



The Cortland Cause

State of the Union 2026

by Justin Neretich, Cortland Chapter President



It has been a productive and energizing start to the work we've established throughout the Fall semester. Thank you all for your active participation, questions, concerns, and responding to calls for volunteers for a variety of tasks, committee work, and opportunities for political action. I deeply respect the many chapter officers who are serving on our statewide negotiations and political coordination during a time of accelerated negotiations with the Governor and Office of Employee Relations of NYS. I strongly encourage all of us to pay special attention to our UUP members only portal to get the most up-to-date information regarding negotiations. I'll now share some more about this Spring's chapter events, and information about how you can get involved!

Our Open House events in Moffett 001 continue to outgrow the office! We had record attendance at our first event this month, and we will continue to utilize the space as a homebase for all members. Find an opportunity to stop in and explore resources, swag, and snacks!

We have two significant Union Matters events being held in March. The first includes a discussion on advocacy relating to artificial intelligence (AI) in higher education. There are many evolving trends regarding the use of AI inside and outside of the classroom, in daily work for all professional faculty, and the encroachment of these tools in our organizations. Learn more about what UUP is doing related to AI and share suggestions for delegates to take to the next assembly in April. We look forward to robust dialogue on this topic!

The second Union Matters will review Grievances at SUNY Cortland, lessons we have learned as well as victories we have gained. Learn more about contractual protections, what to do when a concern is not covered in the collective bargaining agreement, and ways in which the local chapter and labor relations specialist can help you.

In other exciting news, all our local committees are seeking new membership. Please stop into the UUP Cortland Chapter office to inquire about events, communications, and any of our additional committees! Almost all our committees are chaired by a chapter executive board member, and the work that these committees engage in is appropriately balanced as many other service opportunities are across campus. Learn more today!



Finally, please mark your calendars for our SUNY Cortland Works celebration Friday, May 8th, and our Joint Service Awards Recognition event on Wednesday, May 20th. Both events highlight the incredible contributions of our labor on our campus and in our community. It has always been a strength of our campus for all of us to be together in shared spaces and catch up with those we don't often see in our day-to-day. Stay in touch and remember that any of our UUP chapter officers are simply emailing, phone call, or office visit away. We are here to help, to listen to frustrations, and strategies action plans to address concerns. We're also here to congratulate, to celebrate, and to honor one another. Cheers to another Spring semester, and I look forward to seeing you all at an event soon!

I'm a Member Ready to Bargain for a FAIR Contract!

by Jaclyn S. Pittsley, Cortland Chapter Grievance Officer and Negotiations Team



As an officer in the union, I hear a lot of members asking me “What’s UUP doing for me?” This might be the first question on everyone’s mind when he or she or they thinks of the union. After all, UUP exists to negotiate collectively for better terms and conditions of employment. Everyone’s first question is perfectly reasonable.

But it is a mistake to believe UUP can negotiate effectively for you if you stand aside.

UUP began negotiations with the State of New York on February 4. A forceful way to take an active role is to support your Negotiations Team. It includes two members from our own chapter – Jen Drake and Jackie Pittsley – as well as members from across the state representing all chapter types. You can meet them on uupinfo.org through the Members Only portal <https://uupunion.org/myuup/MembersOnly/>

You can find the conceptual proposals on the UUP website. The Negotiations Team has listened to what our members want, and we will fight for fair and equitable structural gains. If you haven't yet had a chance to tell UUP what you think should be in the next contract, there is still an opportunity to email the chief negotiator, Bret Benjamin, at contract@uupmail.org. He reads and responds to every email.

Speaking up and taking part is your privilege and responsibility as a member of UUP, no matter what your position. All Academic and Professional, full-time and part-time, continuing and permanent and contingent employees are equally important to one another and to the purposes of our union, and all of us must be prepared to act.

Please get a poster from the UUP office. Put one on your office door or in your window and stay engaged as we work toward a new Agreement. Let folks know you are a member ready to bargain and keep a close watch of your email for upcoming contract action events.

Remember, too, that your Executive Board has open meetings every month. Attend one and find out on what we are working. If you don't have time in your schedule to attend a meeting, visit the office in Moffett 0001. Or you can contact me, your Grievance Officer. I am always happy to talk to any member of UUP with an issue and to meet with anyone who wants to help but doesn't quite know how. To arrange a time to meet, please just email me at pittsleyj@cortland.edu

Is SUNY Cortland really all in for DEISJ?

by Kristine Newhall, Vice President for Academics

As I write this, we are in the midst of Black History Month. The programming for a month's worth of events is intense: taking proposals, organizing speakers, ordering food, dealing with contracts, creating calendars, booking rooms, plus all the marketing. This work is largely done by professional staff (some of whom are UUP members) as part of the professional obligation and CSEA members who provide necessary administrative support.



Other month-long programming endeavors (Women's History and Native American History Months for example) are organized by academic laborers as part of their position as coordinators of minors. The coordinators of Native American Studies; Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies; Latino, Latin American and Caribbean Studies; and Asian/Middle Eastern Studies all do this work as part of their service obligations. Though each specific coordinator position has different requirements, they are all responsible for (at minimum) creating and/or updating curriculum, doing outreach, ensuring courses get coverage, and advising students. Additionally, some will do programming. There are no course releases for this work. There is no stipend. There is no expectation that this work is the only service work these faculty will perform. But running and maintaining an academic minor is significant labor, and it is under-compensated. *

I could spend the rest of my space here discussing other undercompensated aspects of UUP members' positions—both academic and professional, but I point out this particular inequity because our institution states that it has a commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion, and social justice. These minors are a signal to current and potential students that SUNY Cortland values not just the experiences of persons with minoritized identities but the education of all its students about minoritized identities, histories, and experiences. Failing to adequately compensate the

labor required to maintain—let alone grow! —these programs suggests that this aspect of DEISJ work is not as valued.

The inadequate compensation has consequences and those are becoming clearer. The position of coordinator of Women's, Sexuality, and Gender Studies was empty for over a year with the work being done by the coordinator of the Center for Gender and Intercultural Studies, a position that no longer receives either a stipend or course release. Thus, the work of coordinating **all** these programs is purely service. According to the website, Latino, Latin American and Caribbean Studies currently has no coordinator.

As someone with a PhD in Women's Studies, I thought about volunteering for WGSS coordinator. But I knew it would be all-consuming. I would not be able to do the other service work I find valuable. My research would certainly falter. I am not the only one who had this thought process. Other faculty—especially junior faculty—who want to participate and who have the expertise to grow these minors, also considered leading them but knew the cost would be too great. It should also be noted that most of the time these positions are filled by those who are historically underrepresented in academia and who already face greater inequities.

When I asked about the lack of compensation for these positions at Provost McClellan's fall meeting on the state of academic affairs, the response was that this is service work and, it was added, that many of these minors have shrunk. There are fewer students in them. Under the new compensation plan for extra service work (i.e., chairing) (which these minors were NEVER a part of anyway) the formula is that more students equals greater compensation. So, it seems this justification is being applied here though, again, there was never compensation for minor coordinators the way there has historically been for department chairs and graduate coordinators.

Numbers are problematically standing in for institutional value. Unless they are not and the value *is* in the numbers for administration, making inclusion purely performative. Dr. Sara Ahmed has expertly written and studied this. [I recommend both *On Being Included: Racism and Diversity in Institutional Life* and *Complaint!*]

It is not surprising that students in some of these minors are dwindling. Coordinators, when they exist, do not have the time to do outreach, to grow their programs. This is a self-fulfilling prophecy, or catastrophe for those who value this work. When something is valuable to an institution, it puts money behind it. Many of these programs are being left to die on the vine.

* I am not speaking for or on behalf of any current or former member in these positions. This is a critical perspective on the structure and enactment of this labor.

RESULTS OF CORTLAND CHAPTER COMMUNICATION QUESTIONNAIRE



My fellow Cortland Chapter siblings,

Thank you for taking the time to fill out the Fall 2025-chapter communication questionnaire. It is greatly appreciated! We had 81 responses which is close to a 12% response rate.

After reviewing the information, we would like to let you know the results:

Of the 81 people who responded, 78 saw or heard of UUP sponsored events during the fall semester. Most received their information by email with posters and word of mouth neck to neck as the second most popular method of receiving information. Please note, the chapter has taken action by removing duplicate email addresses of our members to ease the number of emails received. However, a reminder that some emails may need to be sent to a non.edu, while others can be sent to work emails. This may appear duplicated, but email is dependent on your member communication preferences in your members only portal.

Approximately half of those who responded attended a UUP sponsored event this fall! When members did not attend, it was typically due to their schedule or because they had no interest in the topic of discussion. UUP Cortland continues to diversify the day and time offering of events and meetings. We are also working diligently to be strategic in the topics of discussion we offer at our events!

For responses to our comment section, we separated them out into different categories with a response to the comments in bold. Many of the comments had to do with Union support and advocacy. Members wanted reassurance that UUP would support and represent them. The primary reason UUP exists is to support and represent their members. This is our priority as a chapter.

Contract negotiations and what to negotiate for came next in the commentary. There were many suggestions as to what to negotiate for such as pay raises, holidays, benefits and Discretionary Salary Increase (DSI). Last semester a poll went out asking for UUP members what was important to them and what they would like concerning negotiations. Information gathered from that poll directly related to the conceptual proposals the Negotiations Team put forward to NYS, which can be viewed on the members only portal.

Communication came in next as a big topic. Most members wanted an update on the negotiations. Please continue to engage with your members only portal to get the most up-to-date

information on negotiations. Every event that we host for the Spring will include as many updates as possible on this subject!

Workload is another issue that came up in the comment section. The UUP Cortland Vice Presidents of Academics and Professionals have been working on data collection on workload. This is complemented by survey work from UUP Statewide for all members regarding workload creep. The chapter plans on presenting information on this subject as this work is completed by committee members.

The last large topic of discussion in the comment section was UUP member benefits. People wanted to know where to obtain the information and what benefits there were. There are many ways to obtain benefits information. You can go to the UUP Statewide website and view the “know your benefits” webinars that you can sign up for. You can also come into the UUP office and pick up some brochures with the necessary information. Lastly, if you have a specific benefits question, you can call the benefits line at 1-800-887-3863.

I hope that you find this information helpful, the Cortland chapter is constantly growing and evolving to meet the needs of our membership. Together, we all contribute to the success of our local union activity, so I encourage you to keep asking questions, looking for ways to get involved, and attending the events we host!

Lesson I've Learned From Teresa: Making Accessibility A Part of My Teaching Routine

by Megan Frisbie



Years ago, as I welcomed students on the first day of class, I heard a clanging in the hallway. Within a few minutes, a blind woman entered the room with her white cane, apologized for being late, and casually took a seat.

“Teresa” was never late again. She had memorized the steps it took her to find the classroom, and for the rest of the semester, she arrived on time and participated enthusiastically in every session.

During one of our many conferences, Teresa shared that when she lost her vision, her husband left her alone with two helpless toddlers she could not see. Eventually, she connected with a social worker who helped her complete a program for the blind, where she learned to use a computer for the very first time.

When Teresa joined my class at the start of her college journey, I quickly learned that I had to reformat all my handouts to make them compatible with her computer’s reader. This was quite a bit

of work for just one student, but when she demonstrated how her reader worked, my heart sank thinking about how many obstacles she had to overcome. In addition to changing fonts and adding alt text to images, I started rearranging handouts, moving the most important information to the top of the page so that she wouldn't have to listen to her computer read a list of items her classmates could quickly scan. For her part, Teresa worked hard and excelled in the course, surpassing most of her classmates.

Although I haven't taught a blind student since, I have continued formatting my documents the way I did for Teresa. This has greatly benefited students with hearing impairments, dyslexia, and other limitations. On days when my eyes are tired or I'm so overwhelmed with work that it is challenging to focus, I even find myself using text readers, which helps me manage a cognitive load that gets heavier with each passing semester.

Making course materials accessible can be time-consuming and, at times, I have wondered how much the changes benefit students without accommodation requirements. However, over the years, I've found ways to make my courses more accessible without sacrificing quality for other students:

Use Hidden Titles in Presentations

As much as I want to appeal to a diverse student body, when I started adding titles to slideshows, I grew frustrated because many of my slides do not require them. Adding titles seemed to create unnecessary visual distractions.

But then I learned about hidden titles. To be accessible, each slide in a presentation needs to be labeled with a descriptive title to allow students to easily scroll through the content. However, those titles do not have to be visible. They can be moved above the slides and remain out of sight during demonstrations. As long as they are identified as titles in the presentation software, the slideshow will be accessible without distracting the class with visible clutter.

Create Templates and Use Consistent Formats

I've also developed a few habits that make my workflow more seamless.

After making a few slideshows accessible, it finally occurred to me that I could turn one well-designed presentation into a template. I saved one slide for each style I regularly use, and now when I create a new slideshow, I just open the template, save the file under a new name, and work in my new material.

The same can be done for Word documents, which can be converted into accessible PDF files. Once one document is accessible, create a template with a few pre-formatted headings that you

can modify. When you need to create a new handout, you can simply replace the text rather than building headings from scratch.

I haven't found a way to create my own templates within Brightspace, but I do know that I save a lot of decision fatigue by using a consistent format for announcements, web pages, and quizzes, which also helps students who benefit from a predictable structure.

Final Thoughts

Students like Teresa may not always be in our classes, but across campus, many have disabilities that are not as obvious. With a few small changes, we can make our course material accessible without burdening ourselves with unnecessary labor. And occasionally, those same changes can even make our own workflow a little smoother.

Forgot Something? Like Your Beneficiary?

by Dave Ritchie

HOW'S YOUR RETIREMENT ACCOUNT?

Among all the tax documents, did you **ALSO** get the end-of-year annual statement that shows how your retirement account(s) did for 2025? No matter whether it's a TIAA, ERS, TRS, Corebridge, Fidelity, VOYA, or other retirement account, here's one action that's important to check:

Have you designated one or more beneficiaries for the account?



Why? Because without a beneficiary, when you die → most likely your retirement funds will end up in your estate → controlled by your will → your will ~may~ require probate → more time before anyone entitled by your will can access those funds. Die with no will? → add more time before anyone can access the funds.

But with a beneficiary → the company releases your retirement funds relatively quickly and directly to your desired beneficiary!

TO CHECK – phone or access your retirement company to verify if you have a beneficiary on file. If not, find out how to add one or more – usually it's just filling out a simple form and faxing or mailing it. If yes, who are they, and are they still the one(s) you want? TIP: Often you can designate shared or primary/secondary contingent beneficiaries, who receive the funds if the primary one(s) pre-decease you. If a partner or spouse is your only beneficiary and similar in age, contingent or shared beneficiaries might be a wise addition.

LIFE INSURANCE POLICY – Do you have a policy? You automatically DO if you’re a member of UUP or an enrolled UUP Retiree! But UUP Benefits staff say that unreachable beneficiaries are a problem.

Do you recall designating a beneficiary for that UUP life insurance policy?

TO CHECK – phone UUP Benefits (800-UUP-FUND) to verify if you have a beneficiary on file. Staff will mail you that info. Are they still the one(s) you want? Need a new form?

Active UUP member: <https://uupinfo.org/benefits/forms/btfbeneficiaryform.pdf>

Retiree UUP member:

<https://uupinfo.org/retiree/pdf/RetireeGroupLifeInsBenCard.pdf>

You can have shared (but not contingent) beneficiaries for the UUP policy, so put all names/addresses/contact numbers on the card. Fill it out and send it to the address on the card.

Last note: **keep a record of who your beneficiaries are** – primary, shared, & contingent – for each retirement fund & life insurance policy. Be well.

IT’S YOUR NEWSLETTER!

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.

Please note: The Cortland Cause will generally not print anonymous submissions.

“We reserve the right to edit submissions for grammar, space limitations, accuracy, etc., and to request changes to submissions, whether prior to or after publication.”

Send contributions to the Chapter Office, cortland@uupmail.org
and to the editor, Jaclyn Pittsley, pittsleyj@cortland.edu

In Memoriam

Ute Gomez (Disability Resources)



Title 2 compliance: notes from the DEI officer of UUP Cortland

by Christa Chatfield, DEI Officer



I want to make two main points here about the Title 2 compliance work I have seen around campus- first, I want to acknowledge the efforts of professional and academic faculty to meet Title 2 compliance in our online courses and materials. This is a huge lift and there has been so much support and effort from instructional design and my fellow academic faculty. Secondly, I want to recognize that a lot of questions remain around the Title 2 compliance on campus and in our digital environment- here are a few I have heard recently: What are the consequences of non-compliance? What is the cut off (by percentage, I suppose) for Brightspace course material compliance that is required at an individual level? How has our workload been expanded for the conversion of our materials? How has the added workload of compliance and material accessibility been distributed across different ranks and schools? What timeline is there to meet screen reader compliance in Degree works and other campus systems (which, as I understand, is not at all screen-reader compliant)?

I am hoping our conversations can expand to meet the goal of true accessibility and not just box checking and screen reader compliance (a narrow definition of accessibility). I am deeply invested in accessibility yet wonder what Title 2 compliance changes in other aspects of our courses are ahead- and who will be tasked with those changes as well. We as an institution must not just be checking boxes and should be striving for more. For example- could live captioning be possible in the classroom? I have not recently explored how well Webex or Teams live-captions function but recall during online pandemic teaching that those captions are particularly terrible if you have any different speech patterns, scientific lingo, or foreign accent. Screen reader accessibility is just one part of the full accessibility picture, and I do hope other technologies can come into play to make all our digital and analog materials more available to people of all abilities.

A Pivotal Point for American Democracy: A Joint Statement by UUP, PSC/CUNY, Rutgers AAUPAFT and Rutgers Adjunct Faculty Union

United University Professions (UUP), representing 42,000 faculty and professional staff at the State University of New York's state-operated campuses; the Professional Staff Congress-CUNY (PSC/CUNY), representing 30,000 members at the City University of New York; and Rutgers AAUP-AFT and Rutgers Adjunct Faculty Union, representing 9,000 Rutgers University academic workers, today issued a call for an end to the militarization of American cities and the brutal treatment of immigrants and those peacefully demonstrating against actions by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and associated federal agencies. What follows is a joint statement

by UUP President Frederick E. Kowal, PSC/CUNY President James Davis, Rutgers AAUP-AFT President Rebecca Givan and RAFU President Heather Pierce: “As unions representing those engaged in the education and training of future citizens of the world and as active participants in a democracy, we are committed to the central principles of the U.S. Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. In the U.S., state power flows from the people and the purpose of government is to secure the ‘unalienable rights’ with which all persons are endowed. No political authority can legitimately claim for itself powers that go beyond those established in the Constitution. “Federal troops have been unleashed against tens of thousands of U.S. residents, with particular brutality from ICE. The result has been the detainment and deportation of immigrants, the overwhelming majority of whom have committed no crime but have, in many cases, been arrested while pursuing federally established processes to attain legal status in this country. These attacks are attacks on us all. “The use of masks to hide agents’ identities, the violent tactics employed against unarmed citizens, the seizing of clearly innocent children and the blanket immunity granted to agents by the federal executive have established an out-of-control, heavily armed domestic army answerable only to the president. Such actions are antithetical to the principles upon which our nation was founded and are actively eroding the gains that generations of Americans have struggled to realize throughout our history. “Most disturbing has been the use of deadly force by federal law enforcement, chiefly by ICE and CBP, including the recent murders of Renee Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis. Victims include those killed while in custody at internment camps as well as those peacefully protesting or simply witnessing ICE agents conducting their ‘operations.’ The power of the state to kill is not one that can or should ever be used indiscriminately. Yet that is what is happening in our country right now. “In this hour of deep division in our nation, with a president operating without any checks on his actions, we call on our representatives in Congress to investigate the actions of ICE including those policy actions implemented by U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security Kristi Noem and incidents that resulted in the deaths of those in custody or on the streets of Minneapolis, Los Angeles, Chicago and other American cities. Additionally, we call on our congressional representatives to immediately cease all funding for ICE operations and suspend ICE activities across the country. Finally, it is time for Congress to pass humane immigration reform legislation. “But it will take more than Congressional action to prevent further assaults on our democracy and our communities by the Trump administration. UUP, PSC/CUNY and the Rutgers academic unions strongly support an escalating, comprehensive and coordinated series of national actions by unions, faith organizations, businesses and communities to oppose the militarization of our country. It is time to redouble our efforts to organize sustained, widespread, non-violent protests, targeted economic shutdowns and non-cooperation—as has been done so courageously in Minnesota. “Without broad, escalating resistance, the Trump regime will continue to accelerate state terror – including invoking the Insurrection Act – and stoke unbridled fervor to undermine the Constitution and our freedoms. Failing to act collectively in this moment would be an abdication of our responsibility and would certainly intensify the violence perpetrated by the federal government against the people of our nation. More people will surely die. “Unions have always been at the forefront of the struggle against authoritarian regimes. It is time for organized

labor to take the necessary steps toward escalating widespread resistance against this one. PSC/CUNY, UUP and Rutgers academic unions have an obligation to our members, our campus workplaces, the students we teach and the communities where we live and work to speak out, to organize and to take a stand. “As those who do the work of higher education, we are committed to freedom of thought, the pursuit of truth, inquiry and creativity in all its forms and the discovery of scientific knowledge. Our work serves the purposes of our democracy uniquely well. We stand in defense of this work, the aspirations of our students, and the democracy we hold dear. We hope to be joined by all who are committed to the principles of democracy. Like never before, our efforts, our commitment, and our courage are urgently needed.”



Cortland Holiday Food Drive 2025

by Christa Chatfield

I feel like the holiday season really sneaks up on me every year- and this year was no exception! I am so grateful that Lisa Clark (our chapter assistant) was out ahead of my making the flyers and getting boxes set up for the annual UUP food drive. As in past years, a team of volunteers from across campus put boxes in their workspace, and folks across campus made the time and investment to fill those boxes. As in past years we had an array of items like soup, heat-and-eat foods, and sweet treats like brownie mix, extending out to household goods and paper products that are always so welcome at the food distribution. The items were distributed at the Cortland Free Library on November 25th and December 9th during The Really Free Market (RFM), run by Cortland County Mutual Aid (CCMA). The RFM is a twice a month event that has been run

continuously, indoors and outdoors since March of 2020. Pictured here are myself (Christa Chatfield, on the left) and UUP member Katie Sylvestri (Of the Biological Sciences and literacy departments, respectively) at the December event with about one-third of the donations (the other two-thirds were distributed in November!). Katie and I are also members of the organizing committee for CCMA, a small but mighty team of local activists. Of course, the whole community contributes to the work of CCMA and that includes my UUP union community. Thank you all who donated to this event or any food drive around your communities, as food needs will continue to increase due to looming cutbacks in federal SNAP services. More information about Cortland County Mutual Aid can be found at cortlandmutualaid.org.

Higher Education and Dance: What To Know About Proposed New U.S. Department of Education Earnings Rules

by Nancy Kane



On Friday, January 9, 2026, an advisory committee in the U.S. Department of Education made a decision that could seriously impact the ability of students to earn a dance degree, and for colleges and universities to offer dance degree programs. The first repercussions will be felt starting in July of 2026. Katherine Knott of Inside Higher Ed has been following the development of accountability regulations for years, and much of the following is based on her reporting.

There are two key regulations to be aware of. The first is the gainful employment rule. Under this rule, programs at for-profit institutions as well as nondegree programs in any sector would have to show that graduates can afford their yearly debt payments and that they are making more than an adult in their state who didn't go to college. Failing either of those tests in two consecutive years could lead to a program losing access to federal financial aid. (Knott, September 27, 2023, Inside Higher Ed) So if you are a dance major, and you graduate but cannot pay your student loans because you are dancing professionally but do not earn enough to make payments, you are not considered gainfully employed. If you make less than a high school graduate in your state who is between 25 and 34 years old, you are also not "gainfully employed."

Nationwide, a high school graduate earns an average of \$49,192 (Bureau of Labor Statistics). Personally, I have been employed as a professional dancer, choreographer, and professor for more than 35 years, and I have never earned that much.

Calculating earnings for dancers and choreographers is not easy, because many jobs are not year-round, full-time gigs. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, while union dancers (AGMA) make between \$500-600/week, and corps de ballet dancers can make over \$1,000 per week, most make only a few hundred a week dancing (the lowest 10% earning around \$14/hr, or even lower). Rehearsals may or may not be paid.

Unlike other college graduates, they must continue to take classes throughout their professional career, so unless they are full-time company members with daily classes, they need to devote significant part of their salary to continuing education if they hope to remain in condition to be employable in an extremely competitive field. Many will need to go into forbearance on their student loans, through no fault of their own.

Furthermore, if graduates from a dance program are not shown to be gainfully employed for two consecutive years, that dance program may lose eligibility for Title IV federal funding. That means if you are teaching or working as staff for a dance program, your job is at risk if your graduates do not pass the gainful employment test.

The second part of the regulations is the Do No Harm rule. Under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, dance programs will have to prove that their graduates are gainfully employed in order for the students to be eligible for financial aid, including Pell Grants. For graduate students, they need to demonstrate that the students are earning more than students with a bachelor's degree earn. Obviously, that includes comparing dance students with students in STEM and business, where earnings are likely to be significantly higher than those in the arts.

How are colleges and universities likely to deal with programs that don't meet the new federal standards? While no one knows, in the current higher education environment, I would guess that such programs could be headed for significant cuts or even elimination. Six percent of programs nationwide are expected to fail the new regulations' metric, affecting hundreds of thousands of students (Knott, Jan. 9, 2026, Inside Higher Ed).

These regulations were made with the good intention to protect students (and especially veterans) from being lured into programs at for-profit colleges and certificate programs, but their impact and reach have been widened to potentially affect all of higher education. Transparency and metrics could easily be used to target programs that tend to offer lower "returns on investment" such as public policy and social services, library science, education, liberal arts, psychology, English, history, social sciences, and fine and performing arts. The new accountability metric, set to take effect in July, could eventually cut failing programs off from all federal student aid funds—an enhanced penalty that appeared key to the committee reaching consensus Friday. Before the compromise, programs that fail the earnings test would only have lost access to federal student loans. Under the proposal, college programs will have to show that their graduates earn more than a working adult with only a high school diploma. (Knott, Jan. 9, 2026, Inside Higher Ed) Per the latest decision by the committee, the regulations do not distinguish among different types of colleges or institutions.

Assessing a dance graduate on the basis of their earnings does not take into account what they bring to the world. It does not consider myriad other types of education they might have done, what the market offers in their state, and how their degree may lead them to another profession with

transferable skills. It reduces them to their monetary worth alone, which is a seriously dehumanizing and deplorable perspective.

Taking a broader view of these regulations, beyond the potential for targeting dance students and programs, the regulations deny the fundamental purpose of education, which is ultimately freedom. Learning how to learn, how to live in a free society, how to express your thoughts, and how to work with others to create better tomorrows: these are intangible benefits of education that cannot be reduced to simplistic, quantitative comparisons of earnings.

There will be a period of public comment in which people can voice their opposition to this measure, if desired. The portal to do so is not yet available but keep an eye on ed.gov and set alerts for news on this issue.

UUP is proud to announce the

UNITED UNIVERSITY PROFESSIONS JO SCHAFFER SECOND CHANCE/RETURNING STUDENT SCHOLARSHIP

The Jo Schaffer Second Chance/Returning Student Scholarship will be awarded to an undergraduate student who is currently enrolled and has successfully completed a minimum of 6 semester hours at one of the SUNY state-operated campuses, after having initially enrolled and attended any accredited trade school, college, university or military service, left that institution for at least a year, and has resumed their higher education at a SUNY state-operated institution. This Second Chance Scholarship is given to honor Jo Schaffer, a long-time union member and leader, by the Retired Membership Governing Committee (RMGC) of United University Professions (UUP). The deadline for receiving complete applications is June 1st.

Requirement Specifics:

1. Applicants must be currently registered as an undergraduate student at a state-operated campus of the State University of New York (SUNY) after having previously attended any accredited trade school, college, university or military service. This scholarship is meant to assist students who have returned to pursue their higher education after a hiatus (for any reason) of at least a year. Part-time students are especially encouraged to apply.
2. The award provides a one-time award of \$3,000 which the recipient may use for any educational expenses, not limited to tuition and fees.
3. At the time of application, applicants must have completed at least 6 semester hours credit with a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 at the SUNY institution where they have resumed their higher education.



4. Official transcripts for the applicant are required to be submitted by email directly from the registrar's office from each accredited trade school and/or higher education institution attended, or proof of military service.
 5. Three (3) letters of recommendation are required to be submitted by email directly from the letter writers.
 6. Also required as part of the Application Form is a Personal Statement of 500 words that tells the Scholarship Committee; Why I've taken a second chance at a college education. This statement should include goals, future plans, and needs.
 7. Process: The RMGC Scholarship Committee will collaborate with the UUP Scholarship Selection Committee to review all complete applications received by the deadline of June 1st. The RMGC Scholarship Committee will select the award recipient. The RMGC will have electronic access to all applications for future scholarship evaluation and review of the 2nd Chance Scholarship application & process.
 8. Notification: Recipients, as well as non-recipient applicants, will be notified by mail by the end of July. The RMGC Scholarship Committee's decision will be final. All submitted materials remain the property of UUP and will not be returned. Click on the link for instructions and application form Jo Schaffer Second Chance/Returning Student Scholarship
-



Do you know what Supplemental coverage is available to you?

Supplemental insurance refers to additional coverage that can be purchased to help pay for services and out-of-pocket expenses that primary insurance does not cover. Supplemental insurance policies are designed to fill the gaps left by traditional insurance plans. These policies can cover a wide range of services and expenses, offering additional support when primary insurance falls short.

Supplemental insurance plays a crucial role in providing comprehensive financial protection and peace of mind. Whether it is through accident insurance, critical illness insurance, or any other type of supplemental policy, having this additional coverage can make a significant difference in managing healthcare costs and maintaining financial stability.

Members have access to the below supplemental plans at discounted rates and through the convenience of payroll deductions.

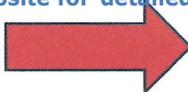
AFLAC offers a variety of supplemental insurance plans designed to meet diverse needs. These plans include:

- Accident Insurance
- Cancer Insurance
- Hospital Indemnity Insurance
- Short Term Disability Insurance



semler_miller@us.aflac.com

Visit the website for detailed information.



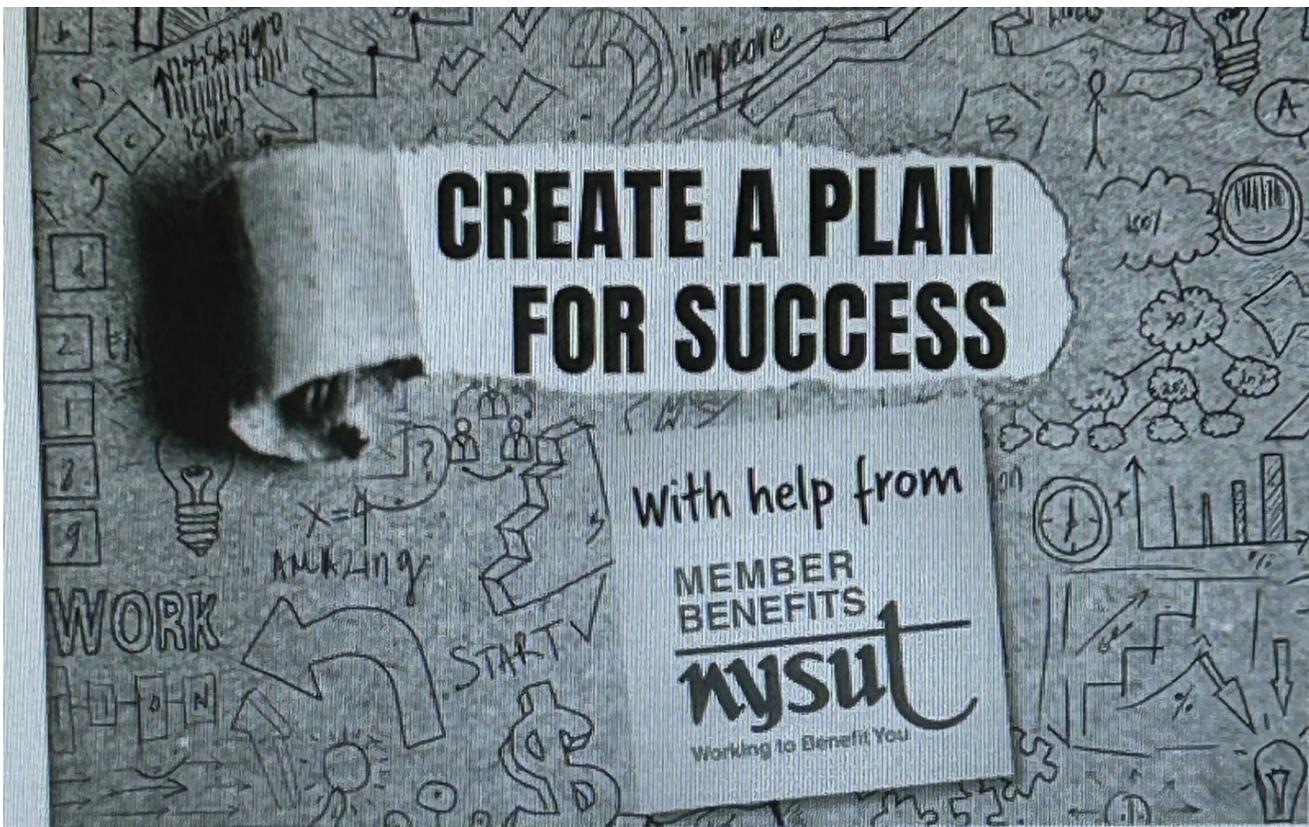
Colonial Life Insurance offers distinct types of supplemental insurance plans:

- ▶ Critical Illness
- ▶ Whole Life and Term Life



Visit the website for more information.





Another new year is upon us and with it comes the opportunity to take stock of where we are in our lives. NYSUT Member Benefits endorses numerous programs that can help with creating a plan to prepare for whatever the future brings.

CREATE YOUR PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR TODAY.

Learn more by scanning the QR code, visiting mb-nysut.org, investinyourfuture, or calling 800-626-8101.



Have you addressed any legal or financial concerns?

With our Legal Service Plan, you gain access to a national network of attorneys at a reduced cost; two, free hour-long consultations; and a legal security package containing a simple will, health care proxy, living will, and power of attorney. Meanwhile, our Financial Counseling Program provides access to certified financial planners that can offer unbiased financial counseling services.

Improving your financial acumen is a key part of building a successful retirement plan. Powered by Kiplinger's Personal Finance, our Financial Learning Center is a free online resource that offers monthly articles about dealing with debt, insurance, retirement, finances, and more.

Do you have an emergency fund?

Synchrony Bank offers several options to help grow your savings over time, including high-yield savings accounts,

money market accounts, and certificates of deposit. NYSUT members receive special rates above those available to the general public.

Is a new home or refinancing of your current home on your list?

NYSUT members can save up to \$2,700 on lender fees and closing costs with the UnionDirect Mortgage Discount Program from Mid-Island Mortgage. For more than 60 years, Mid-Island Mortgage has been helping union members with realizing the joy of homeownership.

Are you looking for assistance with credit and/or debt management?

Our partnership with Cambridge Credit Counseling can assist members with understanding debt consolidation and student loan repayment options. Members can receive a free, no-obligation consultation with a Cambridge certified counselor.

UUP CORTLAND CHAPTER — EXECUTIVE BOARD 2025-2027

4-Digit phone numbers begin with 607-753-xxxx

OFFICERS**PRESIDENT:** Justin Neretich (Community Engagement and Academic Coord.) 5772 jneretich@uupmail.org**VICE PRESIDENT for ACADEMICS:** Kristine Newhall (Professional Studies) 4357 kristine.newhall@cortland.edu**VICE PRESIDENT for PROFESSIONALS:** Jen Drake (The Learning Ctr.) 2361 drakej@cortland.edu**SECRETARY:** Joe Westbrook (Facilities Planning, Design and Construction) 5517 joe.westbrook@cortland.edu**TREASURER:** Kevin Pristash (Director of Corey Union) 2326 kevin.pristash@cortland.edu**OFFICER FOR CONTINGENTS:** Mario Hernandez (English) 4889 bloodmario@gmail.com**OFFICER FOR RETIREES:** David Ritchie (Library, Emeritus) 607-273-4453 david.ritchie0@gmail.com**GRIEVANCE OFFICER:** Jaelyn Pittsley (English) 4837 jaelyn.pittsley@cortland.edu**DEI COMMITTEE CHAIR:** Christa Chatfield (Biological Sciences) 2235 christa.chatfield@cortland.edu**MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT OFFICER:** Mickey Gibbons (Career Services) 4715michelina.gibbons@cortland.edu**Labor Relations Specialist:** Chris Sielaff (NYSUT) Chris.Sielaff@nysut.org**Newsletter Editor:** Jaelyn Pittsley (English) 4837 jaelyn.pittsley@cortland.edu**Health & Safety Chair:** James Fitzgerald james.fitzgerald@cortland.edu**Health & Safety UUP Designee:** Dan Harms (Library) 4042 daniel.harms@cortland.edu**Parking Committee Designee:** Justin Neretich (Community Engagement and Academic Coord.) 5772jneretich@uupmail.org**Political Action Officer:** Bekkie Bryan (Physical education) 4561 rebecca.bryan@cortland.edu**Chapter Assistant:** Lisa Clark (UUP Chapter Office) 5991 uup@cortland.edu**ACADEMIC DELEGATES**Christa Chatfield (Biological Sciences) 2235 christa.chatfield@cortland.eduRebecca Bryan (Physical Education) 4561 rebecca.bryan@cortland.eduKristine Newhall (Professional Studies) 4357 kristine.newhall@cortland.eduJaelyn Pittsley (English) 4837 jaelyn.pittsley@cortland.eduDaniel Harms (Library) 4042 daniel.harms@cortland.eduDavid Ritchie (Library, Emeritus) 607-273-4453 david.ritchie0@gmail.comTadayuki Suzuki (Literacy) 2460 tadayuki.suzuki@cortland.eduMegan Frisbie (English) XXXX megan.frisbie@cortland.eduMario Hernandez (English) 4889 mario.hernandez@cortland.eduDavid Kreh (Library, Emeritus) david.kreh@cortland.eduRobert Hagggar (Economics) rob.hagggar@cortland.edu**PROFESSIONAL DELEGATES**Kevin Pristash 2326 (Director for Corey Union) kevin.pristash@cortland.eduJoe Westbrook (Facilities Planning, Design and Construction) 5517 joe.westbrook@cortland.eduMichael Pitaro (Student Conduct Office) 4725 michael.pitaro@cortland.eduMichelina Gibbons (Career Services) 4715 michelina.gibbons@cortland.eduJennifer Drake (The Learning Center) 2361 jennifer.drake@cortland.edu**AT-LARGE ACADEMIC**Nancy Kane (Sport Management and Physical Education (914-420-2545) nancy.kane@cortland.edu**AT-LARGE PROFESSIONAL**Kristen Dushko (Registrar's Office) 4702 kristen.dushko@cortland.eduMichael Pitaro (Student Conduct Office) 4725 michael.pitaro@cortland.edu



Are You a Member?

Thomas P. DiNapoli New York State Comptroller		J. DOE		Total Gross		Paid Taxable Gross	
Advice # 123456789		Pay Start Date 11/10/2019		Current 3456.78		1234.56	
Advice Date 11/10/2018		Pay End Date 11/24/2019		YTD 45,878.90		34,567.89	
Department ID 1234		Pay Rate 56,789.10		Net Pay 1,234.56			
EARNINGS							
	Hrs./Days	Current	Earnings	Hrs./Days	YTD	Earnings	
Regular Pay Salary Employee		3456.78	5678.90	45	878.90	878.90	
Location Pay		5678.90					
TAX DATA							
				Federal	State	NYC	Yonkers
Married Status				4	1		
Allowances				2	0		
SSN Area							
TAXES							
		Current	YTD				
Fed Withholding		3,456.78	12,345.67				
Medicare		5,678.90	4,567.89				
Social Security		3,456.78	1,234.56				
NY Withholding		5,678.90	4,567.89				
DEDUCTIONS							
		Current	YTD				
Regular Before Tax Health		456.78	1,234.56				
Supplemental Ret. Annuity Prog.		878.90	5,678.90				
Thrift Retirement Before Tax		56.78	1,234.56				
				34.56		456.78	

CHECK PAY STUB TO MAKE SURE

To be a member of the union, your paycheck **must** say "UUP Member" under "Deductions."

Please contact your chapter officers for a membership card or go to <https://bit.ly/1RYG65y>

The Benefits of Being UNION!

Membership in your union goes well beyond fair and equitable wages, and quality, affordable health insurance. It's a statement: There is strength in numbers, and our collective voice will be heard.

Together, our voice is heard when bargaining with New York state and SUNY. Our voice strengthens our leverage in contract talks and enforcement, and in addressing problems in SUNY labor-management meetings.

Our voice is heard as the main advocate for SUNY campus and hospital funding, and for other legislative issues of importance to you—issues that help us better meet the needs of our students and our patients.

- Being a member of UUP also means you maintain:
- Representation in interrogations or disciplinary actions, or in legal actions brought on behalf of members;
 - Representation if Title IX harassment complaints are filed against you (for student or co-worker complaints);
 - Access to benefits and services provided by UUP Member Services Trust, and discount programs and services provided by UUP's state and national affiliates: NYSUT, AFT and NEA;
 - Access to UUP's vision, dental, and life insurance plans in retirement; and
 - The right to vote on the union contract, and to provide input in chapter and statewide union elections.

UUP Cortland Chapter

001 Moffett Center
PO Box 2000
Cortland, NY 13045

PHONE:
(607) 753-5991

E-MAIL:
uup@cortland.edu

We're on the Web!

See us at:

<http://uuphost.org/cortland/>

uup is us.

Follow Us At:

facebook.com/uupinfo
@UUPinfo

YouTube.com/uupcomm
@UUPinfo

SAVE THE DATES

- Open House – March 6
- Members Forum & Executive Board Meeting – March 9
- Union Matters Luncheon – Advocacy and AI – March 24
- Open House – March 30
- Union Matters Luncheon – Grievance Workshop – March 31

- SUNY Cortland Works – May 8
- Service Recognition Luncheon – May 20