

# Empire State University - Labor-Management Meeting NOTES - 28 January 2026

**In attendance:** Lisa V.; Sharon B.; Rashmi P; Jason R.; Emma B.; Danielle R., Malongze F.; Aley O.; Janet A.; Sophia M.; Michele C. (LRS).

## Old business from the last meeting

1. Extra service for advising and full-time mentors. There are professional mentors who are at full load. When will they begin to receive extra service for exceeding mentee targets (UUP)? This problem has become especially acute in CHHS advising.

### Discussion of 1:

Emma brought up issues around workload for professional advisors, most recently for advisors of nursing students. In particular, NCC partnership students were assigned to FEA advisors at the same time as those advisors were being trained, essentially having to advise students without yet having the necessary training. Additionally, some are reporting they are performing extra time which should be compensated for with comp time or extra service. Sharon explains what she knows, which is that faculty workloads are academic year based, and loads are still being tracked to 540 at which point extra service comes into play. There have been some issues with an attempt to rectify the situation.

Advisors are also an academic year's load. The seasonal flux of incoming students happens each term, and there needs to be more frequent reviews of workload to better balance out the workloads of advisors. Seana will be providing extra service to specific impacted members. Rashmi explains that the sticking points here and with College of Ed seem to be both the training of advisors and faculty chair dynamics (e.g. who tend to be their go-to faculty, etc.). Sharon reiterates that they are working to have more timely monitoring of workloads and timely approaching compensation (comp time, extra service. etc.) where needed.

Emma asserts that the NCC partnership situation is not just a result of seasonal flux but is in many ways the result of non-renewing five part-time Nursing faculty. She

notes that this has placed additional expectations on people who would not otherwise have had this workload increase. Michele also spoke about issues around part-time Nursing faculty being non-renewed and the workload impact it had on members and the disruption of service to students due to multiple rounds of misinformation. Rashmi asks for the dates of these issues and correspondences to get a sense of the timeline to better understand and assess the issues which seem to be connected to Spring term. He will speak with the dean to gather more insight on the internal processes and will circle back to the Chapter.

Michele summarizes issues she's received from members about this issue, including confusing information they were directed to give their students. Rashmi asks to hear more about the issues this caused to members, and Emma explains that this caused workload issues for the remaining nursing advisors and other advisor staff. Michele adds that many part-timers are highly skilled at their work, yet oftentimes part-timers are chosen for termination for budgetary reasons, and their skills are overlooked, which causes a workload influx, confusing and poor transition.

2. College of Education faculty advising numbers and College of Education faculty workload. There are faculty in the College of Education who have exceeded their mentee expectation, and there are also faculty who are working in excess of the workload specified in their annual plans (UUP). The union is now prepared to proceed with an Improper Practice charge (IP) since there has been no movement from the administration on this matter.

#### Discussion of 2:

Dianne discusses some faculty continuing to experience workload issues. AI isn't a viable immediate solution because of the learning/training issues, so there's not much reprieve. It feels like the message being communicated to faculty and Chairs is that only teaching counts in your workload whereas other academic work such as co-editing, book editing, serving on the planning committee for a national conference, etc. does not count towards workload. Rashmi responds that this is a classic dilemma of role strain that's present throughout academia. The nature of the faculty is a broad role, and each of these pieces are woven into the role of faculty at all institutions, and these aspects are fundamental to the role of faculty. There are aspects that are more measurable and quantifiable, such as teaching.

Dianne acknowledges this and points out the weight of each needs to be more balanced so that the entirety of what faculty are doing counts to the workload. For example, faculty who are doing more scholarship may not have the same time for teaching as faculty who are not engaged in scholarship. Rashmi explains that when we look at all faculty, in general there is an overwhelming amount of release time for faculty to engage in scholarly and academic activities. Michelle explains that the way the law is written about academics makes a distinction between assigned work and self-directed work. Assigned work is considered part of their workload. For self-directed work there is more leeway to say how much of their work will count. So activities such as a professor being assigned to advise a graduate dissertation, that assignment of work needs to be counted into the workload pie. If someone self-selects to do certain academic work, the law doesn't require it to be counter in the workload pie. So perhaps we need to have more conversations about this. Rashmi agrees and states we need to have a model workload that encompasses faculty duties at Empire.

### 3. Brightspace monitoring. UUP would like to further discuss the definition of Regular and Substantive Interaction with students.

#### Discussion of 3:

Jason explains this is related to item #2 above. We currently have a definition of what substantive means: <https://lit.sunyempire.edu/dlis/design-your-course/regular-and-substantive-interaction/>. Additionally, it's been substantiated by members with expertise in the Middle States that substantive interaction is measured with more meaningful metrics than things like a number of logins. There is a federal compliance requirement that needs to be met, but it must take into account actual engagement. Rashmi explains that Empire's definition of RSI would require a lot more effort to meet than just 3 logins; however, how are we demonstrating to outside institutions and agencies that we are in compliance with Title 4 and all Financial Aid regulations. Three logins is a low baseline for doing that.

Dianne explains that while this makes sense, focusing only on Brightspace privileges that one modality and doesn't consider other modalities like synchronous Teams meetings, emails, phone calls where students might get substantial interaction with a faculty member. Rashmi acknowledges this and reiterates that while this may true, these modalities are all based on Brightspace courses, and Brightspace is the more efficient and effective to track. Everyone agrees that this discussion is ongoing as we move through our Middle States Accreditation process.

4. Faculty extra service rate. Many SUNY campuses pay the regular adjunct rate for extra service teaching. SUNY Empire is one of few campuses that pays a reduced rate yet is one of the most financially solvent. What is rationale for this policy (UUP)?

Discussion of 4:

Sharon explains this is being worked on, and there will be something ready for discussion and implementation.

5. Department chair compensation. The department chairs object to their low stipend and increasing workload. The stipend -- \$4,000 -- has not been raised in close to ten years (UUP).

Discussion of 5:

Sharon explains she's discussed this with the Cabinet and made some proposals. She will update us with more info.

6. UUP requests an administration response to the 25 October 2025 letter sent to Provost Kathuria regarding current teaching and mentoring loads for university faculty (full-time and part-time) (UUP). The union is going to proceed with an IP on this matter if we do not receive the requested data by January 30, 2026.

Discussion of 6:

Rashmi says they have the data. They've been conducting analysis on workload and extra service. He will send us the data at the end of this meeting.

## New business

7. Has the new Provost been oriented on SUNY Empire's faculty reappointment and review process and timeline (UUP)?

Discussion of 7:

Jason states we want assurance that she is knowledgeable about SUNY faculty review and reappointment process as we move into that part of the academic year.

Rashmi states they are working closely together, and she has knowledge and know-how. Dianne shares that there is worry from new faculty due to the ongoing rotation of leadership in this area. She further explains that members have expressed that the instability of the world right now adds to their feelings of worry and suggests perhaps the university speaks to the entire community on these issues as a way to ease these worries.

## 8. Adjunct course cancellations (UUP). UUP wishes to discuss how much notice is being given to adjunct instructors when they lose courses.

### Discussion of 8:

Jason and Emma discuss the broad negative this has for adjuncts who perhaps rely on these courses for healthcare, as well as confusion to students. Emma mentions that she is aware of sections with over ten students being canceled late in the registration timeline, causing extra work for everyone to help these students find alternatives. She remarks that it is unclear what guidelines are being used to determine which sections are canceled and when. Sharon acknowledges that tight timing such as this is always distressing. The challenge of Empire is that we allow for late enrollment, and things don't settle in with ample time to make these decisions. From an HR perspective, we do a lot of back bending when we find out that an adjunct may lose benefits, and we work very hard to find solutions. That is something that we can help with if we are made aware. Rashmi reiterates the sensitivity Management has around health insurance coverage for employees.

## 9. 100 percent, 120 percent, and extra service payment (UUP). UUP wants to discuss the origins of the current faculty load calculations, and how teaching relates to other faculty workload obligations.

### Discussion of 9:

Jason explains that this 120 came in during the pandemic under Malatras as an emergency measure. This happened in many industries, but this never bounced back to normal, and it should have. The Chapter is advising members to ask for extra service or take other things off their plate when they are approaching going above. There needs to be more discussion about how the various academic work faculty are doing is counted in the overall workload pie. This discussion keeps coming up, especially on this agenda. Sharon asks what happens for faculty who say they don't want to mentor; they only want to teach more. Jason explains that given the culture

and value of mentoring at Empire, this may not be received well by their community, but nothing is really done. Michelle explains that workload is supposed to be measured on a case-by-case basis each year. The Board of Trustees is pretty clear about the workload baskets that have to be (e.g., scholarship, teaching, university service, etc.). The baskets do not all have to be the same size, but too much overspecialization can set workload patterns and expectations that stifle professional growth. This is a cautionary tale. Dianne that course development be kept on the radar as part of the pie.

## 10. Amendment to the LOADinG Act, AI, and SUNY Empire (UUP). UUP wants to discuss the impact of the recently enacted amendment to the LOADinG act.

Discussion of 10: See item #13

## 11. SALE Negotiation:

Discussion of 11:

This will be the union's committee for the coming SALE negotiation: Jason Russell, Dianne Ramdeholl, Anastasia Pratt, Sue Epstein. Michelle Couture will attend as a non-voting member of the committee. For management: Rashmi Prasad, Lindsay Holcomb, Nathan Gonyea, Sharon Butler; possibly Liesl Zwicklebauer from SUNY

## 12. Structural Update (HR).

Discussion of 12:

Lisa explains this is about Student Success and Institutional Effectiveness will become its own division; will be posting a provost position and a VPSS; rationale is that we have the ability to have some clarity around the Provost role which over the past five years grew a lot; student support and institutional effectiveness grew into its own entity; the VPSS will report to the President; separating this role from the provost will allow the VPSS to focus exclusively on the work of this division whereas previously the Provost became too much for any one person to cover effectively; the changes align with our missions to be data informed and data driven; current "Decision Support" will become "Institutional Effectiveness"; keep this change in mind as we are discussing governance representation.

Emma asks about whether VMRC and why it was also being moved- Lisa explains over the years, VMRC has become more about student support and student life, and

now better aligns with the scope of student success than with recruitment. Emma asks whether this is mostly a change at the vice president level or if there will be additional changes in supervisors as a result of these shifts- Lisa explains that we are fundamentally looking at top-level reporting structure changes to best allow everyone to have the support they need to do the best they can to serve our students; three offices will be combined to form one division for high level impact. However, she mentions that there may be additional impacts in the future as the needs of the new division are assessed.

Similarly, when Emma asks if this will result in changes in the day-to-day tasks of staff, Lisa answers that it is primarily a structural shift but that she is open to additional changes if the need arises after the transition. Jason asks about the possibility of having a Dean of Graduate Studies again. Lisa responds that supporting grad students is an area where we have room for improvement, but having a Dean of Grad isn't something that's been explored and may not be the most effective as academic programs are rolled into Schools.

Jason explains that, anecdotally, it seems that the size of undergrad programs makes it difficult for graduate programs to get the support they need. Lisa is aware, it's on the radar and the area of graduate student support and graduate student success is something we are paying attention to... where do we intervene to create the right structure to support grad students. Rashmi adds that there have been meetings to assess the support available to grad students; there are discussions about possible new allocations/positions in student success devoted specifically to graduate students.

### 13. Request for input regarding AI (HR).

#### Discussion of 13:

Lisa discusses she came from a meeting with Google and asks about how we're supporting people's professional development through AI. This is going to be a focus at the Annual Meeting- providing learning opportunities for faculty and staff; we want to be supporting our workforce to continue learning and growing in the work they do. Jason explains UUP's position and advocacy around AI. Additionally, there are competing realities with how/if students are using it. There's no way to ignore it, and we know the chancellor and others are enthusiastic about it, so it's going to be an item to be negotiated.

Emma adds information about SUNY AI Legal Institute, saying that some of the developed guidelines should be reviewed and implemented. She raised realistic

concerns around biases, both content generated but also which tasks we use it for and how we use that to draw concepts and (de)valuation to some people and the work they do. The human component of the work we do needs to remain and use that human lens to examine how/when/if we're using AI will be critical moving forward. Sharon echoes these sentiments and explains that we have an obligation to provide support to our staff and students in adapting new technologies like AI. The cautions are very important, but they inform our choices in the exposure we provide employees to the tools and resources needed to stay employable.

## 14. Request for input regarding performance management (HR).

### Discussion of 14:

Sharon explains she'd like feedback from Chapter to think about this. Emma suggested that one of the most meaningful changes to be made is to more formally recognize supervisory work and allow time for it in performance programs. She notes that many times supervision is only noted in a single line, whereas supervision that provides ongoing feedback, support, and mentorship may require significant amounts of time and effort. Sharon suggested having additional meetings about this and set up times for discussion with Emma and Sophia on this topic