



# THE CORTLAND CAUSE

Volume 34, Issue 4  
January 2009

*Special points of interest:*

- Sabbatical discussion
- Advocacy Call

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**PROFESSIONALS —  
SAVE THE DATE!**

**ANNUAL  
PROFESSIONALS  
RECOGNITION  
LUNCHEON  
TUESDAY, MAY 19  
11:30-1:00  
CALEION ROOM  
COREY UNION**

Watch for details later  
this spring!

### President's Column:

## SABBATICALS

—Larry Ashley



A number of my colleagues and I have radically different takes on the policy recently developed by our campus administration over sabbaticals. I heard a great deal of grumbling and anger expressed over the sabbatical policy, and as it is my position that this is totally misguided, I'd like to take the occasion of this column to address the issue. As always, people who wish to respond to what I say here are encouraged to submit your own comments for the next newsletter issue.

**Some History** — Cortland's own institutional culture has been as generous with the granting of sabbaticals as possible. Thus it is rare, though it has occurred several times, for people to apply for sabbaticals and be turned down. Naturally, in such an environment, people have casually assumed that sabbaticals are a right and that individuals are contractually entitled to sabbaticals. This is, of course, not true as I shall demonstrate below.

During the economic contractions that have occurred in the past, the administration has proposed to limit sabbaticals to year-long sabbaticals (from which the college profits in economic terms) and to end half-year sabbaticals because the latter represent a significant cost to the college. Exploratory committees and deans' councils have in the past succeeded — on this campus — in arguing

against that move. We've thus had half-year sabbaticals even in tough economic times and have cut in other areas instead. I can't emphasize enough the importance of the following fact: on other campuses, half-year sabbaticals have long ago disappeared. On other campuses, sabbaticals of any description are much rarer than at Cortland. Thus the nearly-automatic half-year sabbatical that characterizes Cortland's campus is not characteristic of many of our sister institutions.

Now to our own recent history. The budget hammer having fallen, Mark Prus reopened the issue of the cost of sabbaticals and in fairly quick order decided that the College could not, in the present circumstances, afford the cost of half-year sabbaticals, much as previous administrations had questioned this expense. Unlike the past, this possibility was not presented as an option for response from the chairs councils. Instead, it was rather quickly moved to the level of decided policy, and the chairs were informed of the new policy.

This is probably quite understandable given the hectic nature of New York state's budgetary free fall. When it was announced as policy, I had recently reviewed the contract language on sabbaticals in order to respond to a local discussion which began from the premise that

If I were still in the sabbatical hunt... I'd raid my resources to underwrite my sabbatical. I can't understand the resentment toward UUP and the administration for working this out

sabbaticals were an entitlement, that the administration could not do this, and that UUP should step forward and prevent it. Here is the contract language which I shared with people at that time: *(bold sections reflect my emphasis)*

#### §23.6 Sabbatical Leave

- a. Policy. Sabbatical leaves for professional development may be made available to academic employees who meet the requirements set forth below. The objective of such leave is to increase an employee's value to the University and thereby improve and enrich its program. **Such leave shall not be regarded as a reward for service nor as a vacation or rest period occurring automatically at stated intervals.**
- b. Purpose. Sabbatical leaves may be granted for planned travel, study, formal education research, writing or other experience of professional value....
- d. Terms and Conditions. **Sabbatical leaves may be granted for periods of one year at rates not to exceed one-half basic annual salary or for periods of one-half year at rates not to exceed full basic annual salary. Academic employees on sabbatical leave may, with the prior approval of the College President, accept fellowships, grants-in-aid, or earned income to assist in accomplishing the purposes of their leaves.** In such cases, the College President may adjust the sabbatical leave salaries to reflect such income, either prior to or during the periods of such leaves, provided, however, that in no case shall sabbatical leave salary be reduced if total earnings are less than full salary.

This is extraordinarily important language and I pointed out to Mark Prus that the college could, consistent with the contractual provisions, allow individuals to pony up an amount of money that allows the college to recoup the teaching power of the applicant's absence and still take a sabbatical. That was, I thought, a no-risk harmless suggestion, as the applicant would be no worse off than the original policy with half-year sabbaticals simply no longer available.

At this point here were the elements which seemed (and still seem) to me to be salient. What we were faced with at the point of the cancellation policy were two important facts:

- (1) If half-year sabbaticals were cancelled, the average expected number of sabbaticals an individual would receive from the college would be fewer than before this economic crisis arose. If the economic crisis persists for five or six years, as economists are predicting, that would eliminate one sabbatical rotation from almost all Cortland faculty.

- (2) As I pointed out to Provost Prus, when and if the economic scene eased, there would be no way the college could sanction sabbaticals for all the people who had not had one in the last six years...that would be almost the entire faculty. The impact of suspending half-year sabbaticals would be to create a "bulge" of eligible applicants which would be with us until that cohort of faculty had retired or left the college..

What to do? Frankly, if I were still in the sabbatical hunt (I am not, as this is my last year of full-time teaching) I would do one of the following:

- (1) I'd raid my resources to underwrite my sabbatical, and the earlier I was in my career the more sense this would make. DSI and promotion are difficult enough at the best of times, and if I would receive one more sabbatical than I would have if I waited until the economic situation eased, I could think of the costs to me as amortized over two sabbaticals rather than one.
- (2) If I could not financially swing this on my own, I could try to arrange a grant or other source of money for the time of the sabbatical and thus achieve the result I needed...a sabbatical.

**More history** — Prus then went to work to ascertain how much money would have to be ponied up by an individual to make sabbaticals cost-free for the college. He calculated that 15% of one's annual salary was the magic figure. I must admit that this was more than I originally estimated, but a quick review of the figures shows that this is not far off. Loads of people were shocked. What, they said, how dare the college dun me for what I am entitled to?!! And so much money!

Well, you know by now that there is no entitlement. And a year-long sabbatical costs you 50% rather than 30% (2x the 15% for a one-semester sabbatical). That is an indication of how much you are sacrificing to take a one-year sabbatical, and demonstrates that the proposed half-year costs are a comparative bargain, even if a loss compared to the more generous policy of fully-funded half-year sabbaticals.

For the life of me, I can't understand the resentment directed toward UUP and the administration for working this out. No member of the faculty is worse off than before the announced **No Half-year Sabbaticals** policy. Now you have a choice. Decline the choice if you are willing to wait until the

economy recovers and eat the consequence that you will, in all likelihood, have one fewer sabbatical during your time at Cortland. The administration is not trying to make money off of this offer. Mark Prus agreed, in his open Provost's meeting, to report any "profit" from the proposed mechanism and use it in a way the faculty determines. In all likelihood, the offer will still lose a bit of money for the college as those who make higher salaries decline the offer, feeling that it is unfair for them to be charged more money than those who make smaller salaries are charged.

In perfect "no good deed goes unpunished" fashion, the administration and UUP tried to find some less draconian way to meet our budget crisis, only to be met with suspicion and resentment. There are a few corners to consider if you decide to opt for the Provost's offer, particularly retirement and tax consequences. By all means consult UUP and Mary Saracene before you sign on the dotted line. But you do have a choice and it is not Hobson's.

While so many of your fellow workers around the state are losing their jobs, and when funding the sabbatical program means that we can fund so many fewer classes from adjunct teaching, it seems unreasonable to me that we should believe that tenured faculty are not to be impacted at all, particularly when we are dealing with an arrangement which is almost unique to this college and not contractually guaranteed. UUP will continue to try to foil assaults on tenure and health benefits and across-the-board raises. UUP will also lobby strongly for the restoration of fully-funded half-year sabbaticals when the economy recovers. In the meantime, this area is your domain to work through.

That's the way I see it. What do you think? ■



**WIEGARD APPOINTED PART-TIME CONCERNS REPRESENTATIVE**

Anne Wiegard (English) has accepted appointment as Part-Time Concerns Representative to the chapter Executive Board, serving out the unexpired term of Liz Owens (Communication Studies) through the end of May. Special thanks to Liz for her work as Part-Time Concerns Representative over the past four years, and to Anne for agreeing to serve in this important role for this semester. As Part-Time Concerns Representative, Anne will serve as campus Part-Time Concerns Committee Chair and will be responsible for convening meetings of the Part-Time Labor-Management Committee. ■

**Editor's Corner:**



**...AND COUNTERPOINT**

—**Karla Alves**  
English

Larry Ashley's piece on sabbaticals at SUNY Cortland prompts my own. I was one of the faculty who were shocked at the amount of money we must pay in order to have a single-semester sabbatical. When I first heard the plan, from Provost Prus at Chairs Council, I believed it was 15% to be taken from the semester of the sabbatical, since the letter granting the sabbatical tells us that a single-semester sabbatical leave will be granted "at 85 percent of basic annual salary." (I had erroneously presumed this number referred to the annual salary as calculated within the sabbatical semester only.) When I learned later, from Dean Mattingly, that the reduction will in fact be 15% taken out during the sabbatical semester *and* 15% taken out during the semester that the faculty member is on campus teaching, it was then that I was shocked. And I realized that there is no way I could come into work every day during the fall semester in which my salary was lowered by the first 15%. If all of the campus community were asked to work for 15% less, in order to help ensure vulnerable jobs and programs, however, I would be there in an instant.

I have looked into sabbaticals across the country, and I cannot confirm that there is no longer the same number of single-semester sabbaticals, which Ashley's piece attests. In California, a system similar to SUNY, I recently heard from a professor at UC Davis that there are, so far, no changes of any sort to sabbaticals. A few months ago, at a SUNY Cortland Chairs Council, we learned there had been no changes to sabbatical leaves at other SUNY campuses. That may have changed since then, which would be reason for Ashley's statement.

I am concerned that anyone would think that this faculty believes sabbatical requests are *pro forma*. I know the English faculty who requested sabbaticals did not believe they would receive permission unless such permission was clearly warranted. As English Chair, I heard from them frequently regarding this.

I am more concerned that this latest round of controversy seems to show that sabbaticals are not considered actual academic work by many on campus. We argue in terms of the *Handbook* language, which tells us, in case we did not already know it, that sabbaticals are not "a reward for service or a vacation or rest period." During the last few months, I have heard this line recited so often that I need to wonder who it is who actually believes that the sabbatical is anything but a way to produce the scholarship that this school takes so seriously. ■

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“...one of  
the largest  
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Catholic  
Charities  
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Thanks to  
UUP,  
CSEA, ASC,  
and  
students for  
your  
generosity



**Giving Back  
to the Community:**

**HOLIDAY FOOD DRIVE A  
GREAT SUCCESS!**

—Jaelyn S. Pittsley  
Chair, Food & Gift Drive

In this time of economic uncertainty, SUNY Cortland has proven that supporting the community in a time of need is indeed no hardship. During the holiday months of 2008, UUP members, in association with ASC employees, CSEA members, and students participated in two successful holiday food drives and donated non-perishable food items and new, unwrapped gifts to needy members of the Cortland County Community. Catholic Charities of Cortland County, an organization that helps needy families (of any religious affiliation) in the area through a plethora of vital services, distributed our contributions to families in need.

The holiday food drive was completed in two large installments, one that took place in November 2008 before the Thanksgiving holiday, and one that took place in December 2008 before the Hanukkah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa holidays. Both installments were hugely successful. In November 2008, thanks to SUNY Cortland's generous help, Catholic Charities was able to administer emergency aid to 307 needy families; in December, Catholic Charities was able to administer emergency aid to 306 families.

Mary Jordan, Emergency Assistance Coordinator for Catholic Charities, estimates that UUP donated nearly three thousand dollars in food and gifts in 2008 through this drive. On behalf of the campus community, UUP was able to donate in excess of seven hundred non-perishable food items and over one hundred gifts to Catholic Charities, resulting in what Mary has called “one of the largest single donations Catholic Charities has received during her tenure.” She passes her heartfelt thanks and appreciation on to all members, on behalf of both Catholic Charities and the families we enabled her to assist.

Congratulations and THANKS to UUP, CSEA, ASC and students for your generosity, and for proving that even in the darkest of times, we can band together and put the needs of others above our own. ■



**DOWN ON CHURCH STREET  
— ADVOCACY,  
CORTLAND-STYLE**

—David Ritchie  
Library/UUP Outreach Committee

We had one and a half days' notice before our half hour appointment with Senator Seward at his office in Cortland on January 9<sup>th</sup>. Just enough time to contact several Cortland academic and professional colleagues who had identified themselves as willing to advocate locally for Cortland and SUNY. After a flurry of emails and phone calls, we were a strong five. We also knew that a couple of business owners had said that they would be willing to visit local legislators along with UUPers — an added benefit from our ongoing “This Business Supports SUNY” campaign around Cortland and surrounding communities. We were fortunate that John Wetherell of King's Den hair salon said he could join us for our appointment.

Getting Ready – A call to UUP in Albany got us some detailed analysis of the governor's budget plus the current “talking points” – i.e., UUP's desired actions with facts and arguments to support those requests. One of our prospective team had to drop out, but the rest of us decided to gather at the UUP Office before the meeting to clarify what we would say, and what roles we would take. John Wetherell joined us at the office. We decided who would be lead spokesperson, who would “record” the senator's responses to our points, and who would “restore” the conversation if it should stray too far from our list of issues. Craig asked if he could bring up a point not on the agenda, and we agreed he could do that. Each of us were encouraged to add comments or stories which would help make the UUP points. Now it was time to carpool down to 45 Church Street, the senator's satellite office in Cortland.

Ticklish Positions – This year, as in most years, UUP's positions include requests without specifying where the resources should come from, although UUP always develops a list of possible revenue sources and available savings which it will share with any politician. For next year's budget, Governor Paterson has taken the unusual step of indicating that the \$40 million he proposed to add back to the SUNY budget (after decimating it by \$148 million this current year!) should come from a small part of a tuition increase. UUP favors restoring MORE than that \$40 million, as well as several other funding measures, from wherever the resources can be gotten. Also, UUP has always

favored rational tuition policies, and has remarked to politicians that it wouldn't look good to students and parents if their tuition dollars don't go toward benefiting their education, but into the state's general fund. But UUP doesn't take a position on whether the funds to restore to SUNY should come from a tuition increase, so we won't either.

Sitting Down with Jim – After a short wait, an affable Senator Seward welcomed us into his office. After introductions and without our prompting, he commented on the hardship caused by this year's mid-year cuts to SUNY – mentioning that programs and courses that have been already planned can't be delivered, with deleterious effects on students. We took that opening and laid out the requests for restorations – for academic institutions and the SUNY hospitals, which are being cut both by a reduction in operational funding and by the state not funding their mandatory cost increases. Seward listened. We mentioned the governor's proposal – which UUP favors – that a fund be created to buffer SUNY institutions from immediate cuts to programs by allowing them to tap monies specifically designated to continue programs for a year or two – presumably either until the students who are in those programs have finished or until future-year budget restorations would allow the programs to continue on their own. That proposal got the senator's interest, but, frustratingly, we didn't do such a hot job of explaining it! So we fell back on the time-honored “We'll get back to you with more details”, and moved on. [We did get back to him, in a letter sent a few days afterward, and also by alerting UUP in Albany that Senator Seward would like more information on that particular issue.]

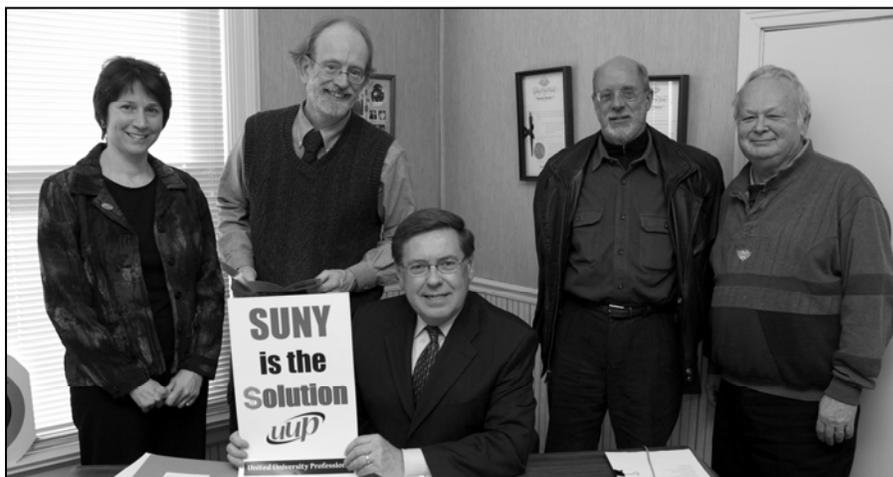
Moving On and Winding Up – We asked the sena-

tor his thoughts on the proposed cuts – all of which UUP opposes – to the EOP/EOC programs (he sees the cuts being restored), on the governor's requested give-backs from contracts with state employees (he didn't see that happening, but suggested that the workforce might be reduced in other ways, perhaps with an early retirement plan), and on the further cutting of the newly established SUNY Office for Diversity (he was non-committal). We talked about the “SUNY is the Solution” campaign with local businesses, and he was impressed with the “SUNY Cortland Matters - Economic Impact Summary” brochure that was put together from Kathy Burke's study for the college. John Wetherell's daughter is a Cortland graduate and he told us that she's now a successful athletic trainer. John's shop has seen a drop in business with each closing of the various employers who have disappeared from Cortland over the years, but hasn't yet seen much effect from the \$4 million cut to SUNY Cortland. We got a laugh from Senator Seward when we asked him if he needed to stop over to Wetherell's shop for a trim. Finally, we gathered for a few photographs that Dawn VanHall took, so you don't see her in any of them, unfortunately.

After Words – Craig Little, Dawn Van Hall, Jamie Dangler, and I felt that we'd conveyed the message – SUNY and SUNY Cortland need more funding restorations than the governor's budget allows – and gave him some reasons to promote and vote for those measures. Jim Seward has been a good friend of SUNY Cortland and SUNY, but most legislators are courteous and willing to listen. Now for the promo: please let the UUP chapter office know if YOU can help advocate for SUNY Cortland and SUNY with us! We need your presence and your voice (*see next page*). ■

**SUNY and  
Cortland  
need more  
funding  
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from the  
Governor's  
budget**

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Above: SUNY Cortland Delegation meets with Senator Seward on January 9th. Left to right: Jamie Dangler, David Ritchie, Senator Seward, Craig Little, and John Wetherell (King's Den)

—Photo by Dawn Van Hall, Library

Want to help? Fax your legislators and join your colleagues for UUP Advocacy days in Albany.

If more step up, fewer will fall down!

## UUP's 2009 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

### Protect SUNY's Core Mission

- Ensure access to public higher education for all New Yorkers
- Maintain SUNY's ability to offer quality education and student services
- Keep SUNY hospitals public and preserve vital services at the health science centers
- Protect SUNY's Educational Opportunity Centers and Educational Opportunity Programs
- Codify the Office for Diversity and Educational Equity in state Education Law
- Increase the availability of full-time tenure track faculty and protect part-time and contingent faculty
- Protect the public trust by preserving legislative oversight of SUNY

### Promote Social Justice

- Protect access to SUNY for employees and students with disabilities
- Reform the current regressive NYS income tax structure
- Enact the New York Fair Pay Act
- Support sovereign immunity legislation to restore public employee rights
- Support paid family medical leave for all New Yorkers
- Support health care for all New Yorkers

### Strengthen Workers' Rights

- Provide unemployment insurance for part-time SUNY employees
- Protect health insurance benefits for SUNY retirees
- Maintain the New York State Theatre Institute's independence and restore employees to 12-month status

Want to help?

Fax your legislators about these important issues!

For information and fax instructions go to

<http://www.uupinfo.org/stop.html>



## ADVOCACY TRIPS TO ALBANY: WE NEED YOU!

*The job you save may be your own!*

**SUNY Cortland has been hit hard – effectively cut \$4 million this year as part of the \$148 million slash to the current SUNY budget.**

Help bring UUP's message to our legislators!

UUP's major points include the following:

- Some or all of the \$148 million mid-year cut to SUNY should be restored
- Campus operating budgets need \$40 million more (as recommended by Gov. Paterson)
- The Governor's proposed elimination of our 2009 3% raise is a violation of our contract
- The Governor's wage and benefit proposals (3% raise, 5-day pay lag, changes in retiree health insurance and Medicare premiums) are too much for state employees to absorb
- Reductions to EOP must be restored
- The Governor's proposed "flexibility legislation" will eliminate legislative oversight of SUNY and contains no employee protections
- SUNY hospitals cannot withstand a \$25 million reduction. The \$25 million should be restored and an additional \$40 million is needed to compensate for 2009-10 increases in mandatory costs
- ...And much more

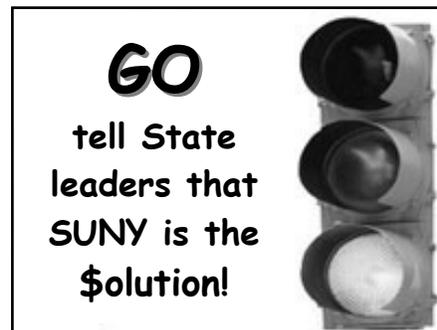
### UUP HAS ALTERNATIVES TO OFFER – FOR SAVING MONEY AND GENERATING NEW REVENUES

**Can you join your UUP colleagues on any of the following Advocacy Days in Albany?  
Tuesday, Feb. 10 — Tuesday, Feb. 24**

UUP will provide transportation, lunch, supportive colleagues, and all the information you need to effectively advocate for New York State and its employees.

### GETTING OUR MESSAGE TO LEGISLATORS IN FEBRUARY IS CRITICAL — THE NYS BUDGET IS DUE MARCH 1

PLEASE contact UUP to sign up now:  
[uup@cortland.edu](mailto:uup@cortland.edu) — 753-5991





## A FEW OF MY FAVORITE THINGS

—Karla Alwes  
English

Playwright Lillian Hellman once said, famously: “I will not cut my conscience to fit this year’s fashions.” Beyond a great line, I have been thinking about the intent of her sartorial gibe lately. That intent is the reason I did not respond to the survey from the Provost’s Office asking us to identify the “three most essential elements of the [College] mission statement.”

As an English language specialist, I cannot let go of the fact that “essential” cannot be qualified by any word, including the word “most.” Something cannot be a little bit essential. Nor can it be “more essential” than another thing. Yet, that is what we are being asked to do — make something “more essential” than another in the mission statement.

Although the elements in the mission statement are now considered to be competing claims, with the request to eliminate the “less essential” of them, I cannot help but see all of them as essential to a liberal arts college. So, why are we being asked to eliminate any of them?

The only rationale that comes to mind is the current economic climate that dictates we eliminate parts of the mission statement that we once believed were essential to the growth of the College in order to eliminate those non-essentials within the campus and thereby save money.

I looked over the mission statement elements, trying to locate something that had been essential

when the mission statement was created in 1998, but has since then lost its essentiality in 2009.

Which one might that be?

- “Excellence in teaching, scholarship, research and service to the community?”
- “A comprehensive curriculum, building on our traditional strengths in teacher education and physical education and enhancing our high-quality programs in the arts, humanities and sciences?”
- “A desire to learn, to think critically, an awareness of the excitement of discovery, an appreciation of diversity, and a respect for physical and emotional well-being?”
- “Oral and written skills, an aesthetic sensibility, assessing the impact of technology on individuals and society?”
- Fostering “independent learners living enriched lives?”
- Helping students “become good citizens with a strong social conscience and an appreciation of the environment and diverse intellectual and cultural heritages?”

Or, maybe we should no longer find essential the attempt to “instill within students a sense of responsibility, an eagerness to make a difference in their community and an awareness of the important positive role they must play in an increasingly global society.” To me, and I could be wrong, it seems like 1998 all over again. Nothing has gone out of fashion since then, as far as I can see.

So, I cannot choose three of my favorite things. But I would appreciate, as I am sure the campus community would appreciate, the Provost’s Office and Strategic Planning Steering Committee letting us know precisely which three elements received the “most essential” award of 2009. I am sure it will be close. ■

I did not  
respond to  
the survey  
from the  
Provost’s  
Office

I cannot  
help but see  
all of [the  
elements of  
the mission  
statement]  
as essential  
to a liberal  
arts college.

### It’s YOUR Newsletter!

We welcome articles and letters submitted by members of the SUNY-Cortland Community. Please share your thoughts with us—we want to hear from you!

Opinions expressed in *The Cortland Cause* are those of the individuals and are neither endorsed by nor represent the views of UUP.

Send contributions to the Editor,  
Karla Alwes (English, 112-B Old Main,  
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AND to the Chapter Office,  
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Deadline for the next issue — February 20

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