



# *the Downstate Update*

## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

*By Rowena Blackman-Stroud*

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### **CHAPTER ACTIVISTS** **ADVOCATE FOR DOWNSTATE** **MARCH 6, 2022 - UUP/PSC** **RALLY**



Downstate Chapter members Redetha Abrahams-Nichols and Samuel Marquez advocated for funding for Downstate at a huge March 6 event that closed half the Brooklyn Bridge in a show of solidarity for Funding public higher education - SUNY and CUNY.

UUP members joined Legislators and more than 1,000 SUNY/CUNY students and members of the Professional Staff Congress/CUNY in Brooklyn for the first of two rallies that day. Redetha Abraham-Nichols and UUP President Fred Kowal spoke at that rally, in front of historic Brooklyn Borough Hall.

Chapter Vice President for Academics Samuel Marquez spoke at the second rally, held at Foley Square in Manhattan, minutes after a boisterous crowd of sign-waving students and union members walked across the Manhattan-bound side of the 1.1-mile-long Brooklyn Bridge. Downstate Chapter President Rowena Blackman-Stroud, Vice President for Professionals Hazel Williams, Retirees Officer Shirley Patterson, Grievance Chair Chantel D. Fuller and members of the Downstate Chapter were also at the event.



In her speech, Redetha Abrahams-Nichols who worked as a Nurse Manager in the Emergency Department during the epicenter of the pandemic advocated for hazard pay for in person service during the pandemic. She said that SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University—has not received state support in years, even as our members risked their lives to take care of seriously ill patients at the time where there was no cure or vaccine for COVID-19.

“The COVID-only designation placed on Downstate amounted to an unfunded mandate,” she said. “Our hospital was



forced to suspend any revenue-generating procedures to focus solely on COVID patients. Since then, Downstate has received no financial help from the state to make up for those losses.

Because Downstate was a COVID-only hospital, patients were slow to return to us for care. They did not want to come to Downstate because they were afraid they would come down with COVID. I hope our political leaders have not forgotten what we have been through. So, I ask today: please remember the sacrifices that we have made and restore the 150-million-dollar subsidy to SUNY Teaching Hospitals and an additional appropriation for SUNY Downstate for its unfunded COVID-19 mandate.



Samuel Marquez, Vice President for Academics and a member of UUP's statewide Executive Board, talked about the importance of Downstate as a prime pipeline of doctors and medical professionals—many of them people of color—to New York City hospitals and health care facilities.

"The SUNY teaching hospitals, and SUNY Downstate, where I'm from, specifically produces more doctors of color than any institution in this state," he continued. "SUNY public teaching hospitals will create healthier communities. We are a public teaching hospital and incredibly we get no direct state support. This must change."

Samuel Marquez also pressed for additional state funds for SUNY in the final enacted state budget.



## **TELL ALBANY TO FULLY FUND SUNY'S CAMPUSES AND PUBLIC TEACHING HOSPITALS!**

There are just about two weeks before the state's deadline to approve its 2022-2023 budget.

Now is the time to press our elected representatives in the legislature to push to include the following in the 2022-2023 state budget.

- Critical funding for our public teaching hospitals
  - Adequate funding for SUNY Campuses
  - Hazard pay for all employees who provided in person service during the pandemic
- I. We urge all UUP members, their colleagues, families and friends to send the electronic letter below by clicking <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/tell-albany-to-fully-fund-sunys-campuses-and-public-teaching-hospitals/>
- II. Call your legislator to advocate for funding and hazard pay. Please use the script below.

*"Hi My name is \_\_\_\_ and I live in \_\_\_\_, zip code \_\_\_\_\_. I am an employee at SUNY Downstate and a United University Professions member. I'm calling to urge the legislature to support the addition of \$68 million dollars for debt service for our SUNY hospitals and reinstatement of the operating subsidy so that we can continue to provide quality healthcare to all New Yorkers. I am also asking that all appropriate staff titles be included in the hazard/retention bonuses proposed for healthcare workers. All heroes must be recognized for their service so the salary cap should be removed. SUNY Downstate was declared a COVID-only hospital at*

*the height of the pandemic and has faced years of austerity. Please, be a public healthcare champion and fully fund our SUNY hospitals to help us recover!*

Senator Zellnor Myrie  
518-455-2410

Senator Kevin Parker  
518-455-2580

Assemblymember Jo Ann Simon  
(518) 455-5426

Assemblymember Emily Gallagher  
(518) 455-4477

Assemblymember Rodneyse Bichotte Hermelyn  
(518) 455-5385

Senator Andrew Gounardes  
518) 455-3270

Senator Gustavo Rivera  
(518) 455-3395

## **GETTING BURIED BY STUDENT DEPT? UUP CAN HELP – SIGN UP FOR UUP STUDENT DEBT CLINICS**

UUP regularly offers virtual student debt clinics to help members navigate the federal public service forgiveness program and learn more about income-driven repayment plans.

Statewide Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O'Bryan-Losee leads the clinics.

All clinics are on Wednesdays. The next clinics are set for:

- March 30, 5 p.m. – 6:30 p.m.
- April 13, 11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Click [HERE](#) to register for one of the above dates

## **REGISTER FOR UUP'S UPCOMING PRE-RETIREMENT WORKSHOPS**

UUP is holding its virtual pre-retirement workshops in April and May.

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

The schedule for the workshops is:

- Monday, April 11, 12 Noon to 1 p.m.
- Wednesday, April 13, 12 Noon to 1 p.m.

To register for the April workshops, click [Here](#)

- Tuesday, May 17, 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm
- Thursday, May 19, 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm

To register for the May workshops, click [Here](#)

### **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:** Chantel D. Fuller

**Officer for Contingents:** Donovan Lorde

**Department Rep Coordinator:**

Rowena Blackman-Stroud

**Membership Development Officer:**

Khadija Sikriti

**Retirees Officer:** Shirley Patterson

**UUP/NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist**

Lisa Mouscardy Willis

**Chapter Assistant**

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