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**United University Professions**

May 29, 2020

Dr. Merryl H. Tisch, Chairman  
SUNY Board of Trustees  
H. Carl McCall SUNY Building  
353 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12246

Dr. Kristina M. Johnson, Chancellor  
State University of New York  
H. Carl McCall SUNY Building  
353 Broadway  
Albany, NY 12246

Dear Chairman Tisch and Chancellor Johnson,

For the past several months, the leadership of United University Professions (UUP) has been in discussions with our membership across 29 SUNY campuses, focusing on various aspects of the coronavirus crisis and its impacts on our members' lives and work. These conversations, and the uncertainty and anxiety reflected among our membership, has made it imperative for UUP to establish a position with respect to the Fall 2020 semester. As the largest higher education union in the United States our work on behalf of our members and higher education nationally has been focused on the pressing needs that have emerged in the context of this crisis.

Attached is a document that articulates the baseline requirements that UUP believes must constitute the core of any planned reopening of SUNY institutions for the Fall semester. The principles clearly establish that the health and safety of all members of campus communities must be the priority in all planning undertaken prior to the start of the semester. Though I am certainly aware of the financial imperatives that we face in New York and the entire nation, the pandemic will not be contained without aggressive steps to stop its spread –until a vaccine is developed -- whenever that might be. In these circumstances, caution is required, as lives are at stake.

Though the principles UUP has established are not radical or extreme in any way, the underlying requirement beyond the statements in the document is that UUP representatives at every campus should be a part of all planning discussions regarding the Fall semester. This has

not occurred in any systematic fashion. I consider this to be a mistake that could well cause serious repercussions for all members of the SUNY community. Our members have been putting their lives on the line at the SUNY hospitals since the start of the pandemic, and they will continue to do so out of their unmatched commitment to our communities. Our members will also begin to put their lives on the line in other SUNY settings soon. And the students we serve will be doing so as well.

The concerns and perspectives of UUP are relevant and must be a part of conversations so as to provide the safest, most productive setting for our students. Not to include us in these discussions will inevitably lead to problems and errors which may well endanger the lives of our members and our students. As president of UUP, I cannot emphasize enough that we are ready to be partners in bringing about the best situation possible for everyone. However, our partnership must be one that respects the concerns and real fears of our members and their families.

My obligation to the health and safety of our members is absolute and unwavering. It is why the leadership of UUP has used union funds to purchase Personal Protective Equipment for employees at the SUNY hospitals. It is why we have chosen to articulate our positions on the safety requirements we feel are necessary for the Fall semester. I do believe that a safe reopening can be achieved. However, it will be the greatest challenge the SUNY community has ever faced. Our best chance at succeeding is to work together to meet this challenge.

I look forward to working with the leadership of SUNY to insure a safe, strong and equitable future for our university system and our state.

Regards,



Frederick E. Kowal, Ph.D.  
President  
United University Professions  
AFT/NYSUT Local 2190

Enc.

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Assemblymember Carl E. Heastie, Speaker of the NYS Assembly  
Senator Toby Ann Stavisky, Senate Committee on Higher Education Chair  
Assemblymember Deborah J. Glick, Assembly Committee on Higher Education Chair  
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