



# *the Downstate Update*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

*By Rowena Blackman-Stroud*

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Happy New Year to each and every one of you. Certainly, 2020 was not an easy year, and 2021 has begun with many of the same challenges. But as we did last year, we will face these challenges together.

UUP will continue to advocate for you, our members. Your union will continue to fight for hazard pay for our frontline workers, for our negotiated raises and benefits as outlined in our contract with the state of New York.

On the coronavirus front, UUP is doing all it can to make sure that UUP members working on campus are eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine. SUNY Downstate employees were part of the first group of workers approved for the vaccine in New York. But our union is fighting to get vaccine approval for everyone, including all SUNY employees and those people who live in communities that host SUNY colleges and universities.

For the most up-to-date vaccine information for SUNY employees, go to UUP's website at [www.uupinfo.org](http://www.uupinfo.org)

UUP is also working on a comprehensive legislative agenda for 2021-22 that includes the restoration of funding for SUNY's public teaching hospitals, hazard pay for frontline workers, abolishing the TAP Gap, and significant climate protection initiatives, etc.

At the statewide level, UUP is working closely with the incoming Biden administration for COVID relief and stimulus money for New Yorkers and for

New York state. As you know, UUP endorsed Joe Biden and Kamala Harris for president and vice president and many of you worked with us on their campaign. Their administration is pro-labor and we will work closely with them to secure federal stimulus money and loan forgiveness programs for New York.

Lastly, I, along with UUP President Fred Kowal and statewide officers, have met virtually with new state legislators that were elected in the November 2020 election. It is important that they get to know UUP, who we represent and what we stand for. If you live in an area with a newly elected state representative, please make a point of reaching out to them.

### DOWNSTATE FRONTLINE WORKERS HONORED

Downstate Chapter members on the front lines of the pandemic response at Brooklyn's SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University were honored for their heroic efforts Jan. 14 by Metro New York Health Care for All.

Metro New York, a New York City-based labor and community organization that fights for health care justice, honored the Downstate Chapter and other unions that represent front-line health care workers in the state with its Trade Union Leadership for Health Care Justice award.

The awards were presented during the organization's 2020 Health Care Justice Leadership Annual Gala. The event was held virtually.

Downstate Chapter President Rowena Blackman-Stroud accepted the award for Downstate.

“At the height of the first wave of the pandemic last spring, our members found themselves at the epicenter of the nation’s COVID-19 outbreak,” she said. “They worked tirelessly, even as Gov. Cuomo designated SUNY Downstate as a COVID-19 hospital. Our members showed extreme bravery in the face of this virus.”

“We want to salute your UUP chapter’s leadership in working with our city’s and state’s leaders to address the COVID-19 pandemic, and your members who have gone far beyond the call of duty for months now,” said Mark Hannay, Metro New York’s director.

Other unions that were honored include 1199 SEIU, the New York State Nurses Association, and several District Council 37 locals.

### **TELECOMMUTING INTO THE SPRING**

The UUP’s telecommuting agreement with SUNY has been extended through April 2, 2021.

UUP first negotiated the telecommuting agreement last spring, following the shutdown of SUNY campuses and the abrupt conversion to distance learning.

### **SALARY INCREASE DELAYED AGAIN**

The Governor’s Office of Employee Relations has informed UUP that the state will again delay implementation of the 2 percent across-the-board salary increases that were due to UUP members on July 1 or Sept. 1, 2020, depending on obligation. The delay is expected to extend to the end of March 2021.

The July 1/Sept.1 increase is contractually provided for in the 2016-2022 State/UUP Agreement.

After GOER notified UUP of the initial delay in payment in June, UUP filed class action grievances covering the delayed raises and related delays in minimum salary increases, including minimum

salaries for adjuncts, which were scheduled to take effect in 2020. UUP also filed an Improper Practice with the NYS Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) on behalf of residents working in facilities associated with SUNY’s academic medical centers. Given the repeated delays in implementing UUP’s negotiated raises, UUP continues to pursue all appropriate avenues for enforcing the contract and protecting its terms and conditions of employment.

In a message to members, UUP President Fred Kowal said that, “While we did not agree with, or accept the state’s decision, we understand that the decision is driven by the state budget crisis, which has developed as a result of the COVID 19 pandemic. To address this crisis, it remains critical that the federal government provide desperately needed assistance to state and local governments across the country, including New York. However, given the situation in Washington right now, it’s clear that any additional federal help will at minimum await the inauguration.”

The latest federal coronavirus relief bill, which President Donald Trump signed just before the end of 2020, includes the Education Stabilization Fund, which delivers \$5.8 billion to New York’s educational institutions, including \$1.4 billion for higher education.

The package also includes \$1.6 billion to New York for vaccine, testing, tracing and flexible local health funding. Also included is \$1 billion in support for hospitals, mental health, community health centers and providers.

“I am optimistic that this money will be used to help out where our members are being taxed severely right now thanks to a surge in COVID patients -- most notably at Upstate,” Kowal said. See UUP’s statement on the federal aid package [HERE](#).

However, New York will still need revenue to close a budget deficit that may reach \$14 billion. UUP is still advocating for the passage of an “Ultra-Millionaires’ tax” and a “Billionaires’ tax” by the Legislature. UUP will also increase its efforts to secure

passage of the proposed reinstatement of the Stock Transfer Tax, an option could generate more than \$1 billion of new revenue for the state in the first month. UUP is urging members to tell state legislators to fund the state's recovery.

**"It is critical that NYS legislators hear from you,"** Kowal said. "Please take a few moments to ensure our voices are heard." For additional information go to: [UUP Campaign for Revenue Raisers \(uupinfo.org\)](http://uupinfo.org)

### **DISCRETIONARY SALARY INCREASES AND COMPRESSION DISTRIBUTION**

The dates for distribution of the 2020 DSI and salary compression pools are expected as early as March. UUP will provide members with updated information as soon as possible.

Regardless of the date of payment, both salary compression adjustments and DSI will be retroactive to July or September depending on a member's obligation. But the money—added to base salaries—is coming.

### **CHAPTERS TO ATTEND JANUARY DELEGATE ASSEMBLY**

The UUP Delegate Assembly will take place as a virtual event Jan. 22-23. Seated delegates have already had the opportunity to register themselves;

From now through Jan. 19, 2021, Delegates can email or call the chapter office to register.

### **eLEARNING IS EASY WITH EMPIRE KNOWLEDGE BANK**

EKB eLearning offers thousands of courses and videos to help employees develop current skills and learn new skills for professional development and advancement. Empire KnowledgeBank, a UUP-negotiated benefit, also offers courses to help members deal with stress, change, and staying balanced in an ever-changing world. UUP-represented employees can access thousands of

eLearning courses, eBooks and short course videos for opportunities to enhance their professional and career development, for certification preparation and continuing education. Course offerings include "Bouncing Back with Perseverance and Resilience;" "Take a Deep Breath and Manage Your Stress;" "Optimizing Your Work-Life Balance," and "Staying Balanced in a Shifting World."

Click [HERE](#) to apply for a FREE EKB license and to access guidelines.

### **NYS/UUP INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT AWARD PROGRAM**

Funding for the Individual Development Award Program ("IDA") is provided under the 2016-2022 Agreement between UUP and the State of New York.

Application forms will be available from **January 25, 2021**, on-line by clicking the following link

<http://www.uuphost.org/downstatedemedicalcenter> You can also call the Chapter office at (718) 270-1519 and arrange to pick up an application.

All eligible UUP bargaining unit members may apply for a maximum of \$1,000 to help support such activities as:

- Attendance at professional conferences
- Coursework to enhance professional skills
- Small research projects

The activity period covers one round of IDA awards:

- **July 2, 2020 to July 1, 2021**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE  
FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 2021, -  
APPLICATIONS CAN BE SUBMITTED  
ELECTRONICALLY TO  
[Brooklyn@uupmail.org](mailto:Brooklyn@uupmail.org).  
For further information, contact the UUP  
office at (718) 270-1519.**

### **UNUM CHANGES**

The New York State Department of Financial Services Life Bureau is requiring that Unum, UUP's life insurance carrier,

no longer offer all value-added services (worldwide emergency travel assistance, life planning financial and legal resources, and employee assistance/LifeBalance - EAP).

Regrettably, UUP will no longer be able to offer the Worldwide Travel Assistance program to our represented employees beginning Jan. 1. Statewide Membership Development Officer Tom Hoey made the announcement in a Jan. 4 email to UUP leaders.

The DFS' Life Bureau has determined that Unum's insurance policies do not contain specific enough language to allow them to offer value-added services to their customers. Unum has attempted to resolve this issue by adding to their previously approved product filings, but DFS has been unwilling to approve new policy language because the services do not have a relevant connection to life insurance.

Contact the UUP Benefit Trust Fund at 800-887-3863 with questions or for more information.

### **PRE-RETIREMENT WORKSHOPS**

UUP will hold a virtual pre-retirement workshop on Jan. 26 and Jan. 28.

The two-part webinar will cover health care and Medicare, followed by union benefits, such as dental and vision coverage.

- Jan. 26, 2021: Health care and Medicare, noon
- Jan. 28, 2021: Union benefits, noon.

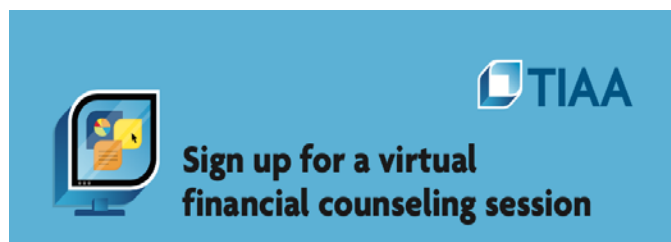
Click [HERE](#) to sign up.

### **DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES** **VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

We invite all UUP members to get involved with their union:

- If your department does not have a UUP representative, please volunteer to serve as your Department Representative.

- Department Reps will be provided with up-to-date information on issues that pertain to their workplace. If your department has multiple shifts, each shift should have a Department Rep.
- Attend Department Representative meetings. The next Virtual Zoom meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, January 20, 2021, 12:30 pm to 1:30 pm.**
- Attend chapter meetings. If you have not done so, please submit your personal email address to [Brooklyn@uupmail.org](mailto:Brooklyn@uupmail.org) so we can keep you up-to-date on what's happening.



We know that there is a lot of uncertainty in the world today. And just as we have for more than 100 years, TIAA is here to help you.

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**MAKE AN APPOINTMENT**



#### **Make your secure connection**

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### **BJ'S DISCOUNT**

Start the new year by saving!! If you are interested in signing up for a BJ's discount membership or want to renew your membership, our BJ's representative, Peter Laddomada will be available to take your call on **Tuesday, January 26, 2021 and Wednesday, January 27, 2021**, between the hours of **12:00 Noon and 4:00 pm**.

He can be reached at (718) 637-7487. You can email him at [pladdomada@bjs.com](mailto:pladdomada@bjs.com).

Give him a call and take advantage of this savings benefit.

### **UUP Downstate Chapter**

**President: Rowena Blackman-Stroud**

VP for Academics: Samuel Marquez

VP for Professionals: Hazel Williams

Secretary: Ellen McTigue

Treasurer: Fred Houston

Grievance Chair: Simon Abe Gerecht

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