

Fredonia Chapter Elections - Meet the Candidates

Some of the candidates running for the June 1, 2023 through May 31, 2025 term for the Fredonia Chapter Executive Board wrote Candidate Statements.

Christopher C. Taverna – Chapter President and Professional Delegate

I'm running for re-election as your Union Chapter President because I believe that together we can continue to build Fredonia into a workplace where we can excel in our careers. I believe that it is the responsibility of our Union to look out for the best interests of all members, and as your President I will continue to stand by that belief as I have these past four years.

I've been an employee of Fredonia and a UUP member since 2001. I am currently the UUP Fredonia Chapter President, serving in that role since June 2019. I have previously served on the local UUP Executive Board from 2008-2011. I have also been involved with the University Senate from 2006-2012 and again from 2015-Present.

I am asking for your continued support so that we can continue building on the successes of the past four years. Some of those accomplishments are:

- Ensuring our voices are heard by our Campus President and his Administration
- Achieving collaborative decisions rather than top-down mandates for various units
- Handling various concerns from Academics, Professionals, and Contingents alike

I am uniquely qualified to be your President due to my willingness to not only listen to you and bring your issues to management's attention, but to work for positive resolutions. I fight for results and am not afraid to speak truth to power.

I thank you for this opportunity and for your continued support!

For more information, visit: <https://christophertaverna.com/uupelection2023/>

IcIal Vanwesenbeeck – Chapter President and Academic Delegate



Dear colleagues,

My name is ICI Vanwesenbeeck. I was hired at Fredonia in 2005 and since then I have been an active member within UUP. Below is my candidate statement. If you have questions or concerns about my qualifications, or have heard things about me that you'd like to check out, please get in touch with me via your personal email: icisak@protonmail.com or call (716) 410-6724. I believe in direct, open, and honest dialogue, and would appreciate hearing from you. My reasons for serving are:

- **Respect:** If I get to serve you, I will work to protect and preserve the dignity of labor for all. This means we take steps to ensure we are not cornered into thinking we are disposable members of a campus but that we are the workplace. I believe that I can make a meaningful contribution to labor-related negotiations on campus.
- **Equity:** If I get to serve you, I'd like UUP to do some soul searching and question the splintered reality of our membership, and think of ways to stand together in our pursuit of equity. It's becoming harder to be respected as teachers, scholars, and professionals. From *HARP* to employment letters to emeritus rights to instructional workload and academic freedom, we see a preference for a top-down management model and a resistance to our shared governance model. Unfortunately, the effects of this attitude have trickled down to the efficacy and role of UUP. Fair and equitable treatment of all members is a top priority for me, and it helps that I am not easily intimidated by conflict or deterred by obstacles.
- **Solidarity:** Our campus morale has been so low for too long. So, when I think of solidarity in 2023, I think of ways to stand together against macro and micro stressors that hinder our professional growth, happiness, and satisfaction. I think of being united to protect what is most sacred to us: equality, dignity, honor of working, and what we deserve: respect, opportunity, and equity. It's that kind of a journey that makes me look forward to serving you.

This UUP election is critical. If we want to prevent further landslides and the erosion of our professions, we need a strong advocate, such as UUP, to join the table. Whomever you vote for, I hope you cast your vote to make UUP a stronger advocate for labor-related matters on campus. Thank you for reading my statement. I wish Chris, a wonderful colleague whom I served with on the Executive Board, the very best in the elections.

Sincerely,
ICI Vanwesenbeeck
Associate Professor



Ziya Arnavut

UUP Fredonia Chapter Academic Vice President

We are at a crossroads! Our future is at stake!

Several SUNY Colleges like Buffalo, Brockport, Fredonia, Plattsburgh, and Potsdam are in dire economic conditions due to low enrollment and lack of state support.

Thanks to the efforts of UUP, NYSUT and other Unions. NY State and Federal Government gave billions of dollars of support for schools, families, workers, and small businesses until now.

However, due to the drop in enrolment our problems are continuing:

- We lost several full-time, part-time faculty and professional positions.
- Our workload due to retirements, resignations, and low enrollment has been increased in an unprecedented way in the history of SUNY Fredonia.

We need experienced and dedicated Leadership.

In this time of crisis, more than ever, we need a strong and experienced leadership to negotiate possible restructuring and address the workload and compensation issues that we are facing.

I was proud to serve on the UUP Negotiation Committee representing the Fredonia campus that secured salary increases in our last contract. I led this chapter for 8 years and several times negotiated HARP with the former administrators. *First time ever, in the history of SUNY Fredonia, we successfully negotiated and increased the salaries of adjunct faculty, not once but two times from \$700 dollars per credit to \$1000 dollars in 2016.* Six years passed; inflation is running around 9% but the minimum has not been increased. It is time.

If elected, I will stand with you to secure better working conditions needed to keep SUNY Fredonia moving forward, with the principles of shared governance.

I will dedicate my efforts to:

1. Addressing our workload issues.
2. Finding long-term and sustainable solutions to our budget problems and addressing our issues at UUP and NYSUT meetings.

In closing, times are difficult, and we must act now before it is too late for SUNY Fredonia. I believe I have the experience, skills, and dedication to work for you in these challenging times.

Janet Mayer – Vice President for Professionals and Delegate



Though I am running unopposed for Vice President of Professionals, I'd like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to the SUNY Fredonia professional staff who I have not yet met. I've served 3 terms as Grievance Officer for Professionals, 2 terms on the UUP Statewide Grievance Committee, a term on the College Committee for Professional Evaluation and two terms as a UUP Delegate. I enjoyed serving in all of these roles and have found them to be very rewarding service opportunities.

I had the opportunity to serve many colleagues in all of these roles. I've had many accomplishments, including being part of the initial team that developed the first version of the HARP handbook as well as the most recent one. I work well with administration, am knowledgeable of our contract and the grievance process.

Members who have worked with me, often during a very stressful time in their career, will tell you that I am a strong and knowledgeable advocate. While I hope no situations arise during my term that require members to seek me out for grievance assistance, I am here to help. Do not hesitate to reach out for support if you encounter workplace circumstances which require contract information or any kind of support.

I'd appreciate your vote for Vice President for Professionals of our local chapter. I can commit to attending all of the meetings in Albany to represent the interests of professional staff at SUNY Fredonia. I can also help to keep our campus informed on the issues presented to us from UUP in Albany.

Thank you for your consideration.

In solidarity,
Janet

Lei Huang - Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer and Academic Delegate

I am Lei Huang, Ph.D. (Associate Professor of Marketing). I am running for the **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer** and **Academic Delegate**. I have been serving as the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Officer and Academic Delegate at our chapter since 2019. As such, I have had the opportunity to work with colleagues from different disciplines on campus.

As a **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Officer**, I believe that diversity should include but not be limited to demographics such as race, age, gender, education, etc. More importantly, it should embrace cross-cultural diversity, generational diversity, religion, and other ways that diversity manifests in the workplace. In addition, we are now facing severe and continuing budget problems at SUNY Fredonia that threaten core programs across the campus accompanied with serious concerns on work load, equity, resource allocation, and so on. All these issues are turning into major sources of potential problems in the future.

As an **Academic Delegate**, I would collaborate with you and the other members of our campus community to strengthen our union, which in turn would enhance both our professional and personal lives. With your vote I would use the knowledge and skills I have developed to continuously pursue, promote, and protect academic freedom, shared governance, and faculty resources to ensure the delivery of a high-quality education at SUNY Fredonia. I pledge to inform you, to seek your assistance, and to represent you effectively. I humbly request your vote, support and participation.

Dr. Reneta Barneva - Grievance Chair for Academics and Delegate

My name is Reneta Barneva and I am running for Grievance Chair for Academics and for a delegate. In the past eight years I served as Grievance Chair. I am also a delegate and a member of the UUP-statewide Grievance Committee and Constitution and Governance Committee.

I have been at Fredonia for over 20 years and I have gained first-hand knowledge about the issues UUP members face. Prior to that, I have been over 10 years on the Executive Committee of the Senate, serving consecutively as Governance Officer, Vice-chair, Chair, and six years as SUNY Senator. This experience provided me with knowledge about the members in our sister institutions and about the SUNY system as a whole. In the last eight years I have also served on the UUP-wide Grievance Committee, which gave me the opportunity to work on some of the most difficult grievance cases.

The Grievance Chairs for Academics is responsible for assisting the members of the chapter with problems and concerns. I work closely with the Labor Management Specialist to process grievances according to the appropriate procedures.

The position of Grievance Chair requires good listening skills and familiarity with the policies and procedures. I possess both qualities, which makes me a good candidate for the position.

Fredonia academics stand in front of one of the most serious challenges in the university history – a large budget deficit, declining enrollment, and increased teaching load. The goal of my campaign is to assist the UUP members in this difficult time.

Anne Fearman – Officer for Contingents

For twenty years, I've been a part-time contingent (i.e. adjunct) in the English Department, teaching a 4/4 course load of First Year and General Education courses. I've been active in UUP at the chapter level (serving as Officer for Contingents many of those years and currently) and at the statewide level (as a delegate, Chair of the Contingent Employment Committee, and member of the Constitution & Governance committee, all of which are continuing positions). In addition, I'm a member of the Senate Standing Committee, ConFac, and long-serving Senator for Contingents. While there is much work to be done in our union to prioritize equitable pay and job security for contingent employees (among many other issues), I'm proud of the gains we've made and, with your vote, excited to continue serving as your union representative.

Angela Pucciarelli Rice – Professional Delegate

Hello! My name is Angela Pucciarelli Rice, and I am running for Chapter Delegate. I have been the Assistant Director of Athletics and Senior Woman Administrator in the Department of Athletics and Recreation since fall 2018. I also serve as an adjunct faculty member in the School of Business, teaching courses in Sport Management and Health Education. In addition to my professional responsibilities, my campus committee work includes serving on the University Judicial Board, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council, and the SEFA Committee. My interest in the Union matches my interest in matters of equity, inclusion, and transparency of campus-wide issues.

Bruce Simon – Academic Delegate

I ask for a chance to continue serving as an academic delegate from 2023 to 2025.

Throughout my activist career—which began in the mid-1990s as a graduate student at Princeton University, expanded with my contributions as Co-General Editor for [*Workplace: A Journal for Academic Labor*](#) from 1999 to 2002, and has continued to develop within UUP since Mac Nelson recruited me in the summer of 1998—I have been committed to social movement unionism and problem-solving unionism.

I have been an elected delegate and member of our chapter's Executive Board for 21 of my 25 years at Fredonia. During that time, I have served in a variety of local leadership roles:

- Membership Development Officer (2001-2003)
- Part-Time Concerns Officer (2011-2013)
- Officer for Contingents (2013-2017)
- Vice President for Academics (2003-2006 [stepped down due to sabbatical leave], 2017-2019)
- English Department Representative (1998-2001, 2017-present)

I have also been active on multiple state-wide UUP Committees:

- Legislation Committee (2001-2005)
- Globalization and Corporatization Committee (2004-2009, 2010-2016)
- Outreach Committee (2013-2015)
- Committee of Vice Presidents for Academics (2017-2019)
- Contingent Employment Committee, United University Professions (2012-present)
- Future of Public Higher Education Committee, United University Professions (2016-present)
- Committee of Academic Delegates (2019-present)
- Ad Hoc Negotiations Committee (2021-present)

I would be honored to continue representing the chapter at statewide delegate assemblies and contribute to the work of our chapter Executive Board.

Joy Bilharz – Officer for Retirees

I am running for re-election as Officer for Retirees and would like your support. A smooth transition to retirement is important for our members and is most easily achieved if those intending to retire let us know as soon as they reach that decision as that information is usually not forwarded by HR to UUP. I am happy to speak with anyone considering retirement and those discussions will remain confidential.

UUP has made Walter Apple's pre-retirement workshop available on line for access at your convenience but I hope we will be able to have at least one annual face-to-face meeting with him. These meetings will include both retirees and current members and are a good way to keep in touch with former colleagues. Retirees are the single largest membership group in UUP and I hope that we will be able to work closely with active members in the future.

Thank you for your support in the past.

In solidarity,
Joy

Joy Bilharz, Ph.D.
Professor Emerita of Anthropology