



# UNITY

UUP Cobleskill Chapter Newsletter

August 2021



## UUP Members Only Student Debt Clinic

### Student Loan Stress?

Join us for the UUP Student Debt Clinic, a workshop exclusively for UUP members. This workshop will help you understand the Public Service Loan Forgiveness program and Income-driven Repayment plans.

#### Join us at an upcoming Student Debt Clinic:

- September 1, 2021 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM
- September 15, 2021 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM
- September 29, 2021 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM

Virtual events will be held every payday, but if you would like a chapter-specific clinic, contact your Chapter President.

**Sign up for the next virtual clinic at: [go.aft.org/StudentDebtClinicRSVP](https://go.aft.org/StudentDebtClinicRSVP)**

### CONTACT US

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## 2021 Dependent Care Advantage Account (DCAA) Updates

We have received word from the Governor's Office of Employee Relations that the State has again modified the NYS Dependent Care Advantage Account to expand DCAA benefits and eligibility as permitted under recent federal law changes included in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 and the American Rescue Act of 2021. These are modifications that UUP and other state employee unions pressed for in meetings with GOER representatives and we are pleased that the State has agreed to implement them. The new changes are as follows:

- The maximum annual contribution levels have been increased from \$2,500 to \$5,250 for single or married filing separately and from \$5,000 to \$10,500 for married filing jointly or head of household, and,
- Employees are now able to change their

DCAA election amount mid-year without a qualifying change in status event reason. This will allow employees to enroll, change, re-start, or terminate a DCAAccount mid-year throughout 2021. Changes will not be retroactive; they will be applied to the next available payroll processing date following the change in enrollment.

Employees who are currently enrolled in DCAA have already been notified of these changes directly by WageWorks/Health Equity. A notice is also posted on the GOER webpage [Flex Spending Account | Governor's Office of Employee Relations \(ny.gov\)](#). Employees who are interested may also email [fsa@goer.ny.gov](mailto:fsa@goer.ny.gov) or call WageWorks/Health Equity at [1-800-358-7202](tel:1-800-358-7202) with any questions on the DCAA or these new changes.

In solidarity,  
Fred

## American Families Plan Social Media Toolkit

Colleagues,

Our federal advocacy continues, and thanks to your efforts, we have sent over 400 letters to New York's Congressional Delegation to urge for the inclusion of key provisions in The American Families Plan, including support for all public higher education colleges and universities, creating access and opportunity for underrepresented and underserved communities, and fair labor provisions.

**We are ramping up our efforts with an updat-**

**ed [social media toolkit](#)** that includes updated language and graphics to tie into President Biden's Build Back Better campaign. The updated toolkit also includes Tweets that you can use to tag your congressional representatives directly urging them to support key funding. We have also included a full list of Twitter usernames for New York's Congressional Delegation at the end of the toolkit.

If you have not already, [please send a letter today](#), and utilize our social media toolkit to share this important message with others.

Thank you for your continued advocacy.  
In Solidarity,  
Fred



Help support NYSUT-endorsed candidates and campaign committees that are pro-public education and pro-labor.

Click onto the link below for more information:

<https://uupinfo.org/votecope/>

Or you may contact:

Dr. Salvador Rivera  
Vote-Cope  
Coordinator  
(518) 255-6238  
[rivas@cobleskill.edu](mailto:rivas@cobleskill.edu)

## Virtual Student Debt Clinics— September dates

Over 12 million people in the United States are struggling to make their monthly student loan payments, and millions more see economic and personal opportunities pass as they prioritize paying down their debt. Does this sound like you or someone you know?

Many of these people may qualify for free federal programs that can help reduce their monthly payments and eventually lead to student loan forgiveness, but these lifeline programs are significantly under-enrolled. In an effort to help our members get access to these programs, United University Professions and the American Federation of Teachers are proud to host a Student Debt Clinic which will provide information on how to enroll in Income-Driven Repayment

plans and Public Service Loan Forgiveness.

**We will be offering virtual Members Only Student Debt Clinics on the following dates:**

**Wednesday, September 1, 2021 from 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM via webinar.**

**Wednesday, September 15, 2021 from 5:00 PM – 6:30 PM via webinar.**

**Wednesday, September 29, 2021 from 11:30 AM – 1:00 PM via webinar.**

To attend one of the virtual **Members Only Student Debt Clinics**, you must pre-register here: <http://go.aft.org/StudentDebtClinicRSVP>.

From the “student debt clinic” drop down menu, please select the UUP clinic that you are interested in attending – they are labeled “UUP [Virtual Student Debt Clinic] [date] [time].” In the affiliate field, type in the full name of our local (United University Professions), and

it will autofill after a few keystrokes. Registration is first come, first serve, and we must cap attendance for a single clinic at 75 participants in order to ensure that we are able to provide maximum assistance to attendees. Registration will close 48 hours prior to the virtual clinic. Webinar login information will be provided prior to the clinic to all who register. [If you can’t make one of these virtual clinics, don’t worry – we’re planning on offering them every payday. If you want to help host a chapter-specific virtual clinic, please let us know!]

Managing your student loan debt is the first step in taking on the inequities which plague our system of higher education, and we look forward to seeing you at the virtual Student Debt Clinic and working together to find a collective solution to the problems of student debt and college affordability!



*News from the desk of  
Dr. Frederick E. Kowal, President*

Dear Colleagues,

As you might expect, between the vaccination discussions going on with SUNY and the incredible report issued by the Attorney General, it's been a crazy day. However, I wanted to get this information out to you -- as late as it may be -- so that you can share it with the members at your chapters.

After very hectic negotiations, I am pleased to report that yesterday we concluded our discussions with SUNY over the new SUNY telecommuting policy. The policy and the communication that SUNY System Administration has now sent to campuses about it is attached to this e-mail.

For the first time in SUNY's history, this policy now provides all SUNY campuses with authority to allow employees to enter into telecommuting arrangements, where reasonable to do so consistent with operational and programmatic needs, which may be approved independent

of any COVID-related justification for the telecommuting. The policy establishes system-wide uniform parameters for these telecommuting arrangements.

The policy authorizes hybrid telecommuting (up to a maximum of five days per pay period) where consistent with operational and programmatic needs, defines the work rules that will apply to work performed on telecommuting days, and the process for reviewing and approving individual requests for telecommuting. I encourage all of you to review this new policy, become familiar with its terms, and begin labor/management discussions with your campuses about where telecommuting will be operational feasible on your campus.

For the time being, the new policy remains a pilot program that will expire on December 31, 2021, unless extended. As you certainly must know, we will be pushing hard for its extension well before the end of the period, while also preparing with

our members, for the work in contract negotiations to get it into that most important document. The December 31 expiration will give both SUNY and UUP the opportunity to evaluate how telecommuting is working under the new policy and discuss whether the policy needs to be updated or amended in any way before being continued beyond the end of the calendar year.

Certainly, we wanted to get more into this pilot program. And while this policy does not include everything we might have hoped for in the telecommuting arena, it is an important and significant step forward on an issue that we have been attempting to address for years. It's a first step -- historic, certainly, but one that is just a first step.

Again, please feel free to distribute this information to your members.

In Solidarity,  
Fred

## Pre-Retirement Workshop: August 10th and 12th

We still have some open spots for this month's Pre-Retirement Workshop on Tuesday and Thursday August 10<sup>th</sup> and August 12<sup>th</sup> from 7-8 pm. We split the workshop over two days as there is much information to take in. Part 1 deals with Medicare and trading in sick days to pay for health insurance and Part 2 deals with the available benefits such as Vision and Dental care that staying a member of the union provides. The Chair of the Retiree Membership Committee Charlie McAteer usually attends this session and will give you information on maintaining membership when you retiree and why it is important. You may take these workshops as many times as you like as the information is rather complex especially with Medicare. Also you can take these two workshops in any order as they don't depend on each other, also next month we will be doing the workshops in the afternoon at

lunchtime. These Workshops have been very popular over the past year and we have had over 2,000 members attend and I encourage every member to attend, even new members so you understand the great benefits we have negotiated for you over the past 45+ years. Walter Apple does a great job at running these workshops and is able to answer individual members questions. We **do not** record these workshops because of privacy concerns and because the information does change and we want to make sure you have the most current instructions. Let me know if you have any questions.

To register for the workshop use the below link:  
<https://forms.gle/VR9YZqADpjTbpMx78>

In Solidarity,

**Tom Hoey**

State Wide Membership Development Officer  
United University Professions

**SHARE YOUR  
THOUGHTS  
ABOUT  
YOUR NEXT  
CONTRACT !**



## JOIN THE CAPITAL REGION NEGOTIATIONS TOWN HALL

**SEPT. 23, 2021**

**1:30 pm**

**REGISTER AT:  
[bit.ly/UUPSept23](https://bit.ly/UUPSept23)**

**This is a members-only virtual event.  
More information about negotiations  
events on your campus will be coming soon.**

Join UUP President Fred Kowal, Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin, and Counsel to the President Elizabeth Hough for a discussion on the upcoming UUP/New York State contract negotiations process. Learn how you can participate in the negotiations process and share issues and concerns you would like addressed in the next round of contract negotiations.

## **UUP Executive Board Members**

Bill Tusang, President

(518) 255-5205

Christina Trees, VP Academics

(518) 255-5119

Wendi Richards, VP Professionals

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Candy Hofmann, Secretary

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Emma Paden, Treasurer

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(518) 255-5767

Thomas Hickey, Grievance Chair

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Mitch Tomaszewicz, Membership Chair

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TBA, Affirmative Action Officer

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Cliff DaVis, Officer for Retirees

Joseph McCarthy, Professional Delegate

Michelle Couture, Labor Relations Specialist

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Bulletin Newsletter Editor, Patricia Lepore Moody

Chapter Assistant, Patricia Lepore Moody

## **UUP Chapter Office**

001 Old Gym

Monday & Tuesday

8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Thursday

8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.