



# *the Downstate Update*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

*By Rowena Blackman-Stroud*

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### **UUP In Memoriam webpage**

UUP remembers the active and retired members of our union family that we've lost to the COVID-19 pandemic. If you know of a UUP member who has passed due to COVID-19, please click the link below to enter their information on UUP In Memoriam webpage.

[CLICK HERE](#) to fill in UUP's In Memoriam form.

Enter the decedent's name (first name, middle initial and last name), select their campus from a pull-down list, and your email. You may also leave a short personal note about the deceased.

We will never forget our colleagues who were lost to the vicious virus known as COVID-19.

### **Expressing Our Gratitude**

The Downstate Chapter would like to acknowledge solidarity messages from the following organizations: American Federation of Teachers (AFT), New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), Brooklyn for Peace, the Professional Staff Association, CUNY/Professional Staff Congress and Faith Leaders.

Our chapter sends a special thank you to the members of the SUNY Farmingdale campus for all your love and support.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read the messages.

### **UUP: Statement on the death of George Floyd**

UUP and the Downstate Chapter stands in solidarity with the Brooklyn community in demanding justice for George Floyd.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read a statement by UUP President Fred Kowal.

### **Gov. Cuomo signs new accidental death benefit legislation**

UUP and NYSUT, working with the New York State AFL-CIO, has been strongly advocating for several bills pertaining to COVID-19-related workers compensation, unemployment issues and an accidental death benefit.

As a result of this advocacy, last week, the Legislature approved a bill that granted death benefits to the families of police officers, public health workers and other front-line workers who have died of the coronavirus.

The governor signed the bill May 30.

This is the most extensive benefit of its type in the nation for the families of front-line workers who died from COVID-19.

For more information please call the campus benefits office at (718) 270-3015.

### **S8427 Gounardes/A10528 Abbate**

The governor's revision to the bill provides for an accidental death benefit for the statutory beneficiary of any public employee who in enrolled a state or local defined benefit pension system (for our

members this would be ERS or TRS) and meets the following conditions:

1. The employee worked on or after March 1, 2020.
2. The employee worked at their normal place of work or at another work site (other than telecommuting from home) as assigned by their employer.
3. The employee contracted COVID-19.
4. The employee died on or before Dec. 31, 2020.
5. COVID-19 caused or contributed to the member's death.

The employee's beneficiary does not need to prove that the employee contracted COVID-19 at the workplace.

To qualify, the employee had to have been diagnosed with COVID-19 with a diagnostic test or by a physician, nurse practitioner or physician assistant; and either:

- A death certificate statement that COVID-19 caused or contributed to death; or
- Certification from a physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant that COVID-19 caused or contributed to the death.

Once those standards are met, the accidental death benefit is mandatory under all state and local retirement systems. The physician, nurse practitioner, or physician assistant can be licensed in any state or the District of Columbia.

The accidental death benefit is an annual annuity of 50% of the member's final salary at the time of death. Beneficiaries of members who retired on or after March 1 and before July 1, 2020 but also meet the eligibility criteria for the accidental death benefit may elect to convert an existing service or disability retirement benefit to a COVID 19 accidental death benefit.

While this benefit is currently limited to our members enrolled in ERS and TRS, UUP is continuing to advocate that a comparable benefit be created and

provided to our members who are enrolled in ORP.

### **SUNY Chancellor Resigns**

For story click on links:

<https://uupinfo.org/communications/releases/200602.php>

<https://www.dispatch.com/news/20200603/new-york-state-university-chancellor-kristina-johnson-named-next-ohio-state-president>

### **Reopening SUNY**

We solicited your concerns, comments and suggestions regarding reopening SUNY campuses, starting at the May 18, 2020 Department Representative's meeting.

UUP has issued a detailed set of guidelines that outline steps SUNY must take to guarantee the safety of students, patients and UUP members once campuses open.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the report.

UUP statewide and Downstate Chapter leaders will engage with management on the discussion of reopening.

The Downstate Chapter supports and is advocating for all the guidelines cited in the report, including plexiglass/sneeze guard barriers for all work stations to create barriers between patients, students, customers and staff members throughout the institution.

We believe these barriers –combined with social distancing regulations – will go far in protecting our members from airborne particles and other COVID-19 exposure.

### **More PPE for Downstate**

The Downstate Chapter wants to thank NYSUT for the recent contribution of 5,000 surgical bonnets and 5,000 foot coverings to our front-line workers.

Thank you as well to UUP, which recently sent more N95 masks to our members. In May, UUP purchased and delivered 25,000 isolation gowns and thousands of N95 masks to Downstate members.

## **Fighting for hazard pay and bonuses**

The Downstate Chapter and UUP statewide leadership continue to strongly advocate for hazard pay and bonuses for our residents and fellows, and all of our brave front-line workers.

Our members deserve bonuses and hazard pay for the incredible, heroic work they did during the pandemic. We continue to meet with Dr. Riley and campus administrators to press our case.

UUP President Fred Kowal continues to engage with the SUNY administration and the governor's staff about obtaining funding for bonuses and hazard pay for our members.

We are committed to continuing the fight for this well-deserved compensation for our members.

## **Intellectual property and remote ed: What you need to know**

The sudden, forced conversion of SUNY to a remote education system during the coronavirus pandemic has caused numerous issues and concerns about intellectual property rights for faculty.

UUP has always made the protection of intellectual property rights a priority for members. But now, the union is doubling down on the effort to give members additional training through their chapters about the dos and don'ts of protecting course materials, in what is still uncharted territory for many academics.

UUP has two very clear pieces of advice for members: Don't sign anything your campus administration asks you to sign that deals with your course materials unless you are very sure you understand it, and even then, it's good to check with a NYSUT labor relations specialist before signing.

The pandemic "has really accelerated many things we need to address with regard to intellectual property," said Jamie Dangler UUP statewide vice president for academics, as she addressed chapter presidents and vice presidents in a May 15 video conference, along with NYSUT labor relations staff.

"We can't emphasize it enough—you can't lose the rights to materials you create for your courses unless you sign those rights away," said Dangler. "You really need to know, your colleagues need to know, what they're signing."

Professionals face their own set of special problems during the shutdown, said Downstate Chapter President Rowena Blackman-Stroud, including the possibility that additional tasks around the support of remote education may be added into their performance program, and become permanent new responsibilities.

"Please make sure to talk with your labor relations specialist before you take on these extra services or duties," she said.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download a copy of UUP's Intellectual Property Report.

## **Important info for adjuncts**

Contingent faculty (e.g., adjuncts) who have finished spring semester work, aren't working over the summer and don't have an appointment letter for the fall semester should consider applying for unemployment insurance.

"Your eligibility for UI depends on whether you have received an offer of employment for next year which provides you with 'reasonable assurance' of employment that is substantially similar to your employment this year," President Kowal said. "Even if you have not previously applied for UI over the summer, it is appropriate for you to apply now."

The flier poses and answers specific questions on eligibility, how to file for unemployment, and calculating benefit rates.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the flier.

## **Special coronavirus issue of *The Voice***

The new issue of *The Voice* focuses on the bravery and dedication of our members during the coronavirus pandemic.

This special coronavirus issue spotlights our heroic essential workers on the front lines of the pandemic caring for patients at SUNY's public teaching hospitals—

including Downstate Health Sciences University—and at community hospitals in Buffalo.

*The Voice* also focuses on the important efforts by members across the state, many of whom made and donated face shields and face masks to hospitals and health care facilities.

[CLICK HERE](#) to read this special coronavirus issue of *The Voice*.

### **Tweet your senator**

Twitter is UUP's next battleground to get Congress to approve a COVID-19 mitigation package for New York and other states hit hard by the coronavirus.

UUP has created a social media toolkit with Twitter posts you can use to tell the Republican-led Senate to approve the Heroes Act passed by the House of Representatives. It also has the names and Twitter handles for each GOP senator.

"It's clear Senate Republicans need to hear our message," said UUP President Fred Kowal. "States and local governments have been devastated by a loss of revenue and are faced with the prospect of making cuts to all areas of the public sector, including public higher education. Now is the time for us to redouble our efforts in advocating for our state and our University."

The social media effort is tied to UUP's e-letter/phone campaign, which urges members and supporters to tell New York's congressional delegation to push for funding for New York in forthcoming coronavirus mitigation packages.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the toolkit.  
[CLICK HERE](#) to send an e-letter to legislators.

### **Spread the word: take the 2020 Census**

You can help spread the word about getting people to fill out the 2020 Census.

UUP has produced a toolkit for UUP members with tips and ideas to help publicize the need to fill out and submit census forms.

The results of the census will determine how more than \$675 billion in federal funds will be distributed to states, counties and communities across the country. This funding is crucial for Downstate Health Sciences University and our public teaching hospitals around New York.

Without an accurate accounting of its population, the state could miss out on a significant portion of these federal dollars.

[CLICK HERE](#) to download the UUP 2020 Census toolkit.

### **EAP Program Resources during - COVID 19 (click on the links below)**

[How to Cope with Traumatic Events like Coronavirus -](#)

[Parenting During Coronavirus: Tips for Families with Kids](#)

[Dealing with Uncertainty During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

[Coronavirus Anxiety: Coping with Stress, Fear, and Worry](#)

[Exercise During Coronavirus: Tips for Staying Active](#)

[Panic Attacks and Panic Disorder](#)

[Coping with Financial Stress](#)

[Managing Anxiety in an Anxiety- Provoking Situation](#)

[Coping with Grief and Loss](#)

### **Website- How COVID is impacting the Workplace/ Resources for Employees and Employers**

[www.welcoa.org/covid](http://www.welcoa.org/covid)

If anyone needs to talk/vent or needs assistance, please call:

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NYS EAP Wellness Ambassador  
SUNY Downstate Health Science University  
450 Clarkson Avenue, MSC 53  
Brooklyn, NY 11203  
718-270-1489 (Office)  
718-270-6767 (Fax)

**REMOTE GOVERNING BOARD  
MEETING**

**TUESDAY, JUNE 16, , 2020**

**6:30 p.m.- 7:30 p.m.**

**GOVERNING BOARD MEMBERS  
WILL BE PROVIDED WITH CALL-IN  
INFORMATION**

**Monday, June 22, 2020**

**Remote Presentation on Promotion  
"What you should know"  
Details coming!!**

**UUP Downstate Chapter**

**President: Rowena Blackman-Stroud**

VP for Academics: Karen Benker  
VP for Professionals: Ellen McTigue  
Secretary: Ellen McTigue  
Treasurer: Fred Houston  
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Officer for Contingents: Donovan Lorde  
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