Connection up

Number 105 June 2024

BINGHAMTON CHAPTER, UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS

Editor's note

Connection in Union



By Troy Norton Apartments Coordinator, Residential Life and Editor of Connection

t is early in the Fall 2023

semester — August, I think. I am a new Binghamton UUP Chapter delegate, and I am having lunch with the chapter's new president, Brendan McGovern. We are meeting to discuss me taking the reins of the semesterly newsletter, *Connection*. The rest, as they say, is history.

The name *Connection* was selected before I became editor, and likely even before I was an employee at Binghamton University. I can't take credit for the name. How fitting, though, is the name, given the direction that our chapter has taken and continues to head in.

In August 2023, UUP won a monumental contract with New York State for the 2022-2026 period. At the chapter level, though, we knew that the work was far from over. We had employees to advocate for and, indeed, connections to make. And that's what we've been doing through a series of initiatives, from old to new, membership blitzes to breakfast gatherings, biweekly notes to 1:1 conversations, database organizing to campus and community



Troy Norton speaks at Fight for Your Right to Party (for a Fair Contract) on April 24, 2023.

partnerships. In the pages that follow, you'll read a bit more about each of these initiatives and how they have played a vital role in making those allimportant connections.

Of course, we have not been without challenges. We have seen these challenges at the campus, system, and community levels. Yet from struggle comes solidarity, and from solidarity comes success. I have witnessed the difference that our union has made in the lives of many of our employees over the past couple of years alone. We did this through hard, collective work.

Through these semesterly newsletters, I hope you gain insight into the ties that link all of us, be they triumphs or failures, struggles or successes. For these connections give us strength, value, and purpose; they remind us of our solidarity with and commitment to one another.

Enjoy Connection.

Connection

Binghamton Chapter Newsletter

Number 105 June 2024

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ONLINE MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION: uuphost.org/myuup/Membership/RegForm.php

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KEEP UP WITH CHAPTER ACTIVITIES!

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Reflecting on a Year of Progress and Looking Ahead: A Message from the UUP Chapter President



By Brendan McGovern Program Coordinator, Geography and President of Binghamton UUP Chapter

A s we conclude my first year as UUP Binghamton Chapter President, I am filled with immense pride and admiration for all of you, the dedicated members of our union. Your tireless efforts and unwavering commitment have propelled us forward, making this year one of monumental achievements.

From the beginning, my goal was to foster a strong sense of community among our UUP members, moving beyond a transactional relationship where members only interact with 'The Union' when they have an issue. Together, we have created numerous opportunities for informal interactions, including our monthly Coffee & Breakfast Bites and our monthly Happy Hours at Food & Fire and Iron Agave. These gatherings have become cherished events, strengthening our bonds and fostering meaningful conversations.

Our accomplishments this year have been significant and wide-ranging. We successfully negotiated a memo of understanding protecting our chapter members from on-call/recall duties, won tenure fights for our academic members, and had a confusing policy document recalled that misinterpreted UUP agreement terms and attempted to establish new policies without negotiation.

We began the year by advocating for and achieving \$163 million in operating funds for SUNY, far exceeding the \$43 million initially proposed by Governor Hochul. This achievement was possible due to the relationships we have built with legislators throughout the state, including the election of one of our own, Binghamton Chapter member Lea Webb, to the NY State Senate.

Although we started the academic

year without a contract, together with UUP chapters across the state, we rallied and secured the best, most lucrative contract in our 50-year history. We celebrated this achievement at our first-ever Welcome Back Barbecue in the ITC Rotunda. We created the

Campus Labor

next year.

movement.

Council, an umbrella organization

the three largest bargaining units at

aims to foster a strong community

to fight for bettering the lives of all

campus workers and their families. Our

Campus Labor Council is on the brink

of being recognized as an official AFL-

Our labor-themed lecture series, co-

sponsored with the Masters of Human

Rights Lecture Series and the Human Rights Institute, brought esteemed labor

leaders like Alex Press, Jaz Brisack,

and Scott Houldieson to our campus.

and connection to the broader labor

This series enriched our understanding

CIO Central Labor Council, starting

that includes UUP, GSEU, and CSEA,

Binghamton University. This Council

the academic year without a contract, together with UUP chapters across the state, we rallied and secured the best, most lucrative contract in our 50-year history.

Although we started

seen tremendous improvements. The Chapter Notes newsletter, our enhanced semesterly newsletter *Connections*, a shared UUP calendar, and an increase in UUP Bulletin Boards across campus are just a few examples of our increased visibility this year.

Our events team has been nothing short of amazing. Coffee & Breakfast

Bites, which started as a trial event last summer, has grown into a highly popular gathering. This event now reaches beyond the Vestal campus, with successful editions at The Decker College of Nursing and Health Sciences, The School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and the

Downtown Center.

The workshops we've offered every month covered everything from the Taylor Law to Organizing 101 and how to self-nominate for promotions and salary increases. Our Union Reps have been vital in bridging the gap between our members and our leadership team. Their proactive engagement has directly influenced our discussions in labor-management meetings.

Our advocacy has been powerful and effective. We wrote letters and visited state legislators, successfully advocating for an additional \$114 million in recurring operation funds for SUNY this year, on top of the \$163 million we secured last year.

Through Lunch and Labor, we have educated our members about the *continued from page 4*

Our communication systems have

President's Column

continued from page 3

history of the labor movement and fostered important discussions about its relevance to our current struggles. Our College Review Panel and Committee on Professional Evaluation have tirelessly advocated for fair compensation and promotions for our members.

Our Individual Development Award Committee has distributed over \$130,000 to faculty and staff for professional development this year, enabling our colleagues to attend conferences and take classes that would have otherwise been out of reach.

Despite the Supreme Court Janus Decision, which attempted to undermine public sector unions, we not only survived but grew our chapter membership from 79% to 83%, and over 90% for full-time members of our bargaining unit. Through New Employee Orientations (NEOs), coordinated one-on-one conversations, and Membership Drives, we've increased our membership by a full 4% since last year. Our membership numbers are critical as we prepare to negotiate another contract. United we bargain, divided we beg.

Our efforts are part of a larger, reinvigorated labor movement happening across the USA. From the UAW strike to other labor actions, workers are fighting for better conditions and a bigger share of the pie. We are proud to be part of this larger movement.

We have achieved so much, but there is still more to be done. We intend to

continue and expand these efforts next year and create an even greater sense of community. All members are invited to become more active. If a position does not exist, we will create one for you. This is a collective effort, and the more active members we have, the more we can advocate for better working conditions and a better work environment. This summer, we will get to work planning for an even more successful year ahead. Together, we are stronger, and together, we will continue to fight for the well-being of our workers and the advancement of our union.

Thank you for your dedication and hard work. Together, we will continue to achieve great things.

JUD

A Changing of the Guard



By Alan Wang Network Administration Analyst, Information **Technology Services and** Treasurer of Binghamton **UUP** Chapter

by the time you are reading this, a slate of chapter leaders, some new and some returning, will have been elected for the 2023-2025 term. Looking back at my past two years as chapter president, I have realized that this campus is filled with some of the most talented academics and professionals who care deeply about their professions and the students they serve. It has been a pleasure serving as your chapter president during perhaps the most challenging time for all. If my term as president has taught me anything, it is that this campus is full of talented, resilient individuals who know how to stick

together and get the job done. I will still remain active as an executive board member, statewide professional delegate, and as the chapter treasurer.

Your new president, Brendan

McGovern from the Geography Department, our former vice president for professionals, is a longtime member on our executive board and a strong advocate for our members. Claire Kovacs. our newly elected

"...this campus is full of talented, who know how to stick together and get the job done."

Our vice president for academics is Teipreet Chadha. Renee Andrews from facilities management will continue as our officer for contingents. Rounding out the team are Robert Mess, our

> very active officer for retirees and Donald Kunkel, our longtime membership development officer. Donald's retirement as of May this year opens up another opportunity for our members to get involved. Last but not least, I would like to give a

special thanks to our chapter assistant, Linda O'Branski. Without all of the hard work she puts on behind the scenes in planning, scheduling, and communications for our numerous events, our chapter would not be able to function.

resilient individuals

vice president for professionals has

been a very active executive board

member from the start and always has a

way to get our membership engaged, be

it to rally for a fair contract, or to host a

book club to help educate our members

about the inner workings of unions.

2023-2024 Delegate Assemblies: On Celebration and Action

By Troy Norton, with Contributions from Brendan McGovern

The Fall 2023 and Spring 2024 UUP Delegate Assemblies (DAs) offered much for our union leaders to celebrate. Simultaneously, each DA featured its own calls to action.

The Fall 2023 UUP DA (October 12–14, 2023) doubled as a policy-making assembly and a joyous commemoration of UUP's 1973 founding. The celebration also marked recent back-to-back victories for UUP: one of the best budgets for SUNY in more than a decade—thanks in large part to UUP's advocacy—and one of the strongest contracts ever, which members resoundingly ratified in August. (Check out graphics for contract highlights.) All the same, the DA featured a call to action as UUP emphasized our goal to stop planned program cuts at SUNY Potsdam and prevent the administrative fiasco at Potsdam from replicating throughout the SUNY system.

The Spring 2024 UUP DA played out similarly. We celebrated the rise of new union leaders at both the statewide and chapter levels (indeed, the Binghamton chapter sent many first-time attendees). Yet the celebration was supplemented by a call to action regarding SUNY administration's evident intentions to deprive SUNY Downstate of critical funding.

From the DAs, it is clear that we have made significant gains as a union, and simultaneously that there is, and likely always will be, considerable work to be done. Accordingly, we recognize and celebrate our accomplishments, and we continue the vital work of building connections each day.



Binghamton Chapter delegates at the Spring 2024 Delegate Assembly.



Binghamton Chapter delegates at the Fall 2023 Delegate Assembly.



UUP FIGHTS FOR AND WINS FAIR COMPENSATION!

UUP's newly ratified 2022-2026 contract with New York State achieves fair pay increases for workers across our bargaining unit. All UUP employees will receive on-base increases in all years of the agreement.

ON-BASE INCREASES OVER THE LIFE OF THE AGREEMENT

	Across-the-Board increase	Additional on-base money
2022	2% ATB increase • Retroactive to July 2 or Sept. 1, 2022 (depending on obligation)	
2023	3% ATB • Retroactive to July 1 or Sept. 1, 2023 (depending on obligation)	 Discretionary Salary Increase: \$400 flat ATB on-base increase (pro-rated for part-time employees). Paid in December 2023 2023-24 DSI: 0.5% pool of total payroll, distributed by campuses to eligible employees at management's discretion. Paid in December 2024
2024	3% ATB	 \$1,000 on-base Retention Award for eligible employees (\$500 for those who have previously received a Service Award) 2024-25 DSI: 0.5% pool of total payroll, distributed by campuses to eligible employees at management's discretion. Paid in December 2025
2025	3% ATB	 \$800 on-base retention award for eligible employees who have given 12 years of service 2025-26 DSI: 0.5% pool of total payroll, distributed by campuses to

LIVING WAGE INCREASES FOR OUR LOWEST-PAID Academic and professional ranks and grades

We won increases in the contractual minimum salaries at rates above ATBs for professionals in SL1, SL2, SL3 grades, and academics in the titles of Assistant Librarian, Instructor, Sr. Assistant Librarian, Lecturer, and Assistant Professor. For contract years 2023, 2024, and 2025, the contractual minimum salaries increase by \$2,000/year (12 month/Calendar-year appointments) or \$1,667/year (10/11-month Academic- or College-year appointments) Employees will receive either the new minimum salary or the ATB, whichever generates the higher salary.

INCREASES IN PER-COURSE MINIMA FOR PART-TIME FACULTY

Per-course minima will increase over the life of the agreement as follows:

- 2023: \$4,000/course at University Centers, \$3,500/course at Comprehensive and Tech campuses
- 2024: \$4,500/course at University Centers,
- \$4,000/course at Comprehensive and Tech campuses
- = 2025: \$5,000/course at University Centers,
- \$4,500/course at Comprehensive and Tech campuses
- 2026: \$6,000/course at University Centers,
 \$5,500/course at Comprehensive and Tech campuses
- **Based on 3 credits or credit equivalents (pro-rated for other courses); PT faculty receive new minimum or ATB, whichever is larger**

\$3,000 LUMP-SUM BONUSES

- Employees who are on-payroll or on authorized leave at ratification and who continue through April 30, 2024 will earn a \$3,000 lump-sum bonus (not to base), not pensionable, pro-rated for part-time employees.
- Bonus will be split into two payments: \$1,500 on July 1, 2024 and \$1,500 on July 1, 2025

We also achieved increases in Holiday Pay, Location pay for the Downstate and Mid-Hudson regions, on-call pay, and substantial raises in the PGY salary schedules for Medical Residents at our SUNY Hospitals.

This is the richest contract we've seen in many years. It is balanced to meet the varied needs of UUP's diverse membership while advancing union principles of equity, transparency, workers' agency, and the common good.

Only in union can we create the best possible higher education and health care for students, patients and workers!



eligible employees at management's

discretion. Paid in December 2026

Got questions? Want to get involved? Contact your UUP chapter office or email contract@ uupmail.org for more information.

Taking a leap!



By Cortney Tyler Financial Aid Counselor, Financial Aid

n a time when stress levels are high and deadlines are rapidly approaching, I often find myself in a state of extreme thankfulness. I have been an employee of Binghamton University since early August of 2022 when I joined the Office of Financial Aid and Student Records. I came to Binghamton with about twelve years of experience working in Higher Education, all twelve years at another institution out of state. I came here after years of feeling beatdown, unappreciated, and frankly exhausted at my previous employer.

I came to Binghamton with a good bit of financial aid knowledge and a great deal of Higher Education experience. However, when I walked in the doors on August 4th, to say I was nervous

was a vast understatement. My nerves were quickly alleviated as I was greeted at the door by my new supervisor, Sean. I was then welcomed by the entire FASR staff with breakfast pizza! Since day one at Binghamton University, I have been met with friendly faces and continued support, not only from my supervisor Sean and the Directors Patti and Amber, but the entire department as well! I have been able to attend two conferences where I gained an abundance of knowledge and met financial aid professionals from across the State! The well-oiled machine that is the FASR office has allowed me to grow as a financial aid professional while also becoming part of this amazing team.

I had spent years being fearful for my job, regardless of how hard I worked or how well I performed, living in a constant state of anxiety. It was reflected in my home life where I am the single parent of two boys. I knew I needed to make a change. Looking back, I wish I had taken the leap sooner! I am in a far more stable environment. I no longer have to worry about the longevity of the institution I work for, or if I will have a job tomorrow. I come to work and feel supported. I am welcomed with smiling faces. If I have questions or am struggling with something, I have the resources of not only my colleagues but also digital resources that I never had access to before. I have also had real training in the field I love so much.

While this time of year is stressful with financial aid deadlines approaching in the office and end of school year activities happening in my children's lives, I cannot help but breathe a sigh of relief and look around at how my life has changed since stepping through the doors here in August of 2022. As nervous as I was to make this change, looking back I am filled with gratitude to be here and a part of this team.



Membership Matters

By Troy Norton

he headline for this montage is, I confess, a double entendre. "Matters" can be understood as a noun: these are the dealings of membership. But, more importantly in my view, "matters" can be understood as a verb: membership is important, nay, vital to our success as a union.

To that end, please enjoy the below highlights of various initiatives from this year. These range from our monthly (sometimes more) Coffee and Breakfast Bites (which originally had humbler beginnings as

Coffee and Donuts), spearheaded by our Events Officers, Allie Messersmith-Mars and Tejpreet Chadha (in addition to her role as our chapter's Vice President for Academics); to our biweekly Chapter Notes and Member Spotlights, spearheaded by my two Co-Communications Officers, Margie Weiland and Kitty Cummings; to 1:1 conversations, spearheaded by one of our chapter delegates, Courtney Ignarri. As Chadha noted: "It is especially helpful for us to hear from our members [...] about their concerns and how they are affecting them and their work." And, as is hopefully selfevident from this montage: membership matters.

UUP Spotlight Members



Messersmith-Mars

Genetics Instructional Support, Biological Sciences and Events & Hospitality Committee Co-Chair and 1:1 **Conversations** Coordinator

Short Introduction/About Me

• Hi. I'm Allie! I have been with the university for six years now. I am a Preparator for the Genetics Lab in the Biology Department. I am also a co-chair of the Events and Hospitalities committee and a member of the Membership, Outreach, and Communication Committees.

Tell me about your job and why you love what you do?

• I set up the labs for the students taking the Genetics Lab. I work in animal husbandry by caring for Drosophila melanogaster (fruit flies). I never pictured myself in this position but I love that I get to care for these little guys! We tend to see them as pests but

Alexandra "Allie" after working with them for six years I've grown fond of them.

How did you get involved with UUP?

• I first got involved with UUP by attending one of the first Coffee and Donuts. A few of my colleagues in my department were going through issues regarding their Performance Programs and we decided to attend the event to ask some questions. We ultimately got our questions answered and I decided to see how I could further get involved in the chapter.

How do you make a difference?

• I volunteered to be the Union Rep for Biology which means I act as sort of a liaison between the UUP Chapter and my department. Anyone who has issues/questions/concerns can reach out to me and I try to get them addressed by the right person within the chapter. As a co-chair of the Events and Hospitalities committee, I like to think that I bring people across campus together at the Coffee and Breakfast Bites events. It's

been a work-in-progress but, I think it's had a positive impact on campus engagement throughout the chapter. I've really enjoyed having those morning conversations with members!

What about your community engagement; any hobbies?

• I recently picked up crocheting and have been enjoying it a lot! I just started on my first granny-square blanket so if anyone has any tips, I welcome them!





Occupational Therapy Senior Staff Assistant, **Decker College of Nursing** and Health Sciences and Communications Committee Co-Chair

Short Introduction/About Me

• I have worked at Binghamton University for five years. I work with supportive colleagues who inspire me to learn and grow. I believe my work and service has a positive impact on the university and pushes me to take on new and challenging opportunities.



Chapter leaders during a membership drive in November 2023.

Tell me about your job and why you love what you do?

• I work for the Division of Occupational Therapy and have supported the division throughout accreditation and welcoming our inaugural classes for two NEW clinical doctorate programs to the University, the OTD Entry Level Program, and OTD Post Professional Program. I enjoy the opportunity to continually learn and grow as a professional. I also enjoy the culture at Binghamton as it promotes collaboration and professional development.

How did you get involved with UUP?

• I first got involved with UUP by attending the monthly board meetings. I began to join committees and learn more about the impact and role of UUP on the Binghamton campus. I found great colleagues and support and became a UUP professional delegate. I am also a co-chair of the communications committee and editor of Chapter Notes.

How do you make a difference?

• I am an executive board member of the Professional Staff Senate and UUP professional delegate. I have found involvement in campus organizations and within the community provide rich and diverse collaboration which allows me to make a difference and impact at Binghamton.

What about your community engagement; any hobbies?

• I enjoy reading books to elementary students and supporting the PTA with events and activities. I love spending time with my family, gardening, and designing floral arrangements for weddings and events.



Andre L Mathis '09, MPA '12

Bartle Library Services Manager, Professional Delegate and member of Constitution & Governance Committee and NYSUT SRP Advisory Committee

Short Introduction/About Me

• I am a two time alum of BU graduated in 2009 majoring in Political Science and obtaining my MPA in 2012. Currently serving as the Vice Chair of PSS.

Tell me about your job and why you love what you do?

• I serve as the Library Services Manger at Bartle Library where I oversee the circulation desk and our Course Reserves service. One of the things I love about my job is the interactions and working relationships that I have with my student employees. As a team we are aligned in making sure that we offer the best customer service to the patrons we serve while maintaining a working environment that is professional and detail oriented.

How did you get involved with UUP?

• Prior to working at the BU I worked for a K-12 School District where I served as a local union president for 6 years. Having a great awareness of the importance of being active in your union, I knew that after sometime of getting adjusted to working in Higher Ed that I would want to continue advocating, and participating in union work. I have the privilege of serving as a Professional Staff Delegate for our chapter and serving on our chapter's Executive Committee. Additionally I have the honor of serving on NYSUT SRP (School Related Professionals) Advisory Committee, currently serving in my third term.

How do you make a difference?

• In my job I feel like I make a difference in the aspect of representation matters. Being in a visible role I hope that it allows students who look like me to feel comfortable about utilizing the library or feeling like they can work at the Library. In the realm of our union, I hope that I can always do the best I can in advocating and advancing for the betterment of my colleagues whether its here on campus, or elsewhere.

What about your community engagement; any hobbies?

• I have served and currently serve a board member for numerous community organizations including CARES which an organization that seeks to provide support and establish better working relationships for students and parents of color within the local school district. I love to travel and I am a big fan of cruises.



Troy Norton Apartments Coordinator, Residential Life and Editor of Connection

Short Introduction/About Me

• I am an Apartments Coordinator with Residential Life. I joined the Binghamton University community in August 2021 as a Resident Director. Professionally, I enjoy working with college students and helping them grow. I also enjoy building coalitions and partnerships between people, offices, and organizations.

Tell me about your job and why you love what you do?

• It is a blast being able to work with students and young professionals. I love working with people to help them more fully reach their potential. I also continue to learn so much about myself as a person, professional, and supervisor through my work with others.

How did you get involved with UUP?

• I joined UUP when I first arrived at Binghamton. In my second year, I got involved with the College Review Panel and the College Committee on Professional Evaluation. I enjoyed my work in these areas and met Brendan McGovern, then our Chapter's Vice President for Professionals, who has since become something of a mentor to me. I continue to explore new ways to build connections and advocate for workers' rights through UUP.

How do you make a difference?

• I genuinely enjoy building coalitions and hearing multiple different perspectives. I ask questions to gain clarity on stances I don't intuitively understand. I try to critique in private and praise in public. And, I try to uplift others' voices, whether through dayto-day work or through our semesterly newsletter, Connections.

What about your community engagement; any hobbies?

• I am involved in the College Student Personnel Association of New York State, serving on their executive board as Coordinator of Finance and Administration. Outside of work, I enjoy reading, working out, and watching WWE.



Patrick Doyle System Administrator

in Information Technology Services, Professional Delegate, Chapter Department Representative, Statewide Committee Representative for the Veterans Affairs and the Environmental Issues Advocacy (EIA) committees, and the Sunshine Fund Coordinator.

Short Introduction/About Me

• A short answer? I'll try. My name is Patrick Doyle. I was born in Syracuse, grew up in Port Crane, and live in Chenango Bridge. You could say I'm a local boy. I started working at Binghamton University in June of 1997. Most everything else you'll find out with further reading.

Tell me about your job and why you love what you do?

• The bulk of my job is the system administration of the Windows and

Linux central IT based public labs both physical and virtual. What does that mean? It means if you have ever wandered into a computer lab, Pod, or Information Commons, or ever used a virtual desktop on BingView/VDI over the past 27 years you have utilized my services. I hope you were satisfied! I love working at the University. There are dozens of reasons why. I love contributing to an institution that has such an excellent reputation. There are countless people that I enjoy working with. The diversity, by so many measures, is excellent. I enjoy listening to the stories told, and seeing - in person and in print – the research being done on the campus. It can be quite exciting. I even love simply walking around the campus. I've been to many campuses through the years, and ours is one of the most beautiful and well maintained of all.

How did you get involved with UUP?

• Through my UUP outreach training, we are encouraged to find our "Union Story." My union story is how I became involved in UUP. In a previous life, I worked at a now defunct grocery store chain. It was a union shop where employees are required, as a condition of their continued employment, to have membership in the labor union. That union did little to nothing for me. Actually, it hurt me in that my pay scale was limited by the contract, so that despite my knowledge, experience, and longevity – my pay never changed. When I joined Binghamton University, I was told very little about the union other than I would be paying dues. Another union shop, I figured. The term "whatever" came to mind. Years later, as my responsibilities increased, I noticed that my salary wasn't. I also noticed that the salaries of colleagues were increasing. Interesting, I thought. I had a conversation with a colleague that was, and still is a very active member with UUP. He told me about the ability to apply for a raise through

the union. I never knew. It took three tries, but I finally received my deserved promotion and raise. Way to go UUP! I have progressively become more involved through the years, hoping to return the favor to as many members as I can.

How do you make a difference?

• An interesting question. My first, simple response is that I hope I make a difference. I hope I make a difference in the student body, helping to further their education through my job duties as a System Administrator for the public computer labs, both physical and virtual. I hope I make a difference in the lives of my colleagues with any help or assistance I can offer, making their jobs easier and lives less stressful. I hope I am able to make a difference with the faculty, by helping them to be more successful in their teaching. I hope I make a difference in UUP by being an active and outspoken member and delegate so that others will join and strengthen our union. I hope I make a difference in the lives of my friends by being the person that they would want me to be. I hope I make a difference in the lives of strangers, being a positive and kind person to those I may not meet, or meet briefly. To quote Morgan Freeman at the end of the movie Shawshank Redemption, "I hope."

What about your community engagement; any hobbies?

• Community engagement is an interesting subject. Two things come to mind. The first is I am an active member of my church. Along with regular attendance, I am a lector as well as participating in many church functions and activities. The second is, wherever possible, I patronize small businesses. How is that community engagement you ask? Good question. By patronizing a small business, you are helping your neighbor. You're helping the business owners' family. You're helping them all live a better



life, and doing what they enjoy. That is a lot better of an option than helping a CEO buy a bigger yacht.

• Hobbies? Absolutely. I golf, not well, but I try. I get out on the water in my or my friend's boat. I love to go for long walks and even longer bike rides. I read as much as I can about as much as I can, fiction and non. I am an active member in the Porsche Club of America. I enjoy traveling, short day trips or long vacations. I make a valiant attempt at growing a garden every year. I am – and have been for years – been involved in local politics. I love to try new things. Is that a hobby? Let's say it is. I'm sure there are others I am forgetting, but let's stop here.



Meghan McCarthy

Facilities Operations Center Manager, Facilities Management

Short Introduction/About Me

• I've started working here at Binghamton University in March 2020, which provided an interesting introduction to campus and its operations. I now manage the Facilities Operations Center where I learn something new every day. I've tried to take advantage of the opportunities through UUP and PSS to engage with others on campus.

Tell me about your job and why you love what you do?

• I work in Facilities Operations Center, where we receive and process all facilities-related service requests on campus. I love being in a position to help people across the university, supporting an engaging and welcoming community.

How did you get involved with UUP?

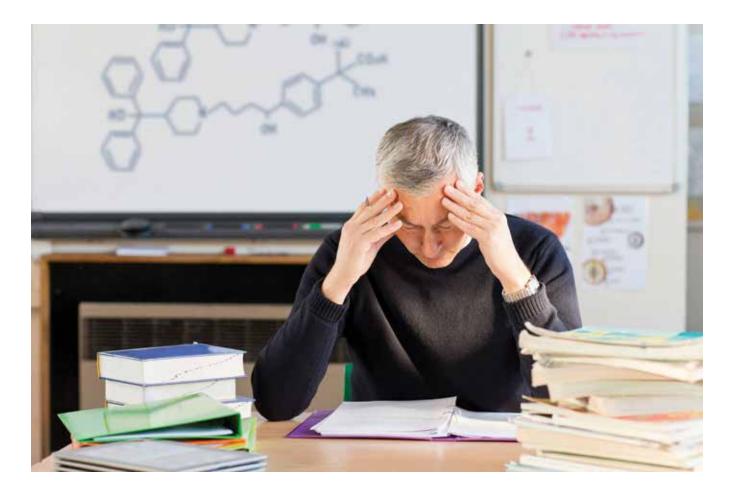
• I started my involvement with UUP by serving on the College Review Panel. Since then, I try to volunteer with the 1:1 campaigns or any other opportunities. I have recently joined the Events and Hospitality Committee as well.

How do you make a difference?

• I try to make a difference by doing my best and helping out however I can.

What about your community engagement; any hobbies?

• I am involved with Big Brother Big Sisters where I have a buddy to do fun activities with. I enjoy different hobbies, like hiking and snowboarding.



Life as an Adjunct Faculty: The Benefits of UUP



By John Ponstingel Adjunct Lecturer, Geography and Binghamton UUP Chapter Delegate

am an adjunct faculty

member at five different universities, including SUNY Binghamton and SUNY Buffalo. I earned my Ph.D. in 2021 from Texas State University, and perhaps like you, I immediately began applying for permanent and/or tenure-track positions. After spending untold amounts of time crafting my cover letters, I applied to several dozen tenure-track positions across the United States. I assumed that I was a competitive applicant due to my track record of peer-reviewed publications, several teaching awards, experience and advanced statistical programming certifications. I told myself it was only a matter of time before the search committees requested to interview me, and that I might receive several offers. I felt confident because tenure-track search committees advertised that they wanted someone with my skills and experience, and many of them called for my dissertation work. Out of 60+ tenure-track applications, I received five interviews over the last two years. Needless to say, I was not offered any tenure-track positions.

With student debt about to crush me,

and a child on the way, I gave up hope of having a tenure-track position and reached out to my existing networks for adjunct work. Luckily, a few of my contacts were able to provide a course here and there, and coupled with my wife's income, we are able to survive. That's it, just survive with no savings, nothing extra for entertainment or helping family members, and living paycheck to paycheck like so many other Americans. But then, I thought, do other Ph.D.'s really earn this little? Surely, I did not persevere through six years of graduate school just to earn \$4,000 or less per course. Fulltime McDonald's employees make more than me. I just earned a terminal degree! What's going on here? To top

it all off, as you know, adjuncts are not entitled to any benefits such as healthcare and research funding.

I spent countless time wondering if I made a mistake. Two years after graduation I still need to do piecemeal work to survive. I currently teach eight (yes, eight) courses, with five different schedules, in three different states, so tax season is always fun! To make matters worse, as you're aware, universities across the U.S. are eliminating tenure-track positions and attempting to outsource courses to adjuncts. Who would move across the U.S. or to another state for \$4,000 (or less) per course; unfortunately, probably adjuncts.

Adjuncts like me have no job security with semester-based contracts because we have no clue whether these contracts will get renewed the following semester. Of course, there are enrollment concerns, catalog offerings, and funding issues that all influence a contract renewal. So many of us are forced to be renters because we have no idea where we will end up in another four months. We are academic nomads with no home, no benefits, no entitlements, and other part-time colleagues repeatedly tell me that they receive little respect and support from full-time faculty.

While my story so far is bleak, there

Adjuncts like me have no job security with semester-based contracts because we have no clue whether these contracts will get renewed the following semester.

are silver linings. **This year brought change!** I started part-time at SUNY Binghamton where I was welcomed with open arms and experienced full-time faculty providing me with immense support. While rare, I realize that I'm fortunate to experience this, and mention it to provide hope for my adjunct colleagues. Receiving support from full-time faculty has not changed my salary or benefit entitlements, but my efforts feel appreciated, are continuously recognized as important contributions, and I genuinely feel a sense of belonging.

United University Professions (UUP) Chapter President at Binghamton, Brendan McGovern, suggested I join the union as an adjunct. At first, I was skeptical of joining since I was



previously in a union that remained a static background element during my employment elsewhere. I assumed more membership dues and no action by the union only leaves me with less money to take home each paycheck. I was wrong. After becoming a paying member in UUP, I received dental and vision insurance, and recently this union negotiated a big contract win for contingents like myself in July 2023. For example, instead of receiving the current minimum compensation of \$4,000 per course, starting in Fall 2023, I now earned \$6,000 per course, a 33.3% raise!

After learning about how active UUP is, I decided to become more involved. I recently attended the National Education Association's (NEA) organizing institute in Buffalo, NY, where I met other contingents with the same problems and learned about the different strategies being implemented around the U.S. to provide job security and a living wage for us. This event was atypical in the sense that it demonstrated unions coming together around common issues and encouraging a sense of community. I previously viewed unions as a service; if I had an issue, I'd contact them. UUP is different because it's fostering engagement and allowing this union to become an integral part of SUNY employees' work experiences.

In sum, I'm happy I joined UUP because I immediately benefited from my membership. UUP isn't a panacea for contingent issues, but it's a great start and provides a voice and arena for us to keep fighting for the job security and living wage we all deserve. One job should be enough to support a family, especially for those who've earned advanced degrees. I have no choice but to continue my piecemeal work in order to survive, but I was delighted to learn that I'm not alone, and that I have UUP as an ally because we are truly all in this together. Do not give up hope and get engaged. Our voices are powerful!



Chapter and community leaders, Jaz Brisack, and Scott Houldieson on November 9, 2023, at the MSHR Fall 2023 Lubna Chaudhry Human Rights Lecture.

Educating Our Membership

By Troy Norton

n advocating for our members, it is important that we place ourselves in the broader context of the labor movement. To this end, UUP has been fortunate to participate in a number of educational and insightful lectures this year.

On November 9, 2023, UUP and community members participated in the Fall 2023 edition of the Master of Science in Human Rights (MSHR) Fall 2023 Lubna Chaudhry Human Rights Lecture. The lecture featured Jaz Brisack, the lead organizer of the Workers United Starbucks campaign, and Scott Houldieson, a striking member of UAW Local 551 and chairperson of the UAWD Steering Committee. The lecture gave participants the opportunity to learn about the intersection of the "old school" and "new school" of labor and how the two schools inform and influence each other.

Then, on February 22, 2024, UUP and community members participated in the Spring 2024 edition of the MSHR Lubna Chaudhry Human Rights Lecture featuring Alex Press, a labor reporter for *Jacobin*. Press discussed

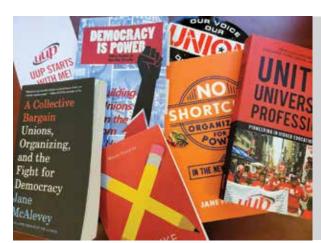


Chapter and community leaders join Alex Press on February 22, 2024, at the MSHR Spring 2024 Lubna Chaudhry Human Rights Lecture.

the strategic considerations, organizing methods, and diverse challenges involved in recent rank-and-file union certification and contract campaigns.

Additionally, on March 22, 2024, UUP hosted Michael Zweig, Emeritus Professor of Economics and Founding Director of the Center for the Study of Working Class Life at Stony Brook University. Professor Zweig offered an enlightening discussion on "Challenging the Injuries and Divisions of Capitalism."

Each of these events aided in the continued education of, and connection building amongst, our members. When we recognize our shared struggles, we work and triumph together.



Lunch + Labor

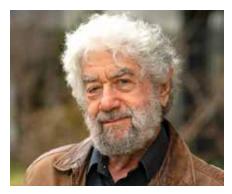


By Courtney Ignarri Asst. Dean Graduate Affairs, Harpur College of Arts and Sciences and Binghamton UUP Chapter Delegate

unch + Labor offers members

a way to learn about all things labor. Started in spring 2022 by current VP for Professionals Claire Kovacs, the originally named Unions 101 group read and discussed seminal books on labor like "Why Unions Matter" and "United University Professions: Pioneering in Higher Education Unionism." They even met, highlighters in hand, to wade through the UUP contract with the guidance of our Labor Relations Specialist, Chris Sielaff. A second series, Unions 201, took place in spring 2023 where participants learned more about the history of collective bargaining, the Chicago teacher's strike of 2012, and effective union organizing at the local level.

I joined the reading group for the 201 series and was fascinated by the history of labor and how prosperity for everyday people is tied to the strength and success of labor. Group meetings were thoughtful and engaging, and open to different ideas and perspectives. In 2023-2024, I joined Claire in planning for and facilitating these sessions, and the group was renamed Lunch + Labor.



Michael Zweig

We met over the lunch hour twice in the fall to delve back into U.S. labor history as well as UUP history, but this time utilized not just excerpts from books, but also online articles, videos, and podcasts.

In the spring, we had the pleasure of meeting with two UUP leaders central to UUP history: Michael Zweig, founding member of UUP and emeritus professor of economics at Stony Brook University, and Eileen Landy, UUP Statewide secretary (among many other UUP roles) and emeritus faculty member in the Department of Sociology at SUNY Old Westbury. Members got the opportunity not to just read about UUP history but to ask questions of those who were there. Our guests were open and honest, and the struggles they described echo many of the experiences we're having at the campus, statewide, and national levels today. The other two meetings this spring allowed us to learn more about current labor struggles in



Eileen Landy

the headlines over the last few years: Amazon/Starbucks and Rutgers/United Auto Workers (UAW).

The group hosts meetings a few times per semester in hybrid or zoom only meetings. Attendees sometimes haven't had the time to read/watch/listen to all (or any) of the selections for that month, but that is ok. The expectation is that one comes ready to engage with the ideas, listen meaningfully to fellow attendees, and participate as much as one feels comfortable. As a child of the 80s, the image of "the more you know" flying through the air on a rainbow guided by a star comes to mind when I think about this group. Corny, I know, but the constant repetition during Saturday morning cartoons worked! Knowledge truly is power, and learning about labor history and labor present has been hugely rewarding and fun. I encourage you to join us in the coming year for the next Lunch + Labor series!

A Shoutout to UUP Space Available



By Liyang Dong English PhD Candidate

am Liyang Dong, a fifth year PhD candidate from the English Department. I would like to express my hearty gratitude to UUP for the Space Available program. Off the four-year guaranteed funding in my program, I am still obligated to pay the tuition for credits this academic year. As an underprivileged international adjunct with very limited income, the total bill was a significant financial burden. Fortunately, through the tireless efforts of UUP leaders under the stewardship of Brendan McGovern, the UUP Space Available progam has been offered to graduate students. It has greatly alleviated my financial stress, and makes me feel warmly accepted, supported, and appreciated in this community like a family member. What UUP has done means a lot for graduate students like me. I hope more people in our university recognize the honorable deeds of UUP, and I hope more graduate students who are postfunding in their programs apply for the financial help offered by UUP's Space Available to get through hard times. I am giving my loudest shout out to UUP and feel proud to be a member!

Meeting Expectations in the Workplace

By Troy Norton

When a manager reviews their employee's performance, they often determine whether that employee is or is not meeting expectations. But a third option is to note that the employee is exceeding expectations. On a micro level, this seems benign enough, and perhaps even helpful for recognizing outstanding employee contributions, which should not go unnoticed. But on a macro level, this implicit standard can create an untenable workplace culture.

It is easy to perceive why an employee would want to exceed expectations. They want to feel valued, by themselves and by their organization; they want to position themselves for advancement; they want appreciation and recognition. On the surface, what better way to do this than to go above and beyond what is expected of you? This should benefit not only yourself but also your organization.

The problem, though, lies in the standard that this sets for employees throughout that organization. Especially in a workforce teeming with financial strains, why wouldn't an organization want to accomplish more with less? And, from a managerial perspective, if employees demonstrate that they are willing to do more work for less compensation, then what incentive does the organization have to fill vacancies rather than eliminate them? Such

Navigating the workplace involves a critical balance between organizational commitment and self-advocacy.

trends almost inevitably will result in increased rates of workload creep, burnout, and employee dissatisfaction, none of which are conducive to either organizational goals or the workers' well-being.

To this end, I urge employees to think critically about what is being asked of them relative to their Performance Programs. Is what you're doing in month six in line with what you discussed with your supervisor in month one? If not, that likely warrants a conversation with your supervisor. Minimally, if you are performing more than what was initially laid out for you in your Performance Program, then you owe it to yourself to sing your own praises in the all-important Selfevaluation section of your Performance Review. Lastly, I urge employees to get comfortable with the uncomfortable: if you are in a position in which you are being asked to go above and beyond, ask your supervisor, politely but sincerely, how will this be reflected in either your compensation or in an adjustment of your duties?

To be completely clear, I in no way urge employees to be non-compliant. There is real merit in being a team player and helping out as appropriate. We also should recognize that rarely if ever are any individual managers at fault for this largely structural and systemic issue. Navigating the workplace involves a critical balance between organizational commitment and self-advocacy. My hope is that by appropriately advancing the latter, we can establish organizations that are simultaneously better able to tap into the skillsets of a diverse workforce in order to reach key strategic outcomes while also better meeting those workers' legitimate needs.

What Did I Do with My IDA?

By Brendan McGovern

With Contributions from Adam Mathews, Associate Professor, Geography

he United University

Professions (UUP) New York State Individual Development Award (IDA) Program at Binghamton University plays a crucial role in fostering the professional growth of faculty and staff. For the academic year 2023-2024, UUP has allocated over \$130,000 to support various professional development initiatives. This emphasizes UUP's commitment to continuous learning and development in maintaining a vibrant professional and academic community. The program is efficiently managed by Aaron Phelps, alongside dedicated UUP IDA Committee members Beth Polzin, Donald Kunkel, Joe Turdo, Bryan Kirschen, Serdar Atav, Kitty Cummings, and Brendan McGovern. Their collective efforts ensure that resources are available to enhance the skills and knowledge of Binghamton's faculty and staff.

What did I do with my IDA?

Adam Mathews, an Associate Professor in the Department of Geography, was granted an Individual Development Award from the UUP in January 2024 to support his participation in the 2023 American Geophysical Union (AGU) Fall Meeting in San Francisco, California. The conference totaled over 27,000 registered attendees from the USA and around the globe, bringing together scientists from across the geosciences (geography, geology, environmental

sciences and education, etc.) and beyond. Adam presented a research poster, 'Active K-12

Pedagogies for Geosciences: Improving Student Learning about Topographic Maps and Landscapes using Hands-on Play and Drones,' as well as coorganized/co-chaired a Union Session (poster and oral sessions on broad, non-specialized scientific topics) called 'Toward Net Zero: Challenges, Opportunities, and Solutions'. The meeting gave Adam the opportunity to enhance his

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Adam Mathews

research knowledge as well as network with professionals within his field of study. Engaging at professional meetings such as this one also will

help better inform Adam's instruction at Binghamton. Learn more about Adam's research by viewing his AGU poster here:

https://doi.org/10.22541/essoar. 170365298.86917045/v1. UUP members are encouraged to explore similar professional development opportunities by applying for an IDA!



Leadership Values at the School of Pharmacy



By JJ Brice Director of Student Affairs, School of Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences (SOPPS)

The rior to moving to SOPPS in September of 2022, I had worked in residential life on the main campus for 8 1/2 years. That time was spent in Student Affairs, a division lead and populated almost exclusively by administrators. Moving to an academic unit reporting to the Provost was an opportunity to explore the world of academic leadership and governance that I had not experienced in my 16-year career. What I found in my new work home was a school that had been founded on the premise of academic leadership like most schools or programs of its kind. It was also a school in transition. Dr. Kannebovina

Nagaraju (Raju) had been named the Dean of SOPPS in May 2022 and by the time I arrived he had already instituted changes to some of the leadership structures. He expanded the Faculty Council to be a Faculty/ Staff Council. tasked Student Affairs with revitalizing "Dean's Hour" as a feedback forum for students with all the school deans, and focused efforts on establishing relationships with our alumni to involve the recently graduated in determining better policy and practice decisions.

When I interviewed

for the position, Dean Raju explained to me that his vision for the school was a place where people were valued and enjoyed coming to work every day whether they were faculty or staff, first year or later career employees. He sold me on a vision of making the school one of the best public programs of its kind in the world with a focus on positive student experiences. At the annual P4 (graduating PharmD) Awards Banquet and Alumni Reception on May 8 of this year, Dean Raju repeated his vision at the podium when he said: "It is difficult to become the most exceptional school of pharmacy without people who are dedicated and work hard to make that dream come true, and we are lucky to have incredible faculty, staff, preceptors, and students all working towards that dream."

In my professional experience, I am most motivated and dedicated to doing my part in pursuit of goals like this when I feel that the leadership values me as a holistic person and not just for the effort of my work. My wife and I welcomed our first child in December 2023, and as we are both Directors of staff units in SOPPS, there were bound to be interruptions in our work due to family necessitated absences. We have both enjoyed patience, encouragement, flexibility and celebration of our new family from our supervisors and the leadership of the school. We are able to enjoy getting to know our son and fully utilize the family benefits hard won for NYS employees and UUP members. We have not experienced any guilt, blame, or resistance to taking the time needed, as I have heard others can encounter when using these benefits. I wanted to write this article to highlight the balanced approach to shared governance, the dedication to a unifying vision, and the achievement of a proper appreciation of work-life balance.



The Vital Role of Unions in Safeguarding Academic Freedom

By Brendan McGovern

e are witnessing a time of unprecedented scrutiny of higher education and workers within higher ed. Nationally, there has been an unsettling recent trend of "secret recordings" in academic environments by campus administration, as highlighted by a recent article published by Inside Higher Ed, entitled "Notice Is Not Required': Letter Says UNC Chapel Hill Secretly Records Professors." This report details the clandestine recording of professors at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, raising serious concerns about trust and integrity within academic institutions. This is a stark reminder of why unions are indispensable in protecting the rights and academic freedom of faculty members.

At the State University of New York (SUNY) campuses, including our own, such clandestine activities would be unequivocally prohibited. In the State of New York, in accordance with the Taylor Law, public employers must bargain evaluation procedures with the lawfully recognized employee organization (union). Your union, United University Professions (UUP), always fights for fairness and transparency in the workplace. These are core values of the labor movement and of UUP.

Evaluation Procedures: A Union Matter

One of the critical areas where unions exert their influence is in the establishment and maintenance of evaluation procedures. These procedures are not arbitrary but are subject to detailed negotiations between UUP and the State, or campus administration in some instances. This ensures that evaluations are conducted transparently, ethically, and respectfully, safeguarding the professional integrity of our faculty



members. Imagine a scenario where faculty evaluations were secretly recorded and used without context or consent. Such practices could lead to a toxic work environment, eroding trust and potentially damaging careers unfairly. If such recordings were permitted, they would first have to be bargained between the State and your union, UUP.

Protecting Academic Freedom and Integrity

The presence of a strong union like UUP is also crucial in defending academic freedom. Faculty members must feel secure in their ability to teach, research, and discuss their subject matter without fear of unjust repercussions. UUP's role in negotiating clear and fair evaluation processes is a cornerstone of this security.

Furthermore, UUP's involvement ensures that any changes to evaluation procedures or other critical terms and conditions of employment relating to academic faculty work are thoroughly discussed and, where UUP has the right to bargain, mutually agreed upon. This collaborative, yet assertive, approach prevents unilateral decisions that could negatively impact the academic environment and the individuals within it.

Your Role in Strengthening the Union

As members of the UUP Binghamton Chapter, your engagement and support are vital. By staying informed, participating in union activities, and advocating for our collective rights, you help to reinforce the protections and benefits that UUP bargains for on your behalf.

In light of the recent discussions about "secret recordings" at UNC Chapel Hill, let this serve as a potent reminder of why our union's presence is indispensable. Together, we uphold the standards that protect our professional and personal integrity, ensuring that our academic environment remains a place of trust, respect, and excellence.

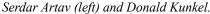
For further reading, you can access the article from *Inside Higher Ed* here.

Thank you for your continued commitment to our union and to maintaining the high standards of our academic community.



Standing on the Shoulders of Giants







Claire Kovacs

By Troy Norton

Our Chapter is fortunate to have been built on the foundation of incredibly dedicated and diligent leaders. It is vital for us to celebrate our past while we look forward to our future.

Our Grievances Officer, Serdar Artav, is retiring after many years of service in our Chapter and our University. We are deeply indebted to Serdar for the work that he has done. The Grievances Officer position will be filled in Fall 2024.

After many years of service toward our Chapter and University, Donald Kunkel is stepping into a well-deserved retirement. Donald has previously served as our Vice President for Professionals and most recently served as our Membership Development Officer. The remarkably capable Courtney Ignarri will be stepping into the Membership Development Officer role. I am confident that Courtney will be able to expand on Donald's excellent work in increasing our reach, and I wish Donald a wonderful retirement.

Our Vice President for Professionals, Claire Kovacs, has accepted a new position outside of the University. Claire has played a vital role in advocating for our professionals, including through piloting an ad-hoc committee on workplace grievances and concerns. I have been appointed as the Vice President for Professionals to finish Claire's term, with an election to be held in the next academic year. I immensely appreciate Claire's leadership and mentorship, and I greatly look forward to lifting up our workers in this new capacity.

The future looks bright for UUP Binghamton. I'm glad you're connected with us. In solidarity,





Starting Your Day with Coffee and Breakfast Bites

By Allie Messersmith-Mars

Hi, **I'm Allie**, Chair of the Events and Hospitalities Committee. First, I want to start by saying thank you so much to this entire Binghamton Chapter for making Coffee and Breakfast Bites such a wonderful experience. I have loved seeing how this event has absolutely flourished and how enjoyable everyone has made it.

Our Chapter President, Brendan, our VP for Academics, Tejpreet, and I have been putting these Coffee and Breakfast hours together for the past few semesters. This has all been a work-in-progress and I appreciate your patience and your kindness as we go through this experience together.

Since starting with UUP, I have found community within both my department and the campus as a whole. Thanks to these coffee hours, I've gotten to speak with colleagues that I wouldn't have necessarily met and I hope other attendees have gotten to meet some new faces, as well. This event has been a great opportunity for fellow colleagues to mingle and discuss any issues that they are experiencing. We've definitely shed some light on various issues and gotten the ball rolling to address them in a meaningful way.

We are very excited to continue Coffee and Breakfast Bites this summer and into the next school year. We also plan to visit our other campuses; the Downtown Center, Decker Health Sciences, and the School of Pharmacy.

Again, thank you so much for attending these events and providing feedback. We can't wait to see your bright and shiny faces for another round!











Coffee & Breakfast Bites School of Pharmacy: 3/19/2024

















Coffee & Breakfast Bites





University Downtown Center 4/18













Beat the Winter Blues



Benefits Fair



Fall Frolic



Campus Labor Council



Binghamton Supports Potsdam



Welcome Back Barbecue