Volume 61, Issue 1 FALL 2026

The Cortland Cause

Cortland Chapter State of the Union
Justin Neretich



As our students returned in late summer, and the hustle and bustle of another Fall term picked up, one central location on our campus remained silent: Our Childcare Center. SUNY Cortland is no stranger to crisis, of incidents and tragedies that have befallen us. But nothing quite like this has ever shaken us to the core, been such a public stain to our image, and so against our very mission as a place of public good. Many of you have come to speak with me about the pain, anger, and frustration the center incident has caused you and your families. The ramifications run deep, and as we all continue to wait for the next update and what the impacts will be on our campus operations, I can tell you that UUP has continued to request more communications and transparency in a process already dictated by external narratives, hearsay, and rumor mongering. This is one current event too close to home for many of us, not including how national and global events are also taking a toll on our overall morale, and many of you have expressed worry and anxiety about the future of public education in this country.

In introduction to what you'll read in my additional submission on the importance of elections, I continue to implore that everyone show courage, integrity, and character in the face of hatred, bullying, and downright demeaning behavior and actions perpetrated by those that would seek to tear apart our communities, our families, and our democracy. For me, there is hope everywhere I turn of these valuable traits. I see it in the incredible work of all of you, my colleagues, from research to activism on the front lines of volunteer work, charity, and protesting the worst crimes of authoritarian overreach. I see it in our students who continue to amaze me with their creativity, resilience, and love of life that can be infectious on the worst of days. I find it in my neighbors and friends, who now more than ever check in, break bread, and share gifts and kindness unconditionally, because it is just the right thing to do regardless of our beliefs.

So, for readers feeling lost, I invite you to come to your Union Office in Moffett Center, if for no other reason than to grab a snack and take a moment to breathe. To perhaps, just sit in tranquil silence with a labor sibling or two; with a neighbor. We need each other now more than ever, and I plan to forever hold space for connectivity, for joy, and for linking arms against the forces that would wish to do us harm. Do not let fear conquer our incredible collective spirit. Solidarity in hope is the resistance that they cannot stand against. We are greater than the worst of us, we only need to prove it in our actions and at the voting polls this November.

Solidarity Forever,
Justin

Supportive and Timely Resolutions for Ongoing Issues: A Gentle Request



As faculty on our campus continue to navigate our way through challenging enrollment, short staff, construction (delays), and new and concerning proposed changes to SUNY Cortland Handbook and our very way of life, it may be difficult for us to feel confident and safe. This could be because we are not feeling openly consulted about these changes, or protected when an issue arises, or indeed engaged in developing resolutions.

Attendance Policy Notifications

Faculty must feel safe to conduct their classes in the manner they see fit as higher education professionals, and that includes imposing policies already in the Handbook regarding attendance and class participation. The frequent notifications from Management about absences put faculty in a difficult position. They make it appear that faculty who have strict policies are setting up barriers. In fact, the Handbook says that the instructor has the authority to determine whether an absence will be excused and whether a student will be able to make up missed work for credit. When faculty are reluctant to excuse repeated absences or missed assignments, they are not turning against students but encouraging them to understand themselves as students, committed to the shared work of the university.

As mutual trust is essential for learning, the University might support the relationship between faculty and students by instituting a Safe Ride program with one of the many campus-owned vehicles and encouraging volunteers on campus to complete van training already available. This would enable students without cars to visit the doctor when ill, ensuring their own health and providing them an opportunity to obtain documentation for an absence they would like to be excused, without burdening Student Health Services or the Associate Deans' Offices.

Proposed Changes for Faculty on Campus

UUP is pleased that three recent proposals – to increase office hours, to require that standing committees meet only in person, and that all faculty be on campus at least four days a week, including the week before classes begin – are on hold to allow for wider and deeper discussion. Here are some thoughts:

Six Office Hours

So far, this proposal is not supported by data. For a start, it would be good to survey students, asking what would work best for them in terms of scheduling and of modality. The results should be sorted by department and widely discussed, between students and faculty in classrooms and among faculty across campus before a proposal is made.

In-Person Meetings for Standing Committees

I have served on several committees that were well-attended and that got work done through a hybrid structure. Why is it necessary to impose a contrary policy? Should faculty whose schedule is complicated by a family crisis or a health issue be prevented from serving on a committee when the chair and the other members are able to accommodate them?

Four Days a Week on Campus, Including the Week Before Classes

This proposal would be interesting if Management had any data to present or a well-developed rationale. What work could faculty do more effectively in their offices on campus than they do in their offices at home? How would the new requirement be enforced, and how would it affect faculty on contingent appointments? In default of any clear benefits, there are only campus-wide problems to consider: for instance, parking.

Ongoing Conversations

The opportunity to go from a 3-3 to a 3-4 courseload for full-time faculty on continuing appointment in lieu of continued scholarship is also a concern. Some faculty might well appreciate the realignment, but its presentation has felt like a threat. When faculty, either academic or professional, are not consulted about proposals by the University that can significantly change their work lives and therefore affect other areas of their lives, it feels somehow not collegial.

Collegiality is at the heart of the University. To take a related issue, it is important for new faculty to be supported and new supervisors to have extensive training on our retention processes, which are purposely not proscriptive (or restrictive) so that we can recruit and retain the best faculty to educate our students.

Solidarity through Adversity

Please know that UUP is working hard with Management on all these issues. I hope the power of solidarity within our union brings some comfort and community spirit into your daily lives as we soldier on.

Respectfully,

Jaclyn Pittsley
Editor

Labor Day Rally at NYS Fairgrounds 2026
Photos by David Ritchie



Kim Nolan and Family



Karl and Shufang Strauss and Lin Lin



The Binall Family and Morgan Neretich marching in Union Rally at NYS Fairgrounds



Cortland Chapter marching along the midway



UUP members and their families

In Defense of Democracy
Justin Neretich, President



As I sat to re-write this draft (yet again), I wondered what could possibly be said to move a reader to action. As someone with an appreciation for both fictional fantasies, and our very real and shared history, I thought of the craft of storytelling. I conjured images in my minds eye of some of my favorite quests: The point in which Frodo truly understands and accepts the burden of the one ring and becomes the hero middle earth never expected; I thought of the mighty and powerful Representative John Lewis marching across the bridge in Selma, grappling with the best and worst of humanity in the very same image, same reality. The fictional terror and evils that Frodo walks through on his journey to mount doom paled in comparison to the real horrors that Representative Lewis walked on his journey across that bridge, and across the hearts and minds of those that watched on television. My mind wandered then to the nearly silent YouTube video of our current US President unveiling his new White House helipad, while my imagination created a fictious and rowdy bar on a corner street in America, where all the network news anchors from Fox to CNN gathered together to share a drink and a meal, unified against the insanity in Washington. A fellowship of the media ring, so to speak.

The illusion of Freedom some days may feel as fantastical as the Lord of the Rings makes orcs and elves and dragons. We have deep lore in many ancient tongues that describe Freedom conceptually, and we've also fought remarkable and terrible wars over it; we currently are killing one another over it. Even in relative peace, Freedom is ultra-fragile, it can be threatened by the actions and behaviors of anyone at any time. Freedom hinges other equally elusive concepts like morality, responsibility, and justice. These concepts rely on not only the belief in, but the submission collectively towards a community by and for the common good. For a birthright to what is sanctified in our Bill of Rights and then some. We as a community, as a nation, have a shared responsibility to the maintenance and preservation of Freedom. As I write to you now, it cannot be denied that we are failing to uphold our responsibility to this Federal Democratic Republic better known round the world as the United States of America.

I am asking you all to join in the fellowship of defending our democracy, our Freedom, from the specters of authoritarianism, of bullying, cheating, and downright nastiness. I know my neighbors. I know my colleagues. I even know my campus administrators.

They are not Donald Trump.
They are not Pete Hegseth.
They are definitely not Stephen Miller.

My community is made up of real human beings, grounded in principles of the common good. We are democrats, republicans, independents, and no political affiliations. We are religious, spiritual, and atheist in our beliefs. We are vastly different but one in the same:

We are the United States of America.

We are the promise of ever upward mobility, and a life worth lived in service to others. We are the hope of the generations before, of time and memory full of joy and laughter, and of resilience and healing despite incredible pain of long deep scars and ever emerging new wounds. We are the fellowship, and we are destined to triumph over the unnatural shadows that threaten to swallow us whole. We need not battle the tyrannical darkness: there's no magic or silver sword that defeats evil here. We simply need to listen, to break bread, do a little research and then:

WE GO TO VOTE.

Not just this year for the midterm elections, but for all elections every year. A cynic would say: *"What is one vote, but a single pebble tossed into a raging sea? Engulfed by enraged political waves fueled by the millions of dollars spent to sway the tide?"*

Here is what I believe: No amount of money, of greed, of hate or cruelty can topple a continent's worth of bedrock. Of hundreds of millions of us. The thunder of our collective voice shatters false perceptions of power and authority in this nation. Our feet march to protect the innocent and to judge the damned. We extend a hand to the weary and downtrodden, not because anyone told us to, but because it is the right thing to do instinctively, the human thing to do. Just as lighting forks in all kinds of directions, so do our opinions as a nation, but that thunder unites into a more singular sound, the loudest thoughts prevail, and these can and should be the sound of defending Freedom. That only happens if the majority of people in this nation vote. You know what happens when we stay at home. You are living through the will of the few being forced upon the many. No mortal men could ever dare take Freedom from us. Come throw your pebble as we force the sea to crash against our unwavering shores. We are America, and we cannot be broken when we forge the fellowship in defense of democracy.

With hope,
Justin



Kyle Canon, Kevin and Teresa Pristash, David Kreh



Dave Ritchie, Peter McGinnis, Jamie Dangler



Chris Sielaff (LRS), Justin Neretich, Mickey Gibbons and Mike Pitaro



Kevin Arnold and Scott



Kerri Freese, Peter McGinnis, Jim Hokanson

PHOTOS BY DAVE RITCHIE

UUP Cortland 2026 FALL KICK OFF PICNIC

SUNY Cortland Presentation, October 22, 2026
By Dave Ritchie, Officer for Retirees



What's a Paleo Artist? What does Art have to do with Anthropology, Archaeology, History, Communication?

John Gurche is a renowned American paleo artist known for his sculptures of early humans, and his researched reconstructions have been published in many articles and 5 covers for National Geographic. John is resident artist at the Paleontological Research Institute, Ithaca, and will be making 3 different presentations – FREE – to different audiences on **Thursday, October 22.**

A Mystery Ancestor from Deep Time –
FREE for the College and Cortland communities
Thursday, October 22nd, 7pm, Bowers Hall 1129
Parking behind Old Main, Bowers, and VanHoesen Halls



In 2019, John was commissioned to reconstruct the face of a newly discovered species of ancient hominin. But the discoverer would not disclose where it was found, when it lived, or to whom it might be related. The reconstruction was to be based solely on the skull's anatomy. This richly illustrated talk will follow that mystery, the reconstruction, and the clues that finally revealed its identity.

SUNY Cortland Presentation October 22, 2026
By Dave Ritchie, Officer for Retirees



Facing the Past– a student opportunity to find out what he does, how he does it, & more!

THURSDAY, Oct. 22, 2:45-3:45pm, MOFFETT 116
(Rozanne Brooks Museum)

SUNY Cortland students from all majors and disciplines, interested in what a Paleo artist is, will have the opportunity to experience what John Gurche does, how he does it, what background, research and history help guide the reconstruction process, even what artistic and video techniques allow John to best illustrate parts of the process. Do you know a Cortland student who might be curious about these? Send them.

Here's a partially reconstructed being from somewhere in the midst of the conversation John will be having with interested students:

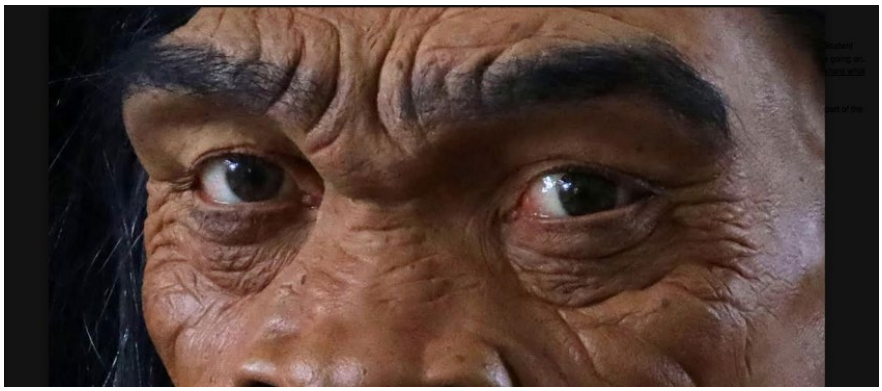


Cortland Retiree Brunch, October 22, 2026
By Dave Ritchie, Officer for Retirees



Cortland UUP Retirees and guests have the opportunity to experience another of John Gurche's fascinating presentations – which we are **opening to all Cortland academic and professional UUP members for free** – but only our Retirees and their guests will get to enjoy brunch with John afterwards!
Retirees & their guests may register (below) until noon Monday, Oct. 19. All others may register until noon on Tuesday, October 20, for just the talk, registering with Lisa at 753-5991 or UUP@Cortland.edu – and you'll be registered as space allows.

The Search for a Denisovan Face
THURSDAY, Oct. 22, 10:30-12:15pm (talk begins 11:30)
CNY LIVING HISTORY CENTER, 4386 US Rte11, Cortland



In 2008, archaeologists discovered very fragmentary remains of an ancient hominin in a Siberian cave. Wondering whether it could be a Neanderthal or an ancient Homo sapiens (the timing was right), scientists analyzed DNA from a finger bone to find that it was neither one, but a new species previously unknown to science. This was very exciting, but the physical remains were so fragmentary that we had no idea what it looked like. This illustrated talk by John Gurche will follow progress in the search for a Denisovan face.

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UUP Cortland Retiree Member and Retiree Guest Reservation for Brunch
Number of Member tickets: _____ at $29.00 (Your check will be returned at the door)
Number of Guest tickets: _____at $29.00 (Write a separate check for guest(s), please)
Total number of tickets: _____ at $29.00 each = Total amount enclosed: $_____
Member Name(s): _____
Guest Name(s) : _____
Member & Guest Email Address(es) (Non-Edu preferably):
_____
Special Dietary Needs: _____
(contact Lisa at 607-753-5991 to be sure we have it)
Make checks payable to UUP Cortland, and send reservation form with check(s) to
SUNY Cortland, UUP Office, 001 Moffett Center, P.O. Box 2000, Cortland, NY 13045-0900.
Mail reservation and payment(s) to be received by noon on Monday, October 19, 2026.
Brunch is FREE to Retiree members, and members' checks will be returned at the door.

On the Road to Legislating Identity Out of Existence
By Nancy Kane



On Monday, September 28, changes to the enforcement of Title IX regulations were announced, reverting to interpretation from the previous Trump administration regarding the word, "sex," and the ways in which educational institutions must investigate charges of sexual harassment (https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/09/29/2026-19929/recodification-of-title-ix-rules). With the current nationwide focus on a rape case at Cornell University, we should note that the ruling may make any further campus investigations more difficult for rape and assault survivors in the way hearings are conducted (https://www.npr.org/2026/09/29/nx-s1-5983779/investigating-sexual-abuse-on-campus). Calling for live witness testimony and cross-examination in a more "judicial" setting can re-traumatize survivors and can be unfair to both defendants and plaintiffs.

Furthermore, while stopping short of defining "sex" as strictly referring to binary distinctions of male and female, the announcement may be seen as a precursor to a future amendment to Title IX in which a person's sex would "refer exclusively to an individual's immutable biological classification as either male or female," as the Department of Education has previously hinted.

The current proclamation from the federal government reverses the previous administration's "Enforcement of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 With Respect to Discrimination Based on Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity in Light of Bostock v. Clayton County" (June 22, 2021).That interpretation of Title IX expanded the word "sex" to include sexual orientation and gender identity. LGBTQ+ students perceived the broader interpretation as offering greater protection for them under Title IX. That interpretation has now been reversed (https://system.suny.edu/sci/titleix/bostock-v-clayton/).

An amendment to Title IX may soon be brought forward, in which Congress will be asked to formally declare that only two sexes exist, and that gender identity is not legally recognized in educational settings. Transgender, nonbinary, genderfluid, genderqueer, and all gender non-conforming students would, in practice, be legislated out of existence in the educational realm. Under the current guidelines, their rights to protection under Title IX are questionable. Thankfully, under NYS law, discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity is still prohibited. Nevertheless, federal protections are not going to be enforced.

In this scenario, students who are genetically, chromosomally, hormonally, and phenotypically neither male nor female would be dismissed out of hand. Intersex variations happen in approximately .018 to 1.7% of the population (the higher number, some say, is approximately the same statistic as redheads). The exact percentages vary according to which differences of sexual development are counted as "intersex." Regardless, such variations in sex exist, and are more common than collegiate transgender athletes. The government's desire to simplify sex and identity would brusquely wave away that reality.

Can identity be erased by executive order? Of course not. However, a person's rights under Title IX could well be complicated by biological realities when an administration cannot or will not recognize that "sex" is far more complicated than they want it to be. Educators should not stand idly by while minoritized groups are targeted for exclusion or erasure.



Hi, I'm Anna. I'm tenured faculty in the Sociology/Anthropology Department. I have been involved up to my eyeballs in work-life discussions going on around campus over the last several years.[1] I am on the Academic Concerns Committee[2] and I participated in the successful effort during Summer 2026 to delay changes to Chapter 220.02 in the College Handbook that would have increased faculty office hours, added an expectation that faculty be on campus four days a week, and required committee meetings to be in person. The report that was the centerpiece of those efforts is summarized in this issue of the Cortland Cause. All of this is to say, I have opinions on campus policies, workload, and work/life balance on campus.[3]

In her emailed memo on 7/30/26, Provost McClellan offered her rationale for the changes mentioned above.[4] While I understand that updating the College Handbook can be both useful and necessary, creating a faculty presence policy with overly detailed rules is neither. In the memo, Provost McClellan stated that the expectation behind the faculty presence policy was that faculty would be required to be on campus for 15 hours a week across four days. Such a specific policy, however, does not account for the many ways faculty in different schools and departments need to adjust their schedules to complete their work. Why should faculty cooperate with a faculty presence policy that doesn't consider how their job works? Hint: they won't. The only way to get faculty to adhere to a policy that names a specific number of days they *must* appear on campus beyond their teaching schedules *even if there is no specific reason to do so* is to coerce their compliance.

In some of my classes, I spend time discussing the difference between compliance and cooperation. Compliance can be coerced, but cooperation cannot. Cooperation requires putting time and energy into something because one believes the act of cooperating is important and will have desirable outcomes. Any college administration could pass any number of policies demanding faculty appear—four days, five days, three days plus every other full moon. And yet, without faculty support such a policy will, at best, produce compliance.

Any administration at SUNY Cortland needs faculty who are happy to be at work because those faculty produce one of the two things[5] SUNY Cortland sells to undergraduates.[6] If the pandemic taught us anything, it is that college students don't want to go to college in their bedrooms at their parents' houses. Campus administrators need

faculty who are happy to talk to parents of potential students, who answer emails, who show up to events, who show students—current and prospective—that Cortland is a good place to be. College students want faculty who teach interesting classes, who are interested in helping them with challenges, who can

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[1] I wrote a report on the workload and compensation of Department Chairs that I sent around campus in September 2024. That led to me working with a few other faculty to develop a Chair Guide. That guide was sent out to current and past chairs for comment and review this semester. I was also involved in the creation of the report responding to the proposed policy addressing faculty presence on campus in Summer 2026 summarized in this issue of the Cortland Cause.

[2] It's a volunteer committee but also a time commitment. Still, union work is service work. You can reach out to Kris Newhall if union organizing speaks to your interests.

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

[4] See the email sent from the "Office of the Provost," entitled "Context for Academic Affairs re: Proposed Changes to Handbook revisions to 220.02, 1:12PM on 7/30/26.

[5] The labor of staff who maintain students' lives outside of the classroom in dorms, dining halls, and social outlets on campus produces the second.

[6] Yes, yes, I know it's problematic to think about education as a product. That said, college isn't free and the pandemic made it crystal clear what students want out of their college careers.

hold them to standards, who give them opportunities to figure out what kind of adults they want to continue becoming, and who help them develop skills that will help them get reasonable jobs. If faculty who are being forced to comply with an attendance policy imposed from above manage to achieve these important goals, it will be despite the policy rather than because of it

Furthermore, compliance is expensive, time consuming, and complicated. The amount of oversight and paperwork required to extract compliance comes with such a high price tag, that it's hard to believe an overly specific faculty presence policy will be consistently enforced. The worst outcome for a faculty presence policy is that it is haphazardly enforced, ensuring that it will be unevenly applied, trotted out to punish the mouthy, annoying, and/or unliked; adhered to by untenured faculty and ignored by tenured; and adjusted for lecturers and part-time faculty in different ways across campus. A haphazardly enforced faculty campus presence policy—of any kind—will create tension, resentment, and frustration between faculty, between faculty and the administration, and between faculty and students.

And if there isn't an intention to enforce the policy… what is the point of the policy? If the primary goal of a faculty presence policy is to ensure that students have access to their faculty, making classes smaller would do more to achieve that than a mandate that we appear on campus long enough for someone to check a box and say we were there. Or, I guess, to check the box that we had, indeed, been on campus 15 hours spread across four days in any given week.

As for the argument that a faculty presence policy—of any stripe—will make it easier to schedule committee meetings… weelll… I have scheduled too many meetings with administrators, staff, faculty, and students to believe such a claim. Personally, I find that scheduling meetings when the options include fully in person OR fully online always ends up making scheduling easier. It is also the case that the research on hybrid workplaces is ongoing, and some approaches produce better workplace outcomes.[7,8]

I'd like to see language in Chapter 220.02 that allows faculty teaching online to adjust their five scheduled office hours to reflect that and that's pretty much it. But any policy language that changes Chapter 220.02 should be sent out to faculty, *before* it is scheduled for addition to the College Handbook, for discussion and adjustment. Once the policy language is available, there should be more than one public forum for faculty to discuss potential changes. At least one of those public forums should be online. Ideally, Faculty Senate and UUP would be involved in that process, but we all have access to email and sufficient grey matter to comprehend policy language. That's the only way I see to get anything resembling faculty support for changes to Chapter 220.02.

I have been faculty at Cortland since 2014. My experience here is that the overwhelming number of faculty are engaged with their jobs and want Cortland to succeed. Many of us expect to spend decades at this institution (or have already). SUNY Cortland offers a small liberal arts college experience for a public university price. Let's focus on policies that enhance what we offer students, rather than micromanaging our faculty and staff into dull, unmotivated compliance.

By Anna Curtis

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[7] Gibson, C. B., Gilson, L. L., Griffith, T. L., & O'Neill, T. A. (2023). Should employees be required to return to the office? *Organizational Dynamics*, *52*(2), 100981.

[8] Eng, I., Tjernberg, M., & Champoux-Larsson, M. F. (2024). Hybrid workers describe aspects that promote effectiveness, work engagement, work-life balance, and health. *Cogent Psychology*, 11(1).



UUP Contract
By Joe Westbrook

I have some things to write that have been reported and perhaps I have something to say. In case you didn't hear:

- UUP members overwhelmingly approved a five year contract with just under 98% approval of those who cast ballots. 13,445 ayes and 305 nays in Secretary speak. The contract is retroactive to July 2, 2026 and in effect through July 1, 2031. Negotiations were completed before the last contract expired, a unique occurrence for this agreement.
- The initial 4.5% increase will be included in paychecks going out October 21.

A concise summary of the beneficial provisions were published in the July 28th edition of the Amherst Bee:

- Across-the-board salary increases of 4.5% in 2026, 4% in 2027, 3.5% in 2028 and 3% in both 2029 and 2030.
- A new retention award for employees with 17 years of SUNY service, along with increased compensation for existing retention awards at seven and 12 years.
- Annual lump-sum payments of $600 for full-time employees with a master's degree or higher and $300 for eligible part-time employees with appointments of at least 0.5 full-time equivalent.
- Higher minimum salaries and increased minimum course rates for part-time academic employees.
- Expanded location pay for employees in Downstate and Mid-Hudson regions, including SUNY New Paltz employees in Ulster County.
- Additional compensation for hospital employees, including residents and fellows, as well as increases in on-call, recall and inconvenience pay.
- Reduced employee contributions toward health insurance premiums for about 6,500 union members.
- Expanded due process and job security protections.
- Reduced emphasis on student surveys in faculty evaluations.
- Expanded telecommuting and remote work provisions.

The current Summer 2026 edition of The Voice includes a detailed listing of all provisions. The more detailed description includes implementation dates and in some cases eligibility criteria. There were several give backs to help control benefit costs. Use this link: https://uupinfo.org/communications/publications/voicearchives.php

How did the UUP negotiate this historic contract? In short, with thousands of hours of service from volunteer members from across the state and elected officers. There were 3 groups. The 20-member negotiating team led by Chief Negotiator Bret Benjamin. They carried the pivotal task of meeting with the State negotiation team and SUNY representative. The Ad-hoc committee which included an academic and professional member from each campus. The third group, the negotiations committee, included the chapter presidents from each campus. All the committees met together to review and recommend the bargained draft agreement to the Statewide president, Fred

Kowal. Once the decision was made to offer the draft to the UUP membership, the negotiations team explained the pact to each with campus prior to the vote.

Thanks to the bargaining unit from those whose affirmative membership provided the financial support necessary to provide the team with the resources and support needed to research, formulate and execute effectively at the bargaining table and to distribute the details home to the voters. Solidarity expresses visibly member strength and commitment to deliver the reasonable and equitable terms and conditions achieved for the higher education work environment.
Today take time to notice three things that bring you joy. They don't have to be big. Perhaps write them down. Then ask yourself: "What do I need to do to create more of these moments". UUP is about changing attitudes about work-life balance. Changes that empower equity and equality.



Please welcome José Ortiz.

Our UUP Cortland Chapter DEI officer, Christa Chatfield is on sabbatical. During this time, José Ortiz, PhD, Assistant Professor, Foundations and Social Advocacy Department, will serve as UUP Cortland Chapter's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and Justice Officer for the 2026-2027 academic school year.

Faculty Presence and Office Hours: Report Summary

By Academic Concerns Committee

As many of our members are aware, in April 2026 Provost McClellan and the Provost's cabinet approved a policy changing expectations for office hours and faculty presence on campus (Chapter 220.02). The policy was initially intended to go into effect in the 2026-2027 College Handbook and called for full-time faculty to hold six office hours per week (with those teaching online allowed to hold proportionate online office hours), plus defining "regular faculty presence" as working on campus four days a week (from Monday to Friday).

UUP quickly mobilized members in response to the Provost's policy change, and the Academic Faculty Concerns Committee gathered data from our members and produced a full research report in response. As a result, we were able to reach an agreement in July 2026 to delay implementation of such changes. Since this time, Provost McClellan has proceeded to raise the prospect of changing Chapter 220.02 stipulations surrounding office hours and faculty's campus presence with both the Faculty Senate and UUP leadership–signaling campus leadership's desire to advance a similar policy in the near future. Discussions will be ongoing this school year.

In order to make sure that UUP members remain informed of these important matters, the Academic Faculty Concerns Committee here provides a summary of the June report that we created in response to the Handbook policy changes.

Note that this report cites data that the UUP Cortland Academic Faculty Concerns Committee collected via three sources: (1) a UUP survey (n=168) of faculty response to the April policy changes in office hours and faculty presence; (2) workload survey data collected by the UUP in Spring 2026; and (3) outside research on workplace conditions and employee experience.

Office Hours

Findings from the UUP survey indicated that student attendance during the current required five office hours was low and revealed that faculty tend to maintain regular contact with students throughout the week–although much of this takes place outside of scheduled office hours and in venues that are responsive to student need (e.g., before and after classes, conversations in hallways and other informal venues, via email and phone).

Overall, the findings indicated faculty need for enhanced flexibility in office hours.

Survey Data:

- Faculty are already fulfilling, and often exceeding, their office hours commitments.
    - 82.1% of faculty surveyed (n=138) held the required 5 office hours; and, an additional 16.7% offered *more* than required.
- Most full-time faculty meet regularly with students outside of scheduled office hours.
    - 64.9% (n=109) regularly meet in person with students in person outside scheduled office hours; and, 34.5% (n=58) do so online.
- Faculty report that students reach out to them more often via email than during in-person office hours in a typical week.
- Faculty report that students are satisfied with the current office hour setup.
    - 53% of faculty perceive students as satisfied; 17.3% say students prefer email/online contact; only 1.8% report students wanting more in-person hours.
- No other SUNY comprehensive requires five mandatory office hours per week.

Take-Away: Findings suggest that a mandated increase in full-time faculty office hours is unnecessary, and lacks responsivity to students' need for flexibility in contact methods and time with faculty. Further, survey findings support the development of policy allowing faculty to offer online office hours in proportion to their online teaching load. However, there is no indication of a simultaneous need to increase the total number of office hours–and indeed, a survey of SUNY comprehensives reveals that there is no existing precedent for such changes.

Faculty Presence

Eight of the thirteen SUNY comprehensives have no written policy regarding the on-campus presence of faculty. One overtly states that the requirement is two days and one implies that it is three days based on the office hours policy. Two require faculty on campus four days a week. The proposed change to the Cortland College Handbook would not bring us in line with other SUNY Comprehensives. Rather, it would result in the Cortland College Handbook diverging from other comprehensives.

In the UUP Survey, responses to the proposed 4-day per week on-campus presence policy was overwhelmingly negative. Five primary themes emerged from our survey alongside data from the spring 2026 worklog survey and current research on workplace flexibility.

Flexibility & Autonomy

Survey respondents expressed concerns that this requirement ignores how varied faculty work actually is (student teaching supervision, supervision of research assistants, coordination of internships, and teaching in online programs). The reduction in flexibility that this policy change would engender was worrisome for many given that faculty lack PTO, making scheduling of medical appointments and other personal needs for themselves and those for whom they care very difficult. Additionally, faculty reported flexibility as a "perk" that offsets comparatively low pay.

Morale

Faculty felt that this policy would increase an already strained sense of morale on campus.

- Respondents commented that the policy targets everyone to address the behavior of a few, penalizing faculty who already go above and beyond; they cite this as a pattern of devaluing the work faculty do for students.
- There was frustration that the changes are disconnected from any clear data or rationale, fueling perceptions of arbitrary or punitive decision-making.
- Faculty felt the policy was developed without meaningful input or consultation from those it affects reinforcing feelings that there is a lack of transparency on campus.
- Some expressed worry that these changes will make Cortland less competitive for recruiting and retaining faculty, especially those who could earn more outside of academia but stay largely for the flexibility the job offers.
- There was a broader feeling that this reflects a pattern of increasing demands and eroding trust between faculty and administration.

Equity

The concerns raised reflect patterns of inequity that are well documented in higher education — and that disproportionately affect minoritized faculty, who already carry heavier service, mentoring, and caregiving burdens than their peers. A policy framed as neutral and applied uniformly will not land uniformly. It stands to widen existing equity gaps.

- **Caregiving.** Rigid on-campus requirements would disrupt childcare and eldercare arrangements. Nationally, these caregiving demands land disproportionately on women faculty and faculty of color, who are more likely to carry primary caregiving responsibilities and are less likely to have institutional support to offset them.
- **No PTO.** Because faculty lack traditional paid time off, flexible scheduling is often the only tool available for managing medical appointments, family needs, or health conditions — a tool minoritized faculty are more likely to depend on given documented disparities in access to accommodations and support.
- **Less flexibility widens existing gaps.** Faculty already navigating additional, uncompensated service and mentoring loads — burdens that fall heavily on minoritized faculty — would lose one of the few resources helping them manage that load.
- **Retention risk is not evenly distributed.** If flexibility disappears, faculty with the most external options — and the least institutional loyalty built through equitable treatment — are the most likely to leave, threatening the campus's ability to retain a diverse faculty.

Impact on Research

Faculty noted that mandatory campus days, especially on non-teaching days, would cut into research/writing time, particularly for those doing fieldwork, archival research, or work requiring focused home-office time. This exacerbates fears about moving tenured faculty to 4/3 teaching loads if they are not seen as being productive scholars.

Hybrid Is Already the Norm

Faculty argued students already prefer email/hybrid contact over in-person office hours, and that in-person mandates don't reflect actual student engagement patterns or committee needs.

Take-Away: The findings in this study also suggest that while there are faculty who resist coming to campus for a single meeting, it is not a widespread problem. A policy that seeks to hold individual faculty accountable by raising the expectations for everyone will only accomplish making faculty who are already highly present on campus feel frustrated and resentful. Whatever changes are or are not made to Chapter 220.02, adding more requirements does not address people who are not meeting existing requirements.

We hope that, going forward, any changes to Chapter 220.02 will reflect campus wide conversations. Our report and this essay seek to engage UUP members in that conversation. Ideally, Provost McClellan, in conjunction with the Faculty Senate, would organize public forums for faculty to discuss potential changes to Chapter 220.02.

Members who are interested in participating in organizing on this and other related issues should contact Vice President for Academics, Kris Newhall.

Dear Colleagues,



At the September Labor Management meeting, UUP was asked to participate in collaborative conversations with SUNY Cortland Academic Affairs and representatives of Faculty Senate. Although we appreciate the offer, **UUP declined the invitation.** UUP appreciates the unique role that Faculty Senate fulfills within the campus community. Faculty Senate's advisement to Campus Administration is an essential component of campus operations that seeks to ensure that administrative decisions are not made in a vacuum. From UUP's perspective, joint meetings with governance and management may lead to confusion about the different roles and purposes each organization fulfills on campus.

As the legally recognized employee organization (union) vested with the power to bargain on behalf of all employees within the bargaining unit, **UUP has the right and responsibility to bargain with the employer and enter into agreements on various terms and conditions of employment.** At times, collaborative conversations can be confused with bargaining and agreement. We hope to avoid such confusion and reiterate that regardless of how UUP and our members participate in such collaborative conversations and organizations, **we maintain our responsibility to bargain, which is not an advisory role to the administration.** To that end, we declined the invitation to participate in an advisory process.

Regarding the policy changes that have been proposed by SUNY Cortland management, UUP has discussed them at various Labor Management meetings and presented data to campus administration resulting from a survey conducted in the Spring 2026 semester. We have serious concerns about the necessity and wisdom of expanding mandatory office hours and requiring a minimum weekly campus presence. We have encouraged Campus Administration to seek input from the employees who would be affected by such changes, including input from Faculty Senate. Alongside our colleagues and union siblings, **UUP will continue to advocate for what we believe to be fair working conditions.**

If Campus Administration develops an updated draft policy, UUP will be eager to see it and continue our engagement with management on the topic. If there are any bargainable terms and conditions of employment affected by proposed policy changes, we will seek to bargain them formally with campus administration before they are implemented.

UUP encourages all faculty to share their perspectives with others, including governance bodies, campus administration, and UUP. Despite what work we do on campus and what our roles and titles may be, we share a common purpose to create an environment that is supportive of faculty as we, through our labor, provide education to the students of SUNY Cortland.

In Solidarity,

Justin Neretich



Democracy Engagement
By Bekkie Bryan UUP Outreach Committee Co-chair

Just about everyone I know, regardless of their political party is exhausted with the state of our politics in the US. We are dismayed at the corruption, war in Iran, inflation, tariffs, gas and energy costs, ICE murders and kidnappings, culture wars, and attacks on science, public education, and higher education. I am exhausted and also depressed and filled with enormous rage. Instead of being stuck in rage or depression, I do what I can as an engaged educator, unionist, and citizen to fight back and participate in my civic duty. After all, our rights and freedoms come with responsibility. The same responsibility we should have to one another living in society.

You see, our constitutional representative democracy or democratic republic requires the people to be engaged. After all, the ultimate power resides with the people and is exercised through those we vote in as our elected representatives. It is not just the act of voting every two or four years though. It is our responsibility to push our representatives, inform them of the issues we are facing, of our concerns, and also of our demands as citizens. We the people should influence governance through our vote, but also by exercising our free speech, peaceful assembly, and with direct communication with our representatives.

I simply write this to remind us all that Democracy is not a spectator sport. We must all do more if we really want our country and our government to work for us, the people. The work that needs completed in the next 30 days (or less depending on when this is published) is all about the mid-term elections. To change our country's trajectory and to protect our work in public higher education I ask everyone to do something. Sign up for a phone bank or canvassing, send post cards, call your representatives, put up lawn signs, attend a march or rally and so on.

Locally, you can sign up for Phone Banks for Labor endorsed candidates through the Central NY Area Labor Federation (CNY ALF). You can do this in the comfort of your home on Sundays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. You can sign up and learn more here . On the UUP website you can look up events and ways to get involved by region. To find canvassing and other events please check out https://uupinfo.org/legislation/calendar/ .

Here in Cortland, we are canvassing out of 129 Port Watson St. every Saturday from 1-3pm and every Monday and Wednesday night from 5-7pm for all our endorsed candidates (Mannion, Webb, Kelles, Hochul, DiNapoli etc.). You can also pick up lawn signs as well during those times.

We cannot do everything, but we can all do something especially when our work and lives depend on it. As Sharon Salzberg wrote "Voting is the expression of our commitment to ourselves, one another, this country, and this world." What is your commitment as an educator, union member, community member, and so on, to the work of this country we don't necessarily recognize in this moment, but is ours all the same?

Early Voting October 24-November 1st. Election Day November 3rd.

Note: You cannot use any state equipment or edu email for political work.

9 to 5 is a Labor Story
By Kris Newhall, Vice President for Academics



I'm drafting this on Dolly Parton Day, September 25, or 9-2-5. In the wake of Dolly's death, there have been many tributes to her causes and passions. Labor hasn't come up much, and honestly that is fine. I hope we keep remembering her for the Imagination Library, the founding and running of Dollywood, and her financial and social support of the COVID vaccine. But the day takes its name from the song she wrote for her very famous movie, *9 to 5*, and that movie is about labor. So, I'm taking the opportunity to talk about how accurate (comedic elements aside) and enduring its themes remain.

Released in 1980, the film is probably best remembered for its catchy theme song and the antics of its three leads, Parton, Lily Tomlin, and Jane Fonda, who founded her own production company to get it made. Underneath the antics is a story of workplace injustice. The boss lies about having an affair with his secretary Doralee (Parton) and sexually harasses her (and others). He fires a woman for talking about her salary and promotes a less qualified man over Violet (Tomlin). When the women end up running the office, they institute an in-office day care, flexible hours, and equitable pay. Productivity jumps 20 percent.

Over four decades later, sadly, not much has changed. Pay equity has improved but is not equal. As state workers, we have protections the film's characters did not: we know what our colleagues earn, and we can't be punished for talking about it. Higher ed also offers more flexibility than many industries, especially for academic faculty. But women still carry most of the childcare and domestic load, and job flexibility is often what makes a full-time job possible at all.

That is one reason why faculty have responded so negatively to proposals that we be on campus more than we already are. The closure of the campus childcare center, which worsened an already serious childcare desert in our area, only compounds the problem. In this issue of the *Cortland Cause*, members of the chapter's Academic Concerns Committee summarize the key points of the report we produced this summer. It covers the disparate effects of a strict campus-presence policy on women and minoritized faculty, along with other concerns raised by faculty respondents to a UUP survey.

While working on the report and our response to the proposed policy, I came across the poem "Statement of Purpose" by Kyle Carrero Lopez. The poem is very good, but what has stayed with me is Lopez's comment about it: "It's harder to collectivize when your ability to relax—your ability to actually enjoy life—is strategically limited in service of capital by the industrious powers that be." Less flexibility, and the anxieties that come with it, makes it harder for us to come together as workers to talk about and organize around the conditions of our labor. That may not be the intent of the policy, but it could certainly be a result.

Many thanks to everyone who worked on the report, who took the survey, and who came to campus while off contract to show support for our efforts. Please keep showing up to fight for a fair, equitable, and sustainable workplace.

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.

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

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In Memoriam
Cynthia Moy – Spouse of Herbert Haines
Steve Dangler – Spouse of Jamie Dangler
Jack Carr
Bill Hopkins
Jane Canegaly Newman – Spouse of Dr. William R. Newman

UUP CORTLAND SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT

Remember that any technology such as laptops, tablets, mobile phones or other property of the campus can be taken back by the campus at any time. UUP advises that all members back up their own files on personally owned devices.

How to maximize your NYSUT membership

Your NYSUT membership offers special advantages unavailable to the general public. Make sure you're utilizing all the savings opportunities below provided by NYSUT Member Benefits.

Member-Only Pricing: Protect your loved ones with various life insurances. Plan for the future with quality long-term care insurance plans. Select from multiple highly rated auto and home insurance carriers. Receive reimbursement for eligible pet care through Nationwide.

Unbiased Advice: Ensure your financial and legal affairs are in order. Receive expert guidance on personal legal matters with unlimited advice from attorneys through our legal service plan. Obtain unbiased, objective phone consultations with a certified financial planner or registered investment advisor with our financial counseling program.

Travel Savings: Bundle and save on flights, cruises, vehicle rentals, and over 850,000 hotels and resorts for the optimal travel experience with MB Discounts & Deals. Enjoy reduced pricing on over 80 explorations across 100 countries with Grand Circle Travel & Overseas Adventure Travel, including new "Immersions" options for more active travelers.

Free Benefits: Check out our free benefits! All in-service and retiree members receive unlimited access to the popular Calm app and can add up to five dependents (age 16 or older). Whether you have a specific matter or simply need an empathetic voice, the Peer Support Line can help. Other benefits include: $5,000 accidental death & dismemberment insurance, travel assistance services, financial learning center, and more.



Feel confident knowing you have a trusted advocate on your side if you ever need us.

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[1] Member must be actively at work, on a full-time basis, performing their regular duties to be eligible for this insurance. Not to exceed five times base salary. Spouses, who are not currently disabled, qualify for 50% of member's coverage up to $50,000 on a Guaranteed Issue basis and 100% of member's coverage up to $100,000 on a Simplified Issues basis. Children must be non-disabled to be eligible for coverage.

*[2] This is a brief summary of TransElite®, Universal Life Insurance Policy **underwritten by Transamerica Financial Life Insurance Company, Harrison, NY.** Policy form series FPGUL300 and FCGUL300. Foms and form numbers may vary, This insurance may not be available in all jurisdictions. Limitations and exclusions apply. Refer to the policy, certificate and riders for complete details.*

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benefits@uupmail.org

Important Reminder - MetLife Dental Open Enrollment Ends October 31, 2026

Don't miss the deadline! Open enrollment for the new MetLife Dental plan, effective January 1, 2027, ends on **October 31, 2026**.

Your Two Dental Options

Active, benefits eligible UUP-represented employees can choose between:

- Delta Dental PPO (Preferred Provider Organization)
- MetLife Dental PDP (Preferred Dentist Program)

Both plans offer the **exact same coverage**. The only difference is the dental provider network, so check whether your dentist is in-network before you decide.

- Find a Delta Dental dentist (PPO network, Premier network)
- Find a MetLife dentist (PDP network, PDP Plus network)

Staying with Delta Dental? No action needed. Your coverage continues without interruption.

Switching to MetLife? You must act by **October 31, 2026**:

1. Fill out UUP's Open Enrollment Change Form
2. Complete the form in full.
3. Click Submit.
4. Watch your inbox for a confirmation email.

Key Dates

- **Through December 31, 2026:** Everyone continues with Delta Dental
- **January 1, 2027:** MetLife Dental coverage begins for those who switched

New ID Cards:
New UUP Benefit Trust Fund ID cards, with your updated ID number, were mailed out to members September 1, 2026

Not Yet Enrolled in the Benefit Trust Fund?
The UUP Benefit Trust Fund provides dental and vision coverage for benefits eligible UUP-represented employees. Complete the enrollment form here to join today.

Questions?
Contact the UUP Benefit Trust Fund at 800-887-3863 Option 1.

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UUP CORTLAND CHAPTER — EXECUTIVE BOARD 2025-2027

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

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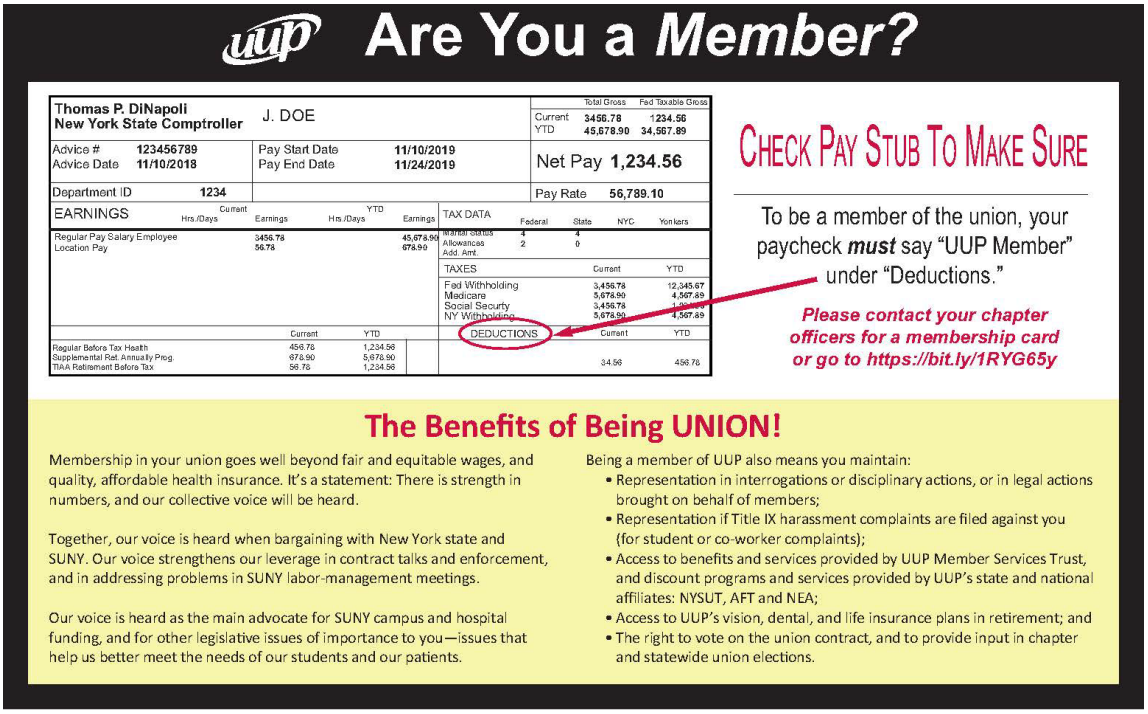
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We're on the Web!
See us at:
http://uuphost.org/cortland/





SAVE THE DATES

Open House:
October 16th 9:00am -11:00am Chapter Office, 001 Moffett Ctr.
Retiree Brunch:
October 22nd 10:30am at CNY Living History Center
Union Matters:
October 19th 11:30 - 1:00 Corey Union Fireplace Lounge
October 28th 12:00pm - 2:00pm Corey Union Fireplace Lounge
AFSP Fundraiser Hockey Game:
November 6th 7:00pm Ice Arena