



# *the Downstate Update*

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

*By Rowena Blackman-Stroud*

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**I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our members for their hard work and dedication to our patients, students and community. Additionally, I would also like to spotlight the contributions of several of our chapter members and congratulate them for a job well done.**

On Feb. 26, Samuel Marquez, the Downstate Chapter's Vice President for Academics and UUP statewide Executive Board member, gave the keynote address at the 2021 Dr. Samuel L. Kountz Jr., Lecture and Awards Ceremony, sponsored by Downstate's Office of Diversity Education and Research.

Sam, professor & co-director of gross anatomy for the College of Medicine, School of Health Professions, and director of the Anatomical Donor Program, shared his story in a Feb. 26 virtual lecture, "From the South Bronx to SUNY Downstate: My Journey."

Sam has been a true advocate for our chapter. He has been working with UUP leaders at the statewide level to advocate for UUP's New York HEALS legislative agenda—including an initiative to create a Medical Educational Opportunity Program (MEOP) to attract students from underserved and under-represented areas to become doctors and health care professionals.

After his talk, Sam and Downstate Chapter member, Daniel Ehlike received Excellence in Teaching awards. Drs. Jason Lazar and Ming

Zhang were honored with Excellence in Mentorship awards at the virtual ceremony.

That same day, two of our faculty—Drs. Christina Pardo and Dr. Camille Clare—presented as part of a panel of experts for a virtual workshop on Black maternal and infant health, part of an annual conference sponsored by the New York State Association of Black, Puerto Rican, Hispanic & Asian Legislators Inc.

Dr. Robert Gore and Dr. Lorenzo Paladino, who were honored as 2020 Empire Whole Health Heroes. The award was given by Empire BlueCross BlueShield and Crain's New York Business. They were three of 50 people who received the award at a virtual Feb. 18 ceremony.

Dr. Gore teamed up with state Sen. Zellnor Myrie in July 2020 to offer a free "virtual healing" workshop for the community. His Brooklyn-based nonprofit group, Kings Against Violence Initiative, visits young people in schools, hospital rooms and community centers; the program helps them recover from the emotional trauma of gun violence.

Dr. Paladino participated in a White House task force that established protocols for putting multiple patients on ventilators designed for single-patient use during the height of the pandemic in New York City in spring 2020. He is a flight surgeon in the New York Air National Guard's 106th Rescue Wing.

Each one of them is an advocate for their students, patients and communities.

Congratulations to our advocates, who inspire us all to reach higher.

### **DISCRETIONARY SALARY INCREASE (DSI)/SALARY COMPRESSION FUNDS**

Under the 2016-22 NYS/UUP contract, members are eligible to receive discretionary salary increases. For this round of DSI, eligible members will receive a flat payment of approximately \$556 added to their base salaries retroactive to July 1, 2020. Part-time eligible members will receive a pro-rated amount based on their part-time percentage.

DSI funds will be paid in the March 17, 2021 paychecks.

Members receiving salary compression payments will also receive their money in the March 17 paycheck. The payments are retroactive to July 1, 2020. This historic benefit was negotiated by UUP and is in the union's 2016-22 contract with the state.

UUP released a three-page flier, "2020 Salary Compression: Analysis and Distribution," guidelines. (Click on attachment).

The salary regression analyses was done by Human Resources. Once you have received your correspondence from Human Resources, questions and concerns can be addressed by Craig Richards at (718) 270-2093 and Ferdinand Mindanao at (718) 270-1687.

### **GET TO KNOW YOUR UNION-NEGOTIATED BENEFITS**

UUP will hold virtual New Employee Orientation programs at noon every other Wednesday in March and April. Called "NEOs at Noon," these webinars offer opportunities to learn about the benefits that your union has negotiated for you with the state, and the best way to maximize them.

It's also a great way to meet colleagues and members of your campus UUP chapter in a welcoming setting, with a presentation designed to answer your questions.

NEOs at Noon are scheduled for March 3, 17 and 31; and April 14 and 28.

Go [HERE](#) to select a date and register for the webinars.

### **HELP UUP 10,000 CONTACTS TO CONGRESS**

UUP is closing in on its goal of members making 10,000 contacts with their Congressional delegation—an ambitious and effective method for urging Congress to pass President Biden's \$1.9 trillion coronavirus stimulus package.

Members have sent nearly 6,000 e-letters to federal lawmakers, urging them to approve Biden's relief bill. Members have also posted hundreds of social media posts and made calls and sent emails to legislators.

UUP President Fred Kowal makes a strong case for swift approval of Biden's stimulus bill in a video he recorded last week. You can view the video [HERE](#).

Here are ways to reach out to your Congressional representatives.

#### ***Send an electronic letter:***

As of today, more than 1,900 people have sent letters to their representatives, urging them to approve Biden's COVID recovery plan. Click [HERE](#) to send a letter.

#### ***Post on social media:***

Using UUP's [Social Media Toolkit](#), members can post directly to elected officials and/or encourage colleagues, friends, and family to join phone banks or send e-letters.

"Over the past couple of weeks, we have made thousands of contacts to our Congressional members," President Kowal wrote in a recent message to members. "We can't stop now! We must keep the pressure on. Join me and our coalition partners across the state for this urgent and easy action."

## **SUPPORT UUP AND INVEST IN OUR NEW YORK**

UUP is asking members to support the Invest In Our New York Act, a package of six state bills that would raise more than \$50 billion to ensure that New Yorkers can rebuild the state's economy by ending tax breaks for the richest New Yorkers.

In a recent message to members, UUP President Fred Kowal wrote that "because of you, our federal and state lawmakers know that we are expecting them to join us in this fight to ensure SUNY has the resources needed to continue delivering the high-quality education and critical services we provide to the people of NY State.

"Over the past few weeks, you and many of our community allies contacted our legislators via letters, phone calls, lobby visits, social media and more. We are building power through our political advocacy, and the work that you are doing is making a difference. Now is the time to take the next step."

### ***HERE's how members can take action:***

[Sign the petition](#) - Help New Yorkers Survive with the Invest in Our New York Act!

Sign up to call New Yorkers about [Invest in Our NY](#) and connect them to their legislators.

## **GOT STUDENT DEBT? GET HELP HERE!**

UUP sponsors regular virtual clinics on student debt so that members can learn how to qualify for federal student loan forgiveness and better handle their repayment.

These clinics offer information in a clear, concise format, and provide valuable advice to members that is often difficult, if not impossible, to obtain from a student loan servicer.

Three more clinics have been scheduled, from 5 p.m. to 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 3, Wednesday, March 17 and Wednesday, March 31. Click [HERE](#) to register for the clinics.

## **SAVE THE DATE: POWER OF PARTNERSHIPS – MARCH 10**

UUP is one of the hosts of the Power of Partnerships Conference, a virtual workshop for students, educators, higher education faculty and community advocates to develop partnerships and explore solutions to the teacher shortage and teacher diversity challenges facing our schools.

The two-hour online event starts at 4:30 p.m. on Wednesday, March 10. It is sponsored by UUP, SUNY, NYSUT and the State Education Department.

At the conference, attendees will hear about successful initiatives across New York that strengthen and expand the educator pipeline, including substitute teacher fellow programs, community partnership opportunities, and how higher education and P-12 partnerships can make these initiatives successful and sustainable.

The online workshop will include informational sessions and small-group opportunities to meet and connect with partners from around the region and state.

## **GETTING READY TO RETIRE? THIS WORKSHOP WILL HELP.**

UUP has scheduled a series of virtual pre-retirement workshops in March, April and May.

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

Sign up for the sessions below:

- Noon to 1 p.m. March 23 and March 25. Click [HERE](#) to register.
- Noon to 1 p.m. April 20 and April 22. Click [HERE](#) to register.
- 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. May 18 and May 20. Click [HERE](#) to register.

**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.
- 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.

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