



The Cortland Cause

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IN MEMORIAM

Our deepest condolences to the families of our proud UUP member on their loss.

Muteb Alqahtani
Childhood/Early
Childhood Education

Shall We Dance?

Last week, I made a mistake. I, as are all our members, am especially busy at the beginning of the semester (as we all are all the time), balancing the obligations of our professional positions, our service and scholarship commitments, the needs of our union members, the negotiations team, the obligations of our personal lives, and my own unplanned need for emergency dental work. I had planned to have lunch with a friend last week, and I forgot to put it on my calendar, so when another obligation took over that space, I had to beg off lunch. I was disappointed in myself, and my friend was very disappointed in my oversight. I apologized repeatedly, and my friend and I have mended the breach, but this mistake has made me think a lot about this professional dance that we all do here at Cortland: we are committed to the excellence of the institution, and that keeps our calendars full; we are all always working hard to remember all the steps, but sometimes, we slip and step on somebody's toe.

The dancing we all do makes me hope faithfully and plan accordingly that when we get the steps right, others thank us. It also makes me hope faithfully and sigh accordingly when we miss a step and are not provided grace – the grace that so many of us have said is so necessary these days!

So many of our members are performing more than a 100% obligation right now. Nearly every professional and academic unit is understaffed, in some cases critically understaffed.

Management has hired thirty new faculty and has approved twenty-eight searches for the 2022-2023 academic year. Positions for professional employees, most recently including an Assistant Coach for the Hockey team, vital positions in Admissions and the Counseling Center, and new RHDs, among many others, have been advertised or filled recently. In the face of the challenge of filling the gaps for our students, teaching faculty have been forced to adjust to 5%, 10%, and even 20% increases in their course enrollment, with no additional compensation – I hope that all who are facing these increases and have discussed how they've adjusted to accommodate this number of students with their Department Chairs. Please, also reach out to UUP to discuss it. Please, especially, reach out if you are experiencing maximum capacity issues, or if students do not have a place to sit in your class, as these can be addressed immediately. Professionals are working to cover two or three different positions, the duties of which are extensive. Many are working late into the evening and on the weekends, without additional compensation and with even less opportunities to adjust their own workload. Often, as positions remain unfilled, these additional duties become de-facto permanent. If you have had a significant increase to your workload and it is ongoing instead of temporary, please reach out to discuss it with UUP.

The administration has made UUP and the campus aware that they have had a tough couple of years financially due to COVID, having to refund student activities fees and housing fees, and other fees, which has caused them to reach into some of their reserves to manage their projected multi-million-dollar deficit. UUP understands and appreciates that the pandemic has taxed SUNY Cortland's reserves, but it has not depleted them. The college received CARES money to help compensate for their shortfall, which was used, as reported at Labor-Management, in part to cover the costs of maintaining the college's bond status for construction and renovation, and to help re-fund its reserves, in addition to providing subsidies



Jaclyn Pittsley,
Chapter President
English

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to students who had applied for assistance. While we are approaching a projected steep enrollment decline across the globe, and while some colleges such as New Rochelle in NYS were forced to close, and while some colleges in our own system are facing serious operational deficits, I believe that with our 1398 new first-year students, 455 new transfer students, and 188 new graduate students, in addition to our returning students, SUNY Cortland is in a solid financial place to hire those positions and maybe more. Those positions need to be awarded to the most desperate of academic and professional areas, such as Physical Education, who boasts a whopping 900+ majors, and Advisement and Transition, who gets all our students on their paths to greatness! These searches need to be conducted in a timely fashion, with attractive and competitive salary packages, to get qualified and committed candidates who can “cut in” and take on some of the dance steps we are all doing in the round. After all, our members have certainly supported the administrative searches we have undertaken recently, just as we support the increase in all staff to maintain operations in an exemplary Scottish Highland or moving Ballet, rather than a merely smaller, but better, waltz.

We also need to make sure important positions don't go unfilled, vacated by those who have retired, from some of our most beloved professors and coaches, to much needed librarians and Residence Hall Directors. If, as we can agree, the students are the most important reason for our being here on campus, and the RHDs the first and primary arbiters of student success, we need to make sure they want to be here, are given adequate salaries and not overburdened. We need professionals and academics on board here at Cortland to serve and meet the needs of those students.

How do we get SUNY Administration and Governor Hochul's staff to recognize that the needs of our members are the needs of our students?

THROUGH UNION ACTIVISM!

- UUP will be providing post cards for you to sign that we will share with our campus President.
 - The postcards will indicate you're united for a fair contract.
 - They will ask them not to support a post-tenure review process.
 - They will demand fair compensation.
 - They will ask for fair benefits.
 - They will ask for increased job security.
 - They will ask for equitable pay and pathways to permanency for contingent employees.
- Attend UUP's virtual Town Hall event on Tuesday, September 27, 2:30-3:45, to discuss the issue, learn about UUP's standing to bargain overload, and brainstorm actions.
- Wear RED when asked by your members in union. Let them see a sea of red during our WEEK OF ACTIVISM, OCTOBER 3-7. If you don't have a red shirt, contact UUP, and we will give you one.
- ATTEND OUR INFORMATIONAL PICKET ON WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 5, 12-2pm, COREY UNION SIDEWALK. Let's make our overload issues visible to Management and to others.
- JOIN UUP! The cost of bargaining our expansive agreement with New York State has increased. Enforcing the contract and protecting members' due process rights costs even more. If you are not yet a member of UUP, do your part and pay your fair share! Members have a say in contract negotiations and can vote on any tentative agreement. Get engaged in the process by being a member of UUP, and encourage others to do so as well!
- Members, attend our engagement forums, open houses, and targeted membership meetings. That's where information will be provided about how to be active.

Everyone must engage a little; no one person must dance all of the steps alone.

As in all things, communication is the key here. Our members need to communicate with their supervisors and Department Chairs. Our supervisors need to communicate with their Assistant Directors and Directors and Deans. Our Directors need to communicate with Management. It's time we all provide an arm for each other, we all stick up for each other, we all stick our necks out for each other, and we all recognize that there is no one partner on the dance card who's more necessary or deserving than any other.

We can all dance, if one person doesn't have to complete every step alone. If we partner up, it'll be beautiful, and it'll be right, and lunch dates may not fall off the floor because our members are overtaxed and in need of support.



Andrée Myers
English

Notes from the Editor

We're about four weeks into Fall Semester here at SUNY Cortland; a semester that is, by all accounts, one of the busiest ever. To me, it's the first semester that's felt "normal" in quite a while, and I'm happy to see our campus filled with students again.

Unlike many other colleges, SUNY Cortland's enrollment has increased significantly. I, for one, am glad to see it, and I am sure that we are all grateful that our university is thriving in this post-Covid era. However, our ability to serve all these new students is being stretched to the limit. Faculty are being asked to teach sections that are well above the enrollment cap, while professional staff are doing more and more with fewer resources. "Workload creep" has, in many ways, become something that, regrettably, we have begun to expect.

In this issue of Cortland Cause, Jaclyn Pittsley, Kristine Newell, and Stuart Damon all explore the issue of "workload creep." These writers implore us to speak up for ourselves and each other so that we receive fair compensation for the increased effort that we are all being asked to put forth at this time.

Food for thought: other industries have a measure of agility when it comes to meeting personnel needs; however, hiring in the academic setting has always happened at a snail's pace. Committees must be formed, meet multiple times to vet applicants' credentials, and then interview likely candidates in at least two rounds if not more. This process, while created to ensure fairness, ends up limiting the flexibility of the institution to be able to serve students. An increase in student enrollment, such as what we are currently experiencing, presses current faculty and staff to work harder without a concomitant increase in compensation. Thus, the university benefits from an increase in revenue while salaries are held in check. It is imperative that administration prioritize new hires that will quickly help to alleviate the work overload that faculty and staff are experiencing. In addition, strategies must be implemented to fairly compensate current employees for the additional workload they have assumed.

We at the Cortland Cause would love to hear your opinions on this issue. Your voice matters!



Jo Schaffer,
Officer for Retirees

This picture was taken at the recent annual pre-State Fair breakfast held by NY State Comptroller Tom DiNapoli. It was an opportunity for Jo Schaffer, UUP Retiree, to renew her friendship with DiNapoli and to thank him for his dedicated support for public higher education and the Retiree Pension system.

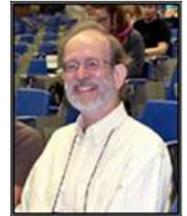


Make Way for the Unionists! Make Way, Make Way!

On Labor Day 2022, hundreds of union members gathered, despite rainy weather, at the New York State Fairgrounds in Syracuse for the last day of the State Fair and the traditional Labor Day march! There'd been no Labor Day parades here for the two previous years, and no State Fairs, either.

Three of us made the trip from Cortland. When we were riding the shuttle bus from the parking lot to the Fair's main gate, a voice from a seat behind us asked, "What chapter?" We turned around and almost in unison said, "Cortland!" Then we asked about him – he is an Oswego high school teacher who, as a UUP adjunct, teaches a history of education course at SUNY Oswego. From his description, he clearly enjoys teaching the class, getting to know the students, and is particularly proud of the way the course is structured. We then arrived at the gate and found our way to the building – the Expo Center – where unionists were collecting for the parade.

There we got the news -- the parade was called off because of the impending rainstorms. No matter! The planned rally would continue inside. We met up with other UUP members from at least six of our chapters – Upstate Medical University, Environmental Science and Forestry, Morrisville, and Cortland – plus the Oswego UUPer and another UUP member who said she'd come up from Stony Brook to walk in the parade with her family! So, before the skies opened up, we went outside for a photo op.



Dave Ritchie
Emeritus
Librarian



It's such a joy to be with people – not just from UUP – who clearly value being union members, and who see what they can accomplish when many can yell with one voice what's important to all of them!

IT'S YOUR NEWSLETTER!

We welcome articles and letters submitted by members of the SUNY Cortland Community.

Please share your thoughts with us— we want to hear from you! Opinions expressed in *The Cortland Cause* are those of the individuals and are neither endorsed by nor represent the views of UUP.

Please note: The Cortland Cause will generally not print anonymous submissions.

"We reserve the right to edit submissions for grammar, space limitations, accuracy, etc., and to request changes to submissions, whether prior to or after publication."

Send contributions to the Chapter Office, uup@cortland.edu and to the editor, Amy Russell, Amy.Russell@cortland.edu



Stuart Daman,
Institutional
Research and
Analysis

Workload Creep & Work-Life Balance

Workload creep refers to the phenomenon of additional duties being added to an employee's required duties without adjusting their current duties or providing additional compensation. This can be the result of increased departures, turnover or a reorganization. Workload creep threatens the difficult and delicate balance between work and the rest of our lives, resulting in a loss of morale, an imbalance between work and life, health concerns, and a feeling of disenfranchisement. Maintaining a balance between work and other areas of our lives is important to avoid these negative outcomes.

Lately, all of us have witnessed or experienced unusually high turnover, departures or reorganization resulting in many vacancies and therefore an increased risk of workload creep. Board of Trustees policies in place, presumably to reduce the impact of increased vacancies, are good (e.g., Extra Service and Also Receives), but may be more difficult to get approved given changes to local campus policies and guidance. These changes create hurdles for staff and supervisors.

Although most of us are taking on additional duties at this time. In a time of transition and change, like we're experiencing now, it should be expected that there would be a commensurate increase in spending to compensate employees taking on the duties of vacant positions, regardless of whether those duties belonged to a subordinate or a supervisor. Administrators should trust that the decisions made by their directors (including interim, associate, and assistant directors) regarding this issue are in the best interest of their respective offices and the university.

Many employees have been giving more time and effort to their jobs, which means they have less to invest in other domains of their life. Choices about work-life balance should be made by the employee, not taken on as an imposition from administrators or supervisors. Employees should also determine if the compensation they receive is commensurate with their additional effort. If this extra work is not sufficiently recognized or compensated, employees should feel no obligation to give their time away and should not feel pressured to do so.

Ideally, a discussion between an employee and their supervisor would yield a consensus about the duties, effort, and compensation expected. Employees ought to feel comfortable advocating for additional compensation. Supervisors should want to advocate for their employees and themselves as well.

While these can be difficult conversations, I hope that through unity, communication and advocacy that employees will feel empowered to reject additional duties for any reason, especially if they are not being compensated sufficiently. Rejection of uncompensated work sends a message to administrators that more cannot be done with less; the limit has been reached.

I encourage all to check out the UUP resources on their website regarding workload creep and contact them if they need additional support.



Falling on Our Swords: Faculty Workload Creep

The week before classes began, I sat on an opening meeting panel with my teaching colleagues as we discussed different pedagogies and strategies we employed during the pandemic. I spoke about pedagogy from a place of empathy, but also talked about how many of us who teach have been and still are demoralized. What has been demoralizing for each of us is different, but in that moment, what was demoralizing for me was my History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education course which was overenrolled by 20%. At one point it was so overenrolled, it exceeded the legal fire code—because someone(s) had forgotten to include me—the instructor—in the count. This further added to my feeling of being invisible and unimportant.

No one had asked me if it was ok to add students above the cap—well above the cap. I had to change assignments and lessons to accommodate the additional students. No one asked how much additional labor I had to perform to accommodate the additional students (upwards of 50 hours). No one offered me compensation for this labor or a formal agreement that would have reduced other required duties (like number of advisees or hours of service) to compensate for the extra hours the extra students would require.

Why was this happening? Because management sets course caps (even though we know in practice that this differs from department to department making it more accurate to say that management approves course caps that have been set by people closer to actual classrooms). And course caps are not items of negotiation under our current contract. Though other institutions either through union efforts or joint governance (i.e., Faculty Senate) have come to agreements on when and by how much course caps can be exceeded, we within SUNY have not (beyond writing intensive and composition courses). This means that your course cap of 30 could be doubled if management says so—without warning, without consent. While some might argue that “they would never do that,” this is dependent on who “they” are at any given time. More importantly, there is NOTHING that prevents them from doing this (outside of space considerations).

In higher education, faculty are often expected to selflessly give of their time and emotional selves; to fall on our swords to compensate for institutional deficiencies and mismanagement. We are expected to accommodate additional students on our rosters, take on more advisees, supervise internships, independent studies, and honors projects for the good of our students. This is all work. It is our labor; labor that management needs in order to operate.

Professional staffers also are asked to fall on their swords, but the conditions of their jobs are often clearer in terms of prescribed hours and tasks, i.e., the boundaries are stronger. What are the terms of faculty labor? How many hours a week should I be working? How much do I devote to teaching and advising versus service or research? How is this different for faculty who have no teaching or service requirements? When is my employer asking me to do too much? Those boundaries are very blurry. We, as unionists, need to be addressing them.

What is so demoralizing about seeing a course cap so blatantly exceeded is that this is a clear boundary violation—one that we can measure. Most of us have and would continue to take a student in excess of the cap because, for example, they need the course to graduate on time or will not receive financial aid without it. But we should not be required to do so.

When we are asked to do more without additional compensation or clear reduction in other duties (that will not compromise our job status including promotion, reappointment, and DSI) we are enabling and helping to cover bad management practices, and we are establishing a precedent that perpetuates the falling-on-our-swords culture.



Kristine Newhall,
Kinesiology

It is wonderful that, amid fears about declining enrollments, we accepted a very large first-year class and hundreds of transfer students. Unfortunately, we do not have the appropriate number of faculty (or staff!!) to effectively meet their needs. We are being asked to be understanding and accommodating for a short period of time as things settle down. We have been promised more hires. But there are no guarantees. This is a bad precedent, and we should be pushing back.

Advocating for what we have been promised—in this case class size—is not selfish. It is something that has been promised to us. It is published information. It has been promised to the students as well. We are meant to feel bad if we complain about extra work because we are in a “caring profession,” but we are not the only ones harmed. Cortland sells itself to potential students by promising small class sizes. Many students are not getting that experience this semester. They are stuffed into classrooms that are overcrowded—literally in Professional Studies there was a desk shortage--to accommodate overenrolled courses. This is not good pedagogy. It inhibits our ability to effectively educate and more importantly get to know our students.

What can we do? We need to find out what is happening in our respective departments and colleges. If you are experiencing or concerned about workload creep, please come to the Faculty Town Hall on Tuesday, September 27 at 4pm in the Exhibition Lounge of Corey Union. We will talk about what is happening for us as workers on this campus and develop strategies for addressing these issues.





Dan Harms,
Chapter VP for
Academics

Odds and Ends

Can we do better at Cortland than a science fiction convention?

We've emerged into a post-COVID fall here at Cortland. For the most part, the administration is running as if this is business as usual - only voluntary masking, no social distancing, no booster requirements for a virus that quickly mutates and evades immunity.

This leads to considerable anxiety for some of the members with whom I have spoken, who may have pre-existing conditions that make the virus even more dangerous. Yet, from what I have seen, these instructors are simply expected to walk into a classroom with students, from whom they cannot require any precautions.

Is there another way of handling this?

In August, I attended a science fiction convention in New England that was reconvening for the first time since the pandemic. I was surprised to find out that the general expectation of the attendees and staff - over 1,800 people - was for masking. One could remove a mask to present, or to eat and drink, but otherwise it was required. Other than that, it was business as usual.

I had a great four days in this setting. Most people complied readily to the requirements. The organizers told us at the end that they had only received two complaints about the mask policy. I did not receive the usual post-event flurry of messages from exposed friends thereafter - and, although my phone registered two contacts with COVID cases during that time, I remained healthy, even though I was well out from my last booster.

There are certainly differences in scale and audience here - yet I do wonder whether the college could adopt a policy for masking in classrooms and offices with immunocompromised staff. I'm sure some people would be unhappy, but it would contribute greatly to the safety and peace of mind of some of our members - and the college's personnel are its most valuable resource.

—

Perhaps the most important decision a college can make is the hiring of leaders who will take it forward into the future. Cortland has a well-established procedure, in the College Handbook, describing how various committees should be formed, and ensuring that representatives from the faculty, staff, and students have a voice in this crucial process.

But is that how it works?

Many readers will not be aware of the college's "Waiver of Search" policy covering special hiring circumstances - for example, when a person steps down unexpectedly and their position must be filled temporarily. This not only allows for continuity of operation but also gives qualified internal candidates a chance to move forward in their careers.

However, there is a more problematic use of this policy: it has been used to appoint people to the college permanently, even when the position would normally require a consultative search process, as stated in the handbook.

To be clear, all of this is permitted under SUNY rules regarding hirings. Nonetheless, it raises serious questions about the role of faculty in making the future of the college, as well as the transparency of the hiring process.

If nothing else, the administration should commit to promptly informing Faculty Senate of such hires and the use of the policy when such personnel would normally be hired through the procedure in the Handbook.

* <https://www2.cortland.edu/offices/hr/affirmative-action/new-policies/Waivers%20of%20Search.pdf>

**United University Professions
Labor-Management Agenda
Monday, October 3, 2022
3:00-4:00pm**

Items of Collegiality:

1. Thank you, President Bitterbaum, for enjoying with UUP our Welcome Back Membership meeting and fall picnic.
2. UUP is planning a town hall meeting in September to discuss the issue of expanding workload, in preparation for an informational picket in October, during our week of Member Action, on Wednesday, October 5, 12-2pm, Corey sidewalk.
3. UUP would like to present management with postcards indicating the needs of our members and students in the next contract, and we hope that we can confirm Management will be supportive in gaining a fair and equitable collective bargaining agreement.

Old Business:

1. Course Teacher Evaluations:
 - a. Has the Committee on Teaching Effectiveness recommended a new software package?
 - b. When can UUP expect to bargain with Management on this?
2. Syllabus Requests and Department Retention of Syllabi:
 - a. Can Management provide an update, following the Faculty Senate endorsement, of their plan for the syllabus requests or department retention of syllabi?
 - b. When can UUP expect to bargain with Management on this?
3. COVID Protocol:
 - a. In what ways is Management working to ensure the safety of academic and professional staff and students in the wake of the current concerning spike in positive COVID cases on campus?
4. Over-enrollment and Staffing Issues:
 - a. The college website currently lists the student to faculty ratio as 15:1. UUP requests information as to how, with our record enrollments, this Common Data Set calculation moved downward from previous years.
 - b. UUP requests information about the loss of staff in dining facilities.
 - c. UUP requests information about the loss of student services in Residential Housing such as no Academic Peer Mentors, few Lifeguards, few, or no Graduate Assistants in Athletics areas.
 - d. UUP requests information about the vacant positions, specifically Administrative Assistants on campus, and whether searches are ongoing to refill lost positions.

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Learn more by scanning the QR code to the left,
 visiting memberbenefits.nysut.org
 or calling 800-626-8101.

UUP ANNUAL Welcome Back Picnic held at Yaman Park on Friday, September 9, 2022



Photos by Dave Ritchie, Jen Drake and Toni Coon

UUP CORTLAND CHAPTER — EXECUTIVE BOARD 2019-2022

4-Digit phone numbers begin with 607-753-xxxx

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