



# *the Downstate Update*

## **PRESIDENT'S CORNER**

*By Rowena Blackman-Stroud*

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### **CHAPTER ELECTIONS**

Elections were held in March/April for UUP Chapter Officers, Governing Board members and Delegates to the UUP Delegate Assembly, the NYSUT Representative Assembly and the AFT Convention.

The results for 2021 chapter elections are listed on the chapter website. Click [here](#) to access chapter election results. [ChapterResultsReport \(uupinfo.org\)](#)

On behalf of UUP, I'd like to extend my sincere appreciation and gratitude to our outgoing Grievance Chair, Governing Board members and Chapter Delegates for your efforts. Our chapter leadership plans to schedule a virtual ceremony to honor our outgoing Chapter Officers and Governing Board members for the election year 2019-2021 - TBA. As for our newly elected chapter leadership, we offer our congratulations and look forward to working with you.

The following is a list of our elected Chapter Officers:

**President:** Rowena Blackman-Stroud  
**VP for Academics:** Samuel Marquez  
**VP for Professionals:** Hazel Williams  
**Secretary:** Ellen McTigue  
**Treasurer:** Fred Houston  
**Grievance Chair:** Chantal Fuller  
**Contingents Officer:** Donovan Lorde  
**Retirees Officer:** Shirley Patterson

Elections are held every two years and all UUP members are eligible to run for office and vote. Elections are conducted

by the statewide Constitution and Governance Committee. Each elected position comes with a two-year term; terms run from June 1, 2021 through May 31, 2023.

### **NEW GRIEVANCE CHAIR**

Abe Gerecht retires effective May 31 2021, as the Grievance Chair of our Chapter, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Abe for his 18 years of service and advocacy on behalf our members, our chapter and UUP. He is a dedicated unionist who cares about UUP. We will miss him, and we wish him well in his retirement.

We would like to welcome and congratulate Chantal Fuller, who was elected as Downstate Chapter's Grievance Chair. Chantal previously served as a Department Representative in Labor and Delivery. Chantal will take office June 1.

### **SEE SOMETHING. SAY SOMETHING!**

The chapter leadership is requesting that if you see position(s) within the UUP Bargaining Unit, being unilaterally transferred out of our unit, please contact the union office as soon as possible at (718) 270-1519 or email at [brooklyn@uupmail.org](mailto:brooklyn@uupmail.org).

What exactly does this mean? It means, (a) if you see that one of your colleagues has a position and/or work responsibilities that they have been doing for a reasonable amount of time, BUT that work is now being done by an employee who is not UUP; or (b) if

you or one of your colleagues has your performance program (job description) adjusted and work that you previously did is given to another employee, who is not in the UUP Bargaining Unit.

Additionally, we are receiving reports that when UUP members retire or leave state service our bargaining unit work is being transferred to other employees outside the bargaining unit which erodes the UUP bargaining unit.

***We need to work together to protect our work and our jobs !!!***

### **DOWNSTATE CHAPTER MEMBERS WIN BLACKSTOCK AWARDS**

Five Downstate UUP Chapter members are the recipients of SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University's Dr. Dale Blackstock awards for mentoring and community service.

The winners are Laura Martello-Rooney, Dr. Christina Guillen, Nkiruka Nwokoye, Simone Reynolds and Taryn Toval-Turpin. The virtual ceremony was held March 12.

Dr. Christina Pardo, a Downstate UUP Chapter member, gave the keynote address, "The Intersectionality of Caribbean Women's Health."

The Blackstock awards are given annually to honor dynamic women at Downstate for their contributions and commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion. The ceremony honors the life and legacy of Dr. Dale Blackstock, a Downstate physician, mentor, and diversity and inclusion advocate.

"We are very proud of our Downstate Chapter award winners," said Downstate UUP Chapter President Rowena Blackman-Stroud. "These women have done an incredible job and deserve these accolades."

Martello-Rooney, Director of GI Research, Division of Gastroenterology & Hepatology, received the Excellence in Mentoring Award.

Martello-Rooney, a member of the Downstate Chapter's Governing Board, shared the award with Reynolds, an

assistant professor in Downstate's School of Public Health.

Guillen, Assistant Professor of Pediatrics, Program Director of Downstate's Pediatric Residency Program and Associate Director of diversity and inclusion graduate medical education, won the Dr. Dale Blackstock Award.

Nwokoye, administrator of Downstate's Department of Family and Community Medicine, won the Diversity Champions award.

Toval-Turpin, Director of Special Projects in Downstate's Office of Medical Education, received the Outstanding Service award.

### **SIGN UP FOR UUP'S HEALTHCARE ROUND TABLE MAY 6, 12:00 PM**

Issues important to Downstate Chapter members, including state funding for SUNY's public teaching hospitals, will be discussed at a virtual roundtable **May 6, 12:00 pm** hosted by UUP.

Moderator:

**Dr. Fred E. Kowal**, UUP President

Panelists:

**Senator Rachel May**

New York State Senate District 53

**Dr. Jim Malatras**, Chancellor  
State University of New York

**Dr. Camille Clare**, Chair of Obstetrics  
and Gynecology and Professor  
SUNY Downstate

**Edline Jacquet**, Chief of Staff; New York  
State Senator Zellnor Myrie  
Senate District 20

Click [HERE](#) to sign up for the roundtable.

Speakers will discuss UUP health care initiatives outlined in our union's [New York HEALS](#) plan.

Those include restoring mission funding to SUNY's public teaching hospitals in Brooklyn, Stony Brook and Syracuse; securing hazard pay for frontline health care workers; creating a Medical

Educational Opportunity Program—to help students from underrepresented and under-resourced communities get into medical school and become doctors and health care providers—and expanding Downstate’s mission to be the center of maternal and child services in Brooklyn.

You will be joining colleagues, UUP coalition partners, lawmakers and advocates for serious discussion of how your union, public higher education and you can work toward a more equitable, sustainable and just place to live, through positive social policies that benefit everyone.

### **SAVE THE DATE: SPRING DA IS JUNE 4-5**

This year’s Spring Delegate Assembly is a little different than in years past.

For starters, the Spring 2021 DA is virtual due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

And it’s a little later than usual; the DA will be held June 4 and 5. So please, save those dates.

Special rules of order will be in effect for the DA. Resolutions proposed for consideration at the Spring DA must be submitted via return receipt email to statewide Secretary-Treasurer Jeri O’Bryan-Losee no later than 5 p.m. May 6. Her email is [jobryan@uupmail.org](mailto:jobryan@uupmail.org).

Also at the DA, UUP will hold elections for statewide vice president for academics and vice president for professionals.

The seats of six Executive Board members—Ray Gleason (Alfred); Kim Hartshorn (Plattsburgh); Tom Melendy (Buffalo HSC); Carolyn Kube (Stony Brook HSC); Idalia Torres (Fredonia); and Ezra Zubrow (Buffalo Center)—are up for election as well.

The delegates seated at the Delegate Assembly elect UUP’s statewide officers and executive board members to serve three-year terms. The elections for these positions are staggered.

For more information about the DA, contact O’Bryan-Losee at [jobryan@uupmail.org](mailto:jobryan@uupmail.org).

### **GETTING READY TO RETIRE? THIS WORKSHOP WILL HELP**

UUP has scheduled a two-part virtual pre-retirement workshop on May 18 and May 20.

The hour-long webinars, which start at noon, will cover health care and Medicare, followed by union benefits.

Click [HERE](#) to register.

### **UUP TELECOMMUTING AGREEMENT EXTENDED INTO SUMMER**

UUP President Fred Kowal announced April 1 that the union has reached an agreement with the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations to extend the telecommuting agreement between UUP and the state through Friday, July 2.

UUP negotiated the telecommuting agreement with the state a year ago, in response to the abrupt shutdown of most on-campus education and activities at SUNY because of the coronavirus pandemic.

The agreement provides that, when feasible, telecommuting requests were to be granted to the greatest extent possible.

Read more about that original agreement [HERE](#).

UUP negotiated periodic extensions of the agreement throughout the first year of the pandemic, even as campuses switched to a hybrid model of in-person and distance education with the fall 2020 semester.

Many UUP members have been affected by a loss of child care during the pandemic, as well as the shutdown of many services for older or disabled residents, and those situations have made telecommuting an especially important issue for members who are parents or caregivers.

## **EMPIRE PANDEMIC RESPONSE REIMBURSEMENT RELIEF FUND**

For over the past 12 months, UUP members have stood up for their patients, our communities and all New Yorkers. UUP continues to fight and advocate for each and every member's rights and benefits. Although your work and sacrifice cannot be measured in dollars and cents, your service must be recognized and acknowledged.

The State of New York has created a program that does that to a limited extent: the Empire Pandemic Response Reimbursement Relief Fund, a program designed to assist essential workers and first responders with urgent economic needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. The Empire Pandemic Response Reimbursement Fund program is coordinated by the NYS Office of Children and Family Services with the intention to reimburse out-of-pocket childcare, transportation, lodging and other qualifying expenses that enabled workers to perform their duties.

Qualifying applicants include first responders, health care, and many multi-industry workers. Up to \$1,000 is available per household. Families who earn up to 500 percent of the federal poverty level - or \$125,470 for a family of four - are eligible to apply for the funds to cover expenses.

The Empire Pandemic Response Reimbursement Fund is a non-competitive application. Applicants who meet the eligibility criteria set forth below and who submit the required supporting documentation for eligible expenses will be awarded funds to reimburse out-of-pocket expenses they incurred to respond to COVID-19 that have not been reimbursed by another source. Awards will be made to eligible applicants for eligible expenditures on a first come,

first served basis until funding is exhausted. The maximum reimbursement amount is \$1,000 per household.

For more information and to apply please visit here:

<https://ocfs.ny.gov/main/news/COVID-relief/>

<https://pandemicfundny.smapply.org>

## **APPLY FOR FEMA COVID-19- RELATED FUNERAL REIMBURSEMENTS**

The Federal Emergency Management Agency has begun accepting applications for its Funeral Reimbursement program.

FEMA will reimburse families who lost loved ones to COVID-19 up to \$7,000 for funeral expenses.

To be eligible for funeral assistance, these conditions must be met:

- The death had to take place in the U.S., including U.S. territories and the District of Columbia.
- The death certificate must indicate the death was attributed to COVID-19.
- The applicant must be a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified legal immigrant who incurred funeral expenses after Jan. 20, 2020.
- There is no requirement for the deceased person to have been a U.S. citizen, non-citizen national, or qualified legal immigrant.

Click [HERE](#) to apply and for more information.

## **DEPARTMENT REPRESENTATIVES VOLUNTEERS NEEDED**

We invite all UUP members to volunteer as a UUP Department Representative.

- If your department does not have a UUP representative, we need you. Department

representatives will be provided with up-to-date information on issues that pertain to their workplace.

- If your department has multiple shifts, each shift should have a department rep.
- As a department rep, you would attend department rep

Please submit your personal email address to [Brooklyn@uupmail.org](mailto:Brooklyn@uupmail.org) so we can keep you up-to-date on what's happening.

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**Treasurer:** Fred Houston

**Grievance Chair:** Simon Abe Gerecht

**Officer for Contingents:** Donovan Lorde

**Department Rep Coordinator:**  
Rowena Blackman-Stroud

**Retirees Officer:** Shirley Patterson

**UUP/NYSUT Labor Relations Specialist**  
Lisa Mouscardy Willis

**Chapter Assistant**  
Jacqueline L. Bourgeois

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