

April 2026

Brockport Chapter



## Brockport Banter...What's Going On This Month?

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### PRESIDENTS ADDRESS

***"Stand fast, then, Oh Workers, your ground, Together pull, strong and united."  
– Walter Crane (The Workers' Maypole, 1894)***

As we look toward May, the end of the semester and International Workers Day, this edition of the Brockport Banter brings news of hopeful signs on our legislative agenda and contract campaign. More importantly you will find information about how you can pitch-in to help us reach our collective goals; join our “raise the stakes” May Day celebration, post your card to support the negotiations team, or join us for in-district lobbying. Our member spotlight this edition features Oana Prajitura who participated in Advocacy Day. We also launch a new feature “know your benefits” with a timely focus on space available tuition for those who may want to register for summer/fall. As you scroll through this edition you will see pictures from our New Hire event – thanks to everyone who participated. There is also a wonderful honorarium tribute for Jennifer Smalls contributed by Tamala David. Prior to all of that I would like to provide an update on Individual Development Awards.

We have received many inquiries about Individual Development Awards, and we thank everyone for your patience. News about awards is taking longer than we would like this cycle. As you may know, the Individual Development Awards are a negotiated benefit coordinated with NYS/UUP Joint Labor Management Committee. Once the campus IDA committee has chosen award recipients, selections have to be approved by the state committee. This year there has been some delay in this approval, primarily due to staff retirements. We just received word that our approvals are imminent, so decisions will soon be distributed to applicants. We thank our campus partners, especially the Grants Development Office, for helping with this initiative. We are exploring moving the deadline for IDA grant submissions early next cycle to help ensure recipients receive notice of their awards in a timely manner.

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A team of members from Brockport UUP recently attended a rescheduled advocacy day in Albany. It was well attended by state legislators' and the team was able to visit local member's offices. As you may know, the New York state budget has not yet been finalized. That said, our advocates learned that the proposals from the executive as well as the two house budgets look favorable for SUNY – including increases in operating aid. The UUP legislative team are looking for our support to push for legislative language that ensures a fair distribution of the increased funding and targeting our fiscally distressed. To that end, we are looking for Brockport UUP members to join a team visiting local legislator's in their district offices. These will most likely take place on Friday's. If you can help out, please reach out to the chapter office or Sara DiDonato our coordinator of outreach.

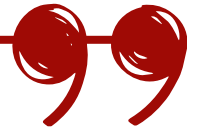
Contract negotiations are progressing with many meetings scheduled between the UUP team and the state. Please sign on to the members only negotiations page to get the latest update which highlights the state's proposals on healthcare. Our statewide webpage also features seven steps you can take for a strong campaign (<https://uupinfo.org/negotiations/>). To support our negotiations the Brockport Chapter is joining the statewide postcard campaign. The postcard's highlight our UUP's contract demands and we want as many members as possible to sign them and return them to the chapter office. Department reps have been sent copies, but we will be happy to supply more. Postcards will also be available at our May Day "Raise the Stakes" Celebration to be held on Friday May 1<sup>st</sup> - International Workers Day - at the Alumni House from 4-6.30pm. This event is happening in concert with others across the state to raise visibility for our negotiations. We want everyone to pop by, sign some cards, put a stake in the ground, and join colleagues for some food and festivities – families welcome. A flyer for the event is included below, a more formal invitation will be coming out soon.

Please enjoy this edition of the Brockport Banter.  
Thanks to everyone who has contributed. Please reach out to the Chapter Office ([brockport@uupmail.org](mailto:brockport@uupmail.org)) if there are features you would like to see in future editions or if you would like to contribute an article or feature.

*In Solidarity, Susan Orr (Chapter President)*



# UUP BENEFIT HIGHLIGHT



## The UUP Space Available Waiver: A Game-Changing Benefit for SUNY Employees

*Article by: Brittany Profit-Rheinwald*

For employees across the State University of New York system, one of the most powerful and sometimes overlooked benefits of union membership is the UUP Space Available Waiver. This benefit, made possible through the United University Professions (UUP), allows eligible employees to enroll in courses at any SUNY institution tuition-free, provided space is available in the course.

The impact of this waiver is hard to overstate. In the Higher Education Administration (MSEd) and Educational Leadership (EdD) programs at SUNY Brockport, students regularly use this benefit to make advanced education not just accessible, but genuinely affordable. Some students pursue their master's degree entirely through the waiver, taking one course at a time while continuing to work full-time.



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Others in the EdD program use the waiver to cover the bulk of their coursework, reducing the total out-of-pocket cost of an entire doctoral education to approximately \$5,000, a fraction of what it would otherwise cost.

For working professionals who might otherwise feel that a graduate or doctoral degree is financially out of reach, this program changes everything. It reflects what a strong union should do: advocate for benefits that transform the lives of its members in real, lasting ways.

If you are a SUNY employee and have not yet explored the Space Available Waiver, now is the time. Your degree and your future may be far more within reach than you think.



***SCAN FOR  
MORE INFO***



# INFORMATION ABOUT TUITION BENEFIT

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## UUP Tuition Free Space Available Program

This negotiated benefit allows UUP-represented academic and professional employees (who work full-time or part-time) to take one course tuition free each semester and special session (e.g. summer session and intercession) from a UUP-represented SUNY campus.

Academic and professional employees can take their chosen course for free as long as space is available. Fees other than tuition are paid by the employee. If a waiver is submitted and the employee withdraws from the course, the waiver is void and removed from the account. A UUP-represented employee can use the UUP waiver and the B140 if taking more than one course. The B140 will cover \$425 towards tuition for the second course.

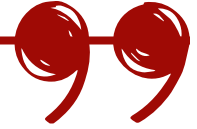
If you are interested in taking a course at a different SUNY campus other than Brockport, each college has its own tuition waiver application and process. Please reach out to the college's Human Resources Department for information.

**Below is the link to Brockport's Tuition waiver information:**

<https://www.brockport.edu/live/news/10454-uup-tuition-free-space-available-program>

Thank you to Tina Bieber from Human Resources for helping us highlight this benefit! Also big thanks to Brittany Profit-Rheinwald for the article contribution.

# ADVOCACY DAY MARCH 17TH



Flexibility and enthusiasm characterized UUP's Advocacy Day this legislative season. A snow-storm thwarted the original plan that had attracted a record number of prospective attendees. Undeterred our statewide team put together a revamped event with a strong presence from UUP members across the state including five members of the Brockport Chapter.

The morning proceedings included presentations from state-wide leaders and drop-in addresses from supporters including NY State AFL-CIO President Mario Cilento. Member advocates were seated based on geographical location and legislators dropped by, mingled with their constituents and listened as they presented UUP's legislative priorities. A great number of NY legislators are SUNY graduates, and their personal experiences shone through in their messages of support for UUP's legislative goals.

In the afternoon, UUP members dropped by Legislator's offices to distribute information packets and talk to legislators and their staff. The Brockport team met with a warm welcome at the offices of Western NY legislators, though none were available for a meeting. Assembly member Sarah Clarke's legislative aide granted the Brockport team a meeting and shared that the assemblywoman had signed on to many UUP priorities. It was a great way to wrap up the day.

Advocacy now turns to meetings in the legislator's district offices. Please let the chapter outreach coordinator Sara DiDonato know if you would like to help out. Also, please consider joining us for advocacy day next year.



*Jie Zhang, Oana Prajitura, Sara DiDonato, Alissa Karl, and Aide to Legislator Sarah Clark*



*Oana Prajitura records a brief message in support of the postcard campaign highlighting key contract demands.*



*Left to Right: Jie Zhang, Susan Orr, Oana Prajitura, and Alissa Karl*

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# MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



I'm a Lead Research Analyst for the Office of Institutional Research & Analysis. I joined the IRA office over four years ago, after completing my Master's in Mathematics here at Brockport. My work mainly involves reporting on and analyzing student data, with a focus on enrollment and student success metrics like retention and graduation rates. I really enjoy getting to collaborate with offices and departments across campus to help better understand our students and assist in decision making.

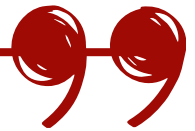
I wanted to get involved with UUP because I believe it's important for professional staff to be represented in conversations about our workplace. I also think it's important to stay informed about union benefits and issues that may be happening across campus that the union can assist with. Serving as a board member lets me stay actively engaged, share information with colleagues, and do my part to support and strengthen our union community at Brockport.

I'm very glad to have been involved in Advocacy Day. It was awesome to hear from legislators who expressed their commitment to SUNY and UUP, there was a real sense of positive energy and support in the room. The highlight for me was going around to the legislators' offices to speak directly about the funding proposals UUP is advocating for. As someone who was new to the experience, I was really appreciative of our Brockport group. I thought everyone did a great job in getting people to meet with us and take a genuine interest in UUP's message.



**Oana Prajitura**

**Lead Research Analyst  
Institutional Research & Analysis**



# IN MEMORIAM OF JENNIFER SMALLS

## A Somber Reflection

by Tamala David

*Executive Committee Rep, School of Nursing*



In Fall of 2023, I stepped away from my roles as UUP Executive Committee (EC) representative for the Nursing Department and Academic Delegate for the Brockport Chapter due to my need to take a medical leave. I returned to a full-time position in the, now, School of Nursing (SON) in Fall of 2025, and this Spring, I returned a role as EC representative for the entire SON. In returning to this role, and upon receiving the February 2026, inaugural issue of the Brockport Banter newsletter, I began to reflect on the many things that have changed in the past two years, as well as the things that have remained the same.

I remembered when our chapter's newsletter was called "The Beacon", and how chapter leaders would encourage faculty to write something for The Beacon as a way to enhance our solidarity and fulfill some of our service expectations. Then, I remembered that it will soon be time for the Spring Delegate Assembly (DA); this year, it will be in Albany. That's when..., I remembered..., my colleague, my office neighbor, my study abroad companion, my BAWAFAS sister, and my friend..., Jennifer Smalls. You see (for those who don't know), during the DA gatherings, there is an "In Memoriam" moment when UUP honors deceased members from the various chapters by projecting their names on the "big screens" in the conference room. It hit me, Jen's name will be on those screens, this year.

The In Memoriam tributes during the DA are done as an act of respect for our collective allies across the state.

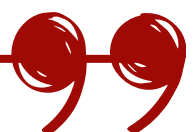
I write this reflection, however, as an act of relationship with a labor partner from my local chapter. I reflect on the fun and long talks we had, and I reflect on that fight we had and the silence between us that followed. I reflect on the work we completed, together, and I reflect on the work we started together that is now left undone. I reflect on the years she was my alternate for EC meetings, while I was her alternate for University Senate meetings. I reflect on her sickbed visit to me when I had to leave work, and I reflect on my sickbed visit to her when she had to leave....

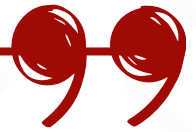
Jennifer Smalls was a loyal leader of, or passionate participant in, many things for Brockport and SUNY. Was UUP one of those things? I'm not the one to say. I don't recall her holding any officer positions, and I don't recall her writing articles for The Beacon. I don't know if she wore red on advocacy days, and I don't know if she voted in union elections or during contract negotiations. I don't know if she was involved in political action or organizing activities, and I don't know if she attended the chapter's monthly social events in The Union. What I do know is this, she filled out an application, paid dues through payroll deduction, and was a card-carrying member of UUP.

As the "union that makes SUNY work", we appreciate and value those who lead the work of the union the same as those who do nothing more than finance the work of the union, because, together, we are union strong!

In Memoriam, Jen Smalls, we love you and thank you for your service.

**"Solidarity Forever."**





# NEW HIRE LUNCH

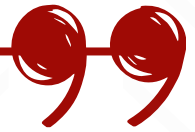
“We are UUP” is a truism. The union is only as strong as its collective members. That is why it is always a pleasure to welcome new folks to our chapter. This year our New Hire Lunch was held on March 26 at the Alumni House. This annual event is our opportunity to welcome new employees and encourage them to join our ranks, as well as to inform newer members about all that UUP has to offer. This year we were fortunate to enjoy lots of spring sunshine, tasty food and engaging conversations.



Thank you to everyone who was able to come out and contribute to the fun times. A special shoutout to our department representatives and our Chapter Leadership for being so supportive. Kudos to our Chapter Assistant Jen Osborne for terrific organization and hospitality. We appreciate the Alumni Association for the great accommodations for this event!

If you are a new member and could not make the event, please reach out to the chapter if you would like to meet-up for introductions. If you have new employees in your department, please let them know that “we are UUP” and ask if they have joined our ranks!

# MARCH U<sup>2</sup> SOCIAL



We had a blast connecting with UUP and CSEA members at our Union with your Unions social in March. Thank you to our colleagues in the Drake Memorial Library for making everyone feel welcomed.

If you've never attended a social, we hold them once a month in different locations on campus. Look out for emails, and follow us on Instagram @brockport\_uup to keep informed. Come enjoy coffee and snacks and conversation!

**Next up is the Commissary Building on May 6<sup>th</sup> 2026 from Noon-1:30pm!**





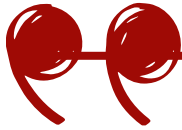
# MAY DAY & END OF SEMESTER GATHERING

# MAY DAY

INTERNATIONAL WORKERS' DAY  
RAISE THE STAKES CELEBRATION

Please join us May 1<sup>st</sup> from 4-6:30pm at the Alumni House for International Workers Day, and a Membership Gathering!





# AI REPORTING FORM

**Is AI technology being introduced, and threatening all or part of your work?**

- The State Legislator has added a policy that protects public sector work from AI encroachment. To ensure this is being upheld, you can report ways AI is threatening all or part of your work.



- To submit the AI Intake form:  
<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/UUPAI>

## Contact Information from Statewide & the Chapter at Brockport:



### UUP STATEWIDE

- 🌐 UUPINFO.ORG
- 📞 UUP BENEFITS: 800 887 3863
- 🌐 [HTTPS://UUPINFO.ORG/BENEFIT](https://uupinfo.org/benefit)
- 🏠 S/BTF/  
P.O. BOX 15143 ALBANY, NY  
12212-9954

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- 🏠 SUNY BROCKPORT, COOPER HALL  
SUITE B4G

### QUICK FACTS



- +UUP STATEWIDE HAS WORKSHOPS REGULARLY**
  - PSLF
  - RETIREMENT
  - BENEFITS
  - UUP 101 COURSES
  - [HTTPS://UUPINFO.ORG/C ALENDAR/](https://uupinfo.org/calendar/)

**+OUR CHAPTER HAS WORKSHOPS MONTHLY**



- +VOTE COPE**
  - THIS PROGRAM GIVES MEMBERS A CHANCE TO DONATE TO POLITICAL ACTIONS.
  - FOR MORE INFO VISIT [HTTPS://UUPINFO.ORG/V OTECOPE/](https://uupinfo.org/voteco/)