

Plattsburgh UUP Chapter Newsletter

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NYSUT Endorsed Candidates for 2026 Elections

Though UUP as a Local does not endorse candidates, the statewide union NYSUT (New York State United Teachers) has announced the candidates they endorse for the 2026 elections.

Please use this link for the full list of candidates:
https://www.nysut.org/resources/special-resources-sites/voter-guide/endorsements

UUP Chapter and Statewide Elections

Interested in being more active and learning more about UUP at the chapter or state level? The election for our chapter officers, our state-wide academic and professional delegates, and delegates to our affiliates (NYSUT, AFT) are coming up.

Timeline:
Nominations: Jan 14 – Feb 12, 2027
Voting: March 15- April 23, 2027
Terms are for 2-years, June 1, 2027 - May 31, 2029

Elected Chapter Positions:
President
Vice President for Academics (must be an Academic)
Vice President for Professionals (must be a Professional)
Secretary
Treasurer
Officer for Contingents
Officer for Retirees
Academic Delegates (must be Academics)
Professional Delegates (must be Professionals)

Details on the roles and responsibilities of each can be found in our Chapter Bylaws

Note: The members who receive the most votes in the election for the position of academic and professional delegate and are not already chapter officers, serve as the at-large members of the chapter executive board.

Fall 2026 UUP Delegate Assembly

Plattsburgh Officers and Delegates representing our chapter at the UUP Delegate Assembly



Jesse Decosse, Rohit Rampal, Kim Hartshorn, Shawna Mefferd Kelty, Gerianne Downs, Ray Carman, and Regan Levitte (from left to right)

From Chapter President, Michelle Toth

A Summary of the Disability Rights Workshop

Temporary – 5 days to a year
Examples include injuries, illness, surgeries and recovery time, rehab, pregnancy and childbirth.

Long Term – 12 months or longer
Examples include cancer, cardiovascular disease, musculoskeletal conditions, strokes, and arthritis.

Campus HR is responsible for any necessary documentation, accommodation requests, approving leaves, and approves the ability to return to work.
UUP is here to help you learn about your options and make you aware of any contractual issues.

Options to be Aware of:
All have various eligibility requirements, check with HR to determine your eligibility.

- **Sick Time**
  4 days or less, no medical documentation is needed.
- **FMLA (Family Medical Leave Act)**
  Up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave for yourself or for caring for a family member. Can be taken intermittently. Can be used in combination with sick/vacation time to continue to be paid. You do need to pay your share for healthcare coverage if not using accruals.
- **Presidential Leave**
  The campus president has the authority to grant additional sick leave after accrued leave has been exhausted.
- **Leave Donation Program (Appendix A-45)**
  A request can be made after exhausting all other leave time. The appeal is sent out to the chapter and those who earn vacation time can donate. Use of donated time can be taken in full or half-day increments.

Accommodation Request
Need to apply using the accommodation request form and provide all needed medical documentation. Can include
The Ask JAN webpage provides list of possible accommodations.
HR will decide what they will offer as accommodation.

Contact a UUP chapter officer if you have questions about leave options.

From Chapter VP for Academics, Shawna Mefferd Kelty

Robust discussion on new contractual language for student evaluations of teaching, not only what we achieved, but also the next steps for chapters:

The negotiated language in the SUNY Board of Trustees Policies:

> "Effectiveness in teaching - as demonstrated by such things as judgment of colleagues, development of teaching materials or new courses, the work of directing or advising students in independent projects, classroom observation, student academic growth, review of course materials by colleagues or administrators, and student reaction, as determined from interviews or surveys."
> (Policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees, Article XII, title A 4(b) and Title B2(b))"

What this means is that Course Opinion Surveys are only ONE element of a holistic approach to evaluation of teaching, not the PRIMARY evidence for evaluation. Our Chapter will work with administration to ensure that all campus committees and entities that evaluate teaching base their evaluation and recommendations on a RANGE of evidence. Beyond working with administration, we will be communicating to our members through executive boards, department reps. I will be speaking at the November 2026 Faculty Senate meeting on this matter. Revisions will happen to our MOU, but members should check their departmental elaborations to ensure that the elaborations are in compliance with the new language/policy.

What Will You Do When They Come for You Workshop led by Labor Relations Specialists Brent Underwood and Jennifer Rhee:

The number of interrogations and discipline is on the rise. I strongly recommend this workshop for any UUP member. They took us through the entire process. They also took us through the new language in the contract Appendix A-57, which is a Pilot expedited Discipline Resolution process program modeled after CSEA's Expedited arbitration process. It provides a 2-hour block of time to argue a snapshot of your case. It isn't the same as arbitration, but. gives the employee and representative an idea of what arbitration will look like. I'm hoping that we can have a workshop specifically on A-57 in the near future.

From Chapter VP for Professionals, Gerianne Downs

At the Fall 2026 Delegate Assembly, professionals met with Statewide VP Carolyn Kube and Bill Capowski, labor relations specialist for SUNY Maritime, New Paltz, Purchase and College of Optometry, where discussions included A-28 and members requesting salary increases. A member has the right to ask for a salary increase at any time, keeping in mind that they must be able to demonstrate a permanent and significant increase in duties and responsibilities as demonstrated by their performance program. (Sec. IV under MOU on promotion and salary increases found on Page 126 of the 2026-2031 contract). The request must be made in writing in accordance with the steps as outlined in the UUP Guide for Professional Employees found under the Member drop-down menu and then under Resources. Pages 19 and 20 of the guide gives members the steps that are necessary to take when a request is refused at an organizational level below that of the campus president.

With that denial, a member is allowed to request a review by the College Review Panel. Again, steps need to be followed in order to protect a member's window of opportunity, all of which are outlined in the guide.

The other item under Appendix 28 dealt with a similar issue — how to appeal an unsatisfactory on an evaluation, found on Page 120 of the contract in the MOU "Relating to a System of Evaluation for Professional Employees, beginning with (Sec. 8b), which deals with satisfactory and unsatisfactory evaluations.

If a member receives an unsatisfactory on their annual evaluation, the member has the right to request review by the Committee on Professional Evaluation. Page 121 of the contract (Sec. 9b) describes how a member requests a review by the committee. Members must inform in writing their immediate supervisor, the chair of the committee, now found on the HRS website under Evaluation Process by Bargaining Unit, UUP Professionals drop-down menu, as well as the UUP Chapter President Michelle Toth and the university president or designee within 10 working days of the unsatisfactory. The evaluation is reviewed, a report with recommendations is sent to the president.

It's important to note that new to the 2026-2031 contract, the president cannot issue a non-renewal letter while the Committee on Professional Evaluation is reviewing a member's file. According to UUP Statewide Vice President Kube, the president is supposed to use this time to consult with appropriate management prior to receipt of the committee's recommendations.

Remember: Members can request salary increases and/or promotions at any time. There is nothing that prohibits the university from granting promotions or salary increases.

From Chapter Secretary, Regan Levitte

A-32 Committee Update (presented by Carolyn Kube & Michelle Couture)

The A-32 Committee was created through a contractual appendix, originally written in the 80s. The committee was charged with revising contractual state titles and job descriptions through the Management Advisory Committee on Classifications and Compensation, specifically for Professionals. The last contract negotiations secured funding for two subject-matter experts to begin the work. The project creates an opportunity to modernize titles and improve career pathways for professionals.

Roles and Responsibilities of the parties involved

- Management controls the revision and approval of professional titles
- The subject matter experts research, develop, and recommend the revised framework
- UUP participates in an advisory role and communicates member concerns, and through the role of collective bargaining, UUP can negotiate the effect of changes on represented employees

Work Done Since the Previous Contract

Since the previous contract, the office of employee relations (OER) assembled a four-person subject-matter expert team. The team reviewed title structures at peer institutions to identify possible models and practices. Campus chief human resources officers provided input on operational needs and existing classifications, and the team has begun translating work.

Goals of the New Framework

- Reduce reliance on broad, generic title labels like “Assistant” and “Associate Staff”
- Create titles that more clearly reflect employees’ work, responsibilities, and professional expertise
- Build more visible promotional opportunities and career progression for professionals
- Address concerns that UUP has raised in both current and previous negotiations with SUNY and the State

Two-Phase Scope and Sequence

Phase 1: Review and revise campus professional titles
Phase 2: Address hospital titles after the campus work is completed

The team has not provided UUP with an implementation timeline. As of right now, they are not yet at the rollout point. Their first focus is making sure the titles are correct. Additional review will occur before any revised structure is put into practice.

What is Known About Member Impact

OER indicated that moving members into new titles is not expected to change current salaries. The process remains at an early stage, and final details have not been established. UUP can negotiate the impact of title changes on represented employees. Detailed information remains confidential until campus human resources and classification and compensation offices receive it for review. No immediate action is required, but member protections must remain central as the proposal develops.

Key Concern: Permanent Appointment

Under the current process, promotion to a new title begins a one-year probationary period, and appointment is restored only after the employee successfully completes that period. A systemwide title conversion could raise questions for employees who already hold permanent appointment, but remember, management cannot change/extend your work year without notice or negotiation!

Member Input

Your input is valuable, and UUP wants to hear from you on…

- Title Accuracy: What should a revised title communicate about your work and responsibilities?
- Career Mobility: What promotional pathways should the new framework make possible?
- Employment protections: What safeguards should apply when an employee moves into a new title?
- Negotiation priorities: Which salary, appointment, workload, or status concerns should UUP raise?

Next Steps and Contact Information

UUP will continue monitoring development and review of the title framework. As more information becomes available, UUP with assess the potential effects of members. UUP will prepare to negotiate impacts, including protections related to salary, appointment status, and implementation.

Member input now can help shape UUP's priorities later. If you have any questions, concerns, priorities, and/or specific examples to share, please contact
Bret Benjamin (uupcontract@uupmail.org) and Carolyn Kube (ckube@uupmail.org)

From Chapter Political Action Officer, Kim Hartshorn

The Outreach Committee hosted three Advocacy Training Workshops. These workshops were designed to familiarize the attendees with the various forms of political advocacy, especially with regards to the November general election. Door-to-door canvassing was the primary focus with instructions for using the Minivan App and role playing.

UUP and NYSUT Vote-Cope are focusing on flipping 2 Congressional seats this election, New York 17 and 21. Democrat Cait Conley is running in the 17th district to unseat incumbent republican Mike Lawler. In the 21st district Blake Gendebien is running a tight race against Anthony Constantino for the seat left open by Elise Stefanik. Over 100 UUPers signed up for AFL-CIO Labor Walks to canvas for various races across New York over the coming weekends.

There is still time to sign up for the Labor Walks in Plattsburgh over the next 2 weekends. Sign up here: https://www.mobilize.us/nysaflcio/event/1039563/

The Vote-Cope reception featured speaker Senator Patricia Fahy, a long-term member of the Senate Higher Education Committee. She was on her way to a Blake Gendebien fund-raiser and spoke with great appreciation for the support of UUP. Coincidentally, Blake Gendebien was staying in our hotel and met many of the delegates in the lobby and elevators.

Following the DA Saturday afternoon I joined some 30 UUPers and went door knocking in Colonie for SUNY alum Devin Lander, our State Historian, who is running for Senator in the 43rd New York Senate District, the district that was once 'owned' by Joe Bruno. https://devinlanderforsenate.com/



UUPers canvassing for candidate Blake Gendebien

Shawna Mefferd Kelty, Holly Heller-Ross, Kara Jefts, Kim Hartshorn, Don Meier, Gary Kroll, Tracie Guzzio, and Carol Shuttleworth (from left to right)

From Academic Delegate, Ray Carman

"AI Contractual and Legal Protections Workshop"
At the Fall Delegate Assembly, I attended a workshop on AI contractual and legal protections. Here are the takeaways from that session that everyone should know.

Where things stand. Public opinion on AI is turning. Skepticism cuts across party lines, and communities across the country are organizing against data centers, Flock cameras, and other AI-related projects. Pressure is building on Congress and state legislatures to regulate, and some large school districts are pulling AI out of classrooms.

What UUP is fighting for. UUP's priorities are protecting bargained jobs, resisting a Big Tech takeover of higher education, centering environmental sustainability, and ensuring inclusive, democratic control of knowledge along with public disclosure.

What UUP achieved this year. We helped create a national standard for public employee AI labor protections in New York law, and we negotiated first in the nation AI protections into our new contract. We have also built relationships with labor and political allies and moved the conversation on AI forward within our affiliates.

Why it matters at SUNY. AI is spreading quickly across our system, with major projects on AI tutoring, advising, and admissions, widespread campus adoption, surveillance technologies like Flock cameras, and new AI academic programs. In addition, campuses are required to develop AI policies by December 2026.

Meanwhile, the State Comptroller's report on SUNY's AI governance found that SUNY Administration has no governance structure to oversee AI systems, no documented policies requiring human oversight or addressing bias, and no metrics to measure performance. Administration officials also said that state IT policies do not directly apply to SUNY. Institutions like Brown and MIT, by contrast, have already examined AI's effects on learning, cognition, and intellectual integrity, along with concerns about student well-being, academic disciplines, data privacy, bias, and fairness.

Our protections. UUP is the only statewide union with enforceable AI language in its contract — this was a huge win! Article 44 establishes that ultimate accountability for work done by or with AI must rest with human beings, and that courses must be offered under the direction of a human instructor of record. Article 9 (Academic Freedom) and the SUNY Board of Trustees' intellectual property policy are also relevant here.

State law adds another layer. The NYS LOADinG Act, enacted in February 2026 and set to expire in 2028, provides that AI systems may not:

- affect collective bargaining agreements or relationships;
- result in the loss of jobs or non-overtime hours;
- take over duties performed by employees; or
- alter employees' rights, benefits, or terms and conditions of employment.

It also requires notification when AI is used.

What we all need to do. Contract language and state law only work if we use them. When an AI program becomes part of your work, we are instructed to start a conversation by asking:

- What does this application do, and what work is it changing or replacing?
- What need is it meeting, and am I required to use it?
- What will its impact look like a few years from now?
- Does it deliver results worth the price tag, or is it a solution in search of a problem?
- How does it affect students?
- What kind of tech companies are we contracting with?
- How will data security be verified, and how are intellectual property and data protected?

We were also urged to document what we learn and bring it to our chapter. Our observations from the ground are how we will enforce these protections.

"Learning Management Systems & Our Rights Workshop"

Another interesting workshop I attended offered an overview of union concerns about learning management systems (LMS), such as Brightspace. Much of this session was a discussion, but a very valuable takeaway was a table that mapped tensions tied to LMS use and proposed methods for resolving them.

Principle	Tensions	What Can We Do?
Manner and Means	Management can decide tools and work method / modality; LMS allows management to use manner and means to assert more control over how our work is performed	Exercise your own discretion wherever possible, even when using a tool that management may control. Where possible, don't center the LMS in your work
Academic Freedom	Tools and modality impact "full freedom" to teach; LMS creates certain expectations about teaching and learning	Confront expectations; don't use LMS features because they are there; use LMS minimally and intentionally
Intellectual Property	Insecurity of work conducted and stored on LMS; IP put at risk when management presses for more LMS use	Keep materials off the LMS when possible; regularly remove your IP from the LMS
Workload	LMS can create more work in the name of learning "efficiency"	Use LMS minimally; manage student expectations
Artificial Intelligence	Manipulates information available to management; usurps role of faculty in identifying student progress	Decline to use Al components in the LMS when possible; contact UUP if/when any directives are issued to use Al

From Professional Delegate, Jesse Decosse

Fall Delegate Assembly: Celebrating Contract Gains and More!
This year's Fall Delegate Assembly celebrated the ratification of the "historically rich contract" covering July 2, 2026, through July 1, 2031. The agreement brings significant gains in compensation and enhanced retention awards, while reinforcing the importance of knowing and understanding our rights as UUP members.

A Contract Worth Celebrating
The new contract includes substantial annual salary increases over the five-year term:

- 2026: 4.5% effective July 2 or September 1
- 2027: 4% effective July 1 or September 1
- 2028: 3.5% effective July 1 or September 1
- 2029: 3% effective July 1 or September 1
- 2030: 3% effective July 1 or September 1

Additional DSI increases include 0.5% in 2026, a $250 base salary adjustment for full-time employees or a $225 lump sum for part-time employees in 2027, and 0.5% increases in each of 2028, 2029, 2030, and 2031.

The agreement also enhances service and retention awards. The seven-year award will increase from $1,000 to $1,750 by the end of the contract. The 12-year retention award will increase from $800 to $1,500 effective July 1, 2028. A new $750 retention award for 17 years of service will take effect July 1, 2029.

Additionally, full-time employees with a master's degree or higher will be eligible for an annual $600 higher education differential beginning July 1, 2027.
Beyond compensation, the contract maintains individual development awards to support professional development opportunities. Campus allocations are still pending from the Office of Employee Relations. Once announced, members will receive information about the campus application process.

Knowing Your Rights
Along with celebrating these gains, the assembly emphasized the importance of understanding our rights as UUP members. Topics included representation during disciplinary proceedings, understanding appointment status and its implications, and knowing our rights regarding non-renewal, retrenchment, and temporary or alternative assignments.

Members were also reminded of their right to request a promotion or salary increase at any time and seek peer review if denied. Employees may also request a committee review of an unsatisfactory evaluation or a satisfactory evaluation that contains negative language. Understanding these protections helps members advocate for themselves and navigate workplace challenges with greater confidence.
Members who have questions about these rights should contact chapter leadership.

Supervision and Time Management
A workshop on supervision and time management highlighted the unique nature of each UUP member's role. Since daily responsibilities vary, expectations regarding leave time, compensatory time, and flexible scheduling should reflect the actual duties of each position. An accurate and up to date performance program is essential to this process, clearly outlining employee responsibilities and supervisor expectations. Members are encouraged to review their performance programs to help ensure that workplace expectations are clearly communicated and understood.

From Academic Delegate, Wendy Gordon

The Gender and Sexuality Interests Committee (GSIC) joined with the ad hoc Human Rights Committee to distribute information, stickers, and pronoun pins during the benefits tabling session on Friday.



A special activity was made-to-order pins featuring mixed pronoun choices (e.g. She/They) and art based on the popular UUP Women's Rights and Concerns Committee poster.

GSIC continues to pursue establishing connections with the national labor organization, Pride@Work.

Looking Back at Recent Chapter Events…

2026 Labor Day Parade in Massena, NY

[Right: Canton Chapter leaders with their banner, and Shawna Mefferd Kelty, David Curry, Michele Bushey (NYSUT Board Member, President of Saranac Teachers Association), Patti Hartshorn, and Kim Hartshorn]





(Below: NYSUT members, Plattsburgh UUPers, and congressional candidate Blake Gendebien)





Looking Back at Recent Chapter Events…

Fall 2026 Chapter Membership Meeting



Special guest, UUP Statewide President Fred Kowal, spoke at our Chapter Membership meeting this past September. He emphasized the importance of participating in Labor Walks to canvass for endorsed candidates. There is still time to show your support and help out. UUP has organized a couple more North Country Labor Walks on Saturday, Oct. 31st and on Election Day (Tuesday, Nov. 3rd).

Use this link to view the full calendar:
https://uupinfo.org/legislation/calendar/

Scroll to the "North Country" section of the page to find registration links for Labor Walks in Ogdensburg, Plattsburgh, and Canton/Potsdam.

Upcoming Chapter Events

Monthly UUP Coffee & Breakfast Bites

All Thursdays, 8:30-10:00am

- Nov. 5th – Faculty/Staff Lounge in the Library, hosted by Michelle Toth
- Dec. 3rd – Hermes Conf. rm (Au Sable 114), hosted by Gerianne Downs

Mark your calendars to come and 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!

Members can also bring non-members

UUP Union Forum

WHEN: Thursday, Nov. 12th, 2:00-4:00pm
WHERE: Yokum 206

Our Chapter VPs for Academics and Professionals are holding another Union Forum this fall to gather and discuss concerns/issues/situations that are occurring on our campus. The goal is to share and discuss what your department/office is experiencing because you may not be alone.

If you have a topic you'd like to submit anonymously for the forum, please use this link:
Union Forum: anonymous suggestions for discussion – Fill out form