

President's Report – October 2025

Fall in Upstate New York: A Season of Reflection and Action for Workers

As we settle into the crisp fall weather in Upstate New York, there's much to appreciate in our region, from vibrant foliage to activities that bring the community together. One such experience is the historic Cooperstown train ride, where you can journey through scenic landscapes aboard vintage rail cars. The Cooperstown & Charlotte Valley Railroad, established in 1869, offers a rare chance to connect with the past and witness firsthand the role that railroads once played in shaping this country's development while enjoying the beautiful fall scenery. As you cross the river on two steel-truss bridges and meander through forests, wetlands, and rolling farmland, it's a reminder of how essential workers in transportation—past and present—are to keeping our world moving.

Our Colleagues at SUNY ESF Need Our Support

However, as we reflect on our region's history and the workers who built it, we must also take a stand for our colleagues who are fighting for the future of public education in New York State. The recent threats to the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (ESF) are a stark reminder that workers, students, and communities will bear the brunt of austerity measures.

These cuts are not just about “belt-tightening” as some would have us believe. What's at stake is the very mission of an institution that has prepared generations of environmental leaders. SUNY's proposed cuts will drastically reduce state funding for ESF, leading to a 20% reduction in staff, cuts to courses and educational programs, and additional austerity measures over the next four years. This is a direct attack on public education amid a climate crisis, where environmental knowledge and leadership have never been more essential.

It's up to us to stand with our colleagues at SUNY ESF and demand that the voices of educators and students are heard. Please take a moment to sign the [ESF Letter of Support](#) to Governor Hochul. Every signature represents our collective resistance against the privatization of public institutions and the erosion of educational opportunities for future generations.

Oneonta UUP: Advocating for Workers' Rights and Fair Contracts

In addition to standing in solidarity with our colleagues at ESF, we are also deep into our next round of UUP Contract Negotiations. As we approach another round of contract talks, we know that our fight is not just about better pay, but about protecting the integrity of our work and ensuring that our labor is valued and respected.

As Chapter President, I will be attending the Statewide Negotiation Committee Meeting in Albany on October 9-10, 2025, alongside **Vice President of Professionals, Jessie Simpauc**, and **Officer for Contingents, Melissa Lavin**. These meetings are crucial as we fight for the fair

contracts and worker protections that every member deserves. We've already begun hearing from our colleagues here at Oneonta during the Chapter Meeting on September 10, 2025—and we're listening. The issues raised by faculty and professionals—such as job security, salary disparities, healthcare options (especially for individuals plus one versus families), mental health care access, elder care, and the ability to donate sick leave—are real concerns that we are bringing to the table. This fight isn't just for better benefits; it's for a more equitable workplace and for a community that values the contributions of every worker.

October Events: Building Solidarity and Knowledge

As we continue our work, we're also hosting events in October that center on important conversations and initiatives that align with our mission to build a stronger, more united campus community.

- On October 7th at Noon in Le Café, join us for a roundtable discussion on *A Restorative Justice Approach to Immigration*, led by DEI Committee Chair, **Professor Penina Kamina**, along with members **John Chiang** and **Erin Francisco**. This is an important opportunity for solidarity, education, and reflection on how immigration and labor intersect in our country today.
- On October 29th at 9:00 AM in Le Café, don't miss our workshop on *Getting to Tenure*, presented by **Labor Relations Specialist, Chris Sielaff**. This session will be invaluable for both new and seasoned faculty who are navigating the tenure process and want to understand their rights and responsibilities under our union contract.

Leadership Opportunities: Get Involved!

Finally, I want to highlight an important opportunity for those who are interested in leadership within our campus union. The Oneonta UUP Chapter currently has an opening for the position of Vice President for Academics. If you are a faculty member who is passionate about the issues we face and are committed to advocating for our rights, I encourage you to reach out. Email me at clarksa12@gmail.com for more details about this leadership position.

Our Collective Strength

As we move forward through another busy semester, I encourage all of you to stay engaged, stay informed, and stay united. The work we do as a union—whether through contract negotiations, advocacy for public education, or creating space for vital discussions—requires the power of collective action. Every step we take together makes a difference.

Thank you all for your continued support and commitment to fighting for the rights and well-being of all workers.