

**Empire State University
Labor-Management Meeting NOTES
for the 28 October 2025 meeting**

22 October 2025

Present: Lisa Vollendorf, Rai Kathuria, Rashmi Prasad, Sharon Butler, Lindsey Holcomb, Jason Russell, Emma Bowman, Dianne Ramdehol, Janet Aiello, Malongze Foma, Aley O'Mara, Sophia Mavrogiannis

The meeting started with introductions.

1. *The Chapter reminded Management that we have the right to ask questions and put items on the agenda. It's Management's choice to respond or not, but Management cannot dictate what goes on the agenda or now. Management expresses their understanding of the difference between negotiable topics and management's work/rights to work through their processes.*
2. **Brooklyn office closure:** Management explains there are is no new info about this location. They are working to identify alternative commercial locations for the Cheektowaga. *The Chapter expresses the need for a process for where/how members can put in requests for things like reimbursements for moving costs.* Sharon will look into this and identify something, which will include a process for determining what is reimbursable and what is not.
3. **Reading Period:** Sharon explains that there's been concerns from all sides regarding meetings during Reading Period. These meetings are for basic operational needs and not meetings with students. *Jason explains that we are the only SUNY on a 12 month appointment, with 4 weeks of reading period. The time is supposed to be there for professional development and professional obligations, so to remove it or convert it into a regular work period this opportunity would go away.* Rai asks if the Chapter can remind members of this fundamental purpose of the Reading Period– that it's not a vacation or liberal leave. Sharon expresses that having a clear understanding across the board about Reding Period is to clarify issues of misuse of the time.
4. **Academic Freedom:** Sharon explains that the University's position is that SUNY Empire support the rights of academic freedom and that no one is obligated to attend any sessions or events where they feel uncomfortable. Sharon asks for the Chapter's support in reminding members of their rights of Academic Freedom, and member rights to not engage in events where they feel uncomfortable *Jason responds that he hasn't heard anything, but that we can remind members about Academic Freedom.*
5. **.5 Performance Programs:** *Emma wants to follow-up for information on PPs of people from before and after the restructuring. She explains that she received some from members, but none from HR. The concern is that a brand new position should be posted*

internally and not just have someone put into it as per fair practices listed in the collective bargaining agreement. One member, in particular, has a brand new PP that is a completely new set of duties and responsibilities. Sharon explains that all brand new positions are posted, but if there is a position change or promotion where someone was already doing a large chunk of the work that person is promoted and the position is not posted so as to not unseat the person already doing most of the work. When the PP requests came in, HR agreed to share any PPs that were still incomplete post-restructuring and that employees can send the Chapter before and after PPs, but Sharon will circle back to Emma on this.

6. **Extra Service for Advising:** *Emma explains that many full time academic advisors are quickly approaching their capacity or above. Extra service is supposed to be voluntary and negotiable; however, the current process is not set up as such. Rai explains that as we get new technology in, the process will be refined in time. There will be better alignment between what advisors see on their side and what's happening in the dashboard. Rai will speak with Seana and get back to the Chapter. Sharon states that the validation of workload is the open problem that keeps showing up, including in the IP. Maybe we should plan to provide numbers and updates on a recurring basis during Labor Management. Can we also reinforce to members that they can/should have the conversation about work overload / work overwhelm with their supervisor as a way of making sure we're having clear conversations across the board about work and workload? The more conversations we can have about workload the better we can forecast workload issues,*
7. **College of Education faculty advising numbers:** *Dianne explains that many mentors in the MEd are at over twice their advisee load, some for over two years, and some are untenured faculty. The Chapter asks that new deans and supervisors be reminded of the Extra Service process and the limits of mentee loads. Rai asks if the members' concerns have been shared with the Dean. Dianne explains that the concern has been shared with Faculty Chairs, and that untenured faculty do not feel safe speaking to their dean directly. Rai explains that it is strange that no one has raised the concern with the dean. We should have internal discussions to find out what's going on, to get some data and find a path forward. Sharon explains that Management and the dean were not aware of this issue, and they will look into this discomfort and uncertainty, and that members are working in an environment where they are safe from retaliation. Ideally, we can work together to coach members to ease some of their concerns in having workload conversations with their supervisor. Jason will circle back to Rai on this*
8. **Faculty will be involved in doing career counseling:** *Jason explains that the Chapter is hearing concerns from members about faculty giving career advice to students, something they are not trained to do. Sharon explains that this is about NISS, which is about providing students with opportunities to get the most out of their education after graduation. Once example, of many, is that in some cases a professor might be in the best position to give students insights into the market and professional value of their degree. As of now, there's been no ask. Rais and Jason to discuss how the student process at Empire has changed then vs now in terms of "advising" students on careers when, in the*

past, most students weren't coming in for pre-structured programs; they were just finding their way through and figuring out what they want to do.

9. **SALE survey follow-up:** Sharon explains that a meeting has been set. The best path forward is collaborative conversations in a smaller group, moving towards a larger group. There will be consultations. There's a clear plan to identify what we are trying to solve and to do so collaboratively.
10. **Brightspace login monitoring:** *Dianne reports receiving concerns from faculty around their engagement in Brightspace courses. Courses are not the only way that mentors engage with students (ex. Phone, email, teams, etc.) and Brightspace is only one way of capturing this information. The Chapter asks how this information is being used and who else has access to Brightspace courses?* Sharon asks that we put this topic on the next LM agenda and that the Chapter comes back with a recommendation for how to achieve the same purpose around student academic progress and student success. Rai explains that we need to demonstrate to external accreditation agencies and to ourselves that we are initiating substantive contact with our students and since our courses are in an LMS then that is the platform through which we can do that. *The Chapter agrees to come back with recommendation.*
11. Follow-up on College of Arts and Science PDRC correspondence.
12. **Faculty extra service rate:** *Jason asks why our rate is so low, and points to how this does directly impact the academic quality of who we are able to recruit for adjunct teaching.* Sharon asks to put this on the next LM so that we can come back with some date.
13. **Department chair compensation:** *The Chapter wants to discuss increasing the compensation to \$10,000. Michelle contextualizes that the lowest amount should be the adjunct rate for a 4 credit course and then work up from there to determine the value and equivalence to a course.* Sharon says Management will discuss and circle back to the Chapter.
14. **Reminding faculty and professionals of comp time and extra service.** *Emma explains that members should be reminded about comp time or extra service when working events.* Sharon agrees. She mentions to Lindsay that this should be part of the supervisor training.
15. **Rashmi Prasad:** Rashmi takes a moment to introduce himself further and ask about some of the general top priorities of the chapter. *The chapter brings up oversimplified or incomplete measures of workload and complexity. There was a discussion about how to make workload measurable while still being holistically approached.* Rashmi explains that Management views professionals and professional, and that one-sided measures come with flaws. We need multimethod measures to understand performance. Accountability is important at every level.