

Tue. February 25, 9am-4pm – UUP Advocacy