



*A Future that
HEALS*

UUP 2021 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA
Healthcare, Education, Access, Leadership, Sustainability

United University Professions (UUP), with our 37,000 active members and 6,000 retirees across New York, are committed to advocating for a cleaner, fairer, more just community for all New Yorkers. We are a solutions-driven union that is proposing an ambitious agenda for 2021-22, focused on the access and delivery of health care for all, raising revenue through a just and progressive tax system, and making SUNY a dynamic vehicle for economic, social, and environmental change. We must rise to meet the many challenges of 2021 and beyond.

UUP members work at....

COMPREHENSIVE COLLEGES



ACADEMIC MEDICAL CENTERS



TECH. CAMPUSES



UNIVERSITY CENTERS



United University Professions
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Contact Daniel Brown, Political Director - dbrown@uupmail.org, about UUP's legislative agenda



HEALTHCARE

1 Restore Mission Funding to SUNY Hospitals

The state's subsidy for SUNY's hospitals was cut by 75 percent between 2008 and 2017 and eliminated completely in 2018. The coronavirus pandemic has made it obvious that New York needs fully funded public hospitals. SUNY's public teaching hospitals continue to care for COVID-19 patients, regardless of their ability to pay. SUNY Downstate Health Sciences University in Brooklyn was designated a COVID-only hospital in the early months of the pandemic to help manage rising cases in the community, while SUNY Stony Brook University Hospital and SUNY Upstate Medical University in Syracuse continue to battle the virus in their communities.

Essential mission funding is required for their continued success. SUNY hospitals provide care for everyone who walks through their doors. No one is turned away, even if they can't pay for care.

SUNY hospitals continue to be the only state agency or institution required to pay salaries, fringe benefits, and debt service for necessary hospital maintenance. The state covers these costs for every other state government entity. Mission funding for the hospitals was created in part to offset that burden. The state must provide the proper level of support to maintain the quality services delivered by these public hospitals every day.

UUP urges the state to restore \$87 million for essential mission funding for SUNY's hospitals.

2 Fully Cover DSH Funding

Disproportionate share hospital (DSH) payments were created as a joint federal and state program to support hospitals that serve large numbers of Medicaid and low-income patients. This payment is a reimbursement for the care provided to patients without health insurance or other means to pay. As a matching program, these payments are funded partly by New York state and partly by the federal government.

The state has arbitrarily and unilaterally imposed a cap on the amount it will match on federal DSH funds for the three SUNY hospitals. Removing the cap would preserve and continue the state's payment of the SUNY hospitals' DSH funding match—as required by the federal government—to ensure future eligibility for DSH funding.

A reduction in DSH funding, combined with the loss of matching state Medicaid funds, poses an unacceptable risk to hospital financial solvency and, ultimately, to the patients the state is obligated to care for in these state-operated health care facilities.

UUP urges the state to remove the funding cap and fully match DSH funding.



3 Hazard Pay for Front-Line Workers

UUP members at our public teaching hospitals have been on the front lines of the COVID fight since the start of the pandemic. At Downstate and Stony Brook hospitals, our members have treated thousands of COVID-positive patients, and they continue to provide that life-saving care today. Now, during this second wave, as the virus has taken hold upstate, our members at Upstate Medical are delivering world-class, life-saving services to thousands across Central New York.

Our members have placed their families' health and their own health and safety on the line to provide care to critically-ill patients without hazard pay or other additional compensation to recognize these efforts. It's time for the state to honor their sacrifices and commit funding to compensate these brave, dedicated front-line workers.

UUP urges the state to award special COVID-19 response compensation to its public teaching hospital front-line workers.

4 Establish a Network of 25 SUNY-Operated Ambulatory Care Centers Across New York

To create health care access of the highest quality, SUNY should establish a network of ambulatory care facilities across New York state, in as many communities as possible. These care centers will expand access to high-quality medical care in underserved areas of New York while also providing an excellent learning environment for medical students, interns, and residents at SUNY's academic medical centers.

UUP urges the state to allocate \$250 million each year, through 2025, to establish a network of 25 SUNY-operated ambulatory care centers across New York.



5 Create the University at Buffalo Medical Center Hospital

The coronavirus pandemic has amplified the need for world-class public hospitals in Buffalo and Western New York. To meet this need and expand the world-class medical education at the University at Buffalo, the state should create a public medical center and teaching hospital at the University at Buffalo.

Creating a SUNY teaching hospital in Buffalo would not only enhance the level of care provided to the public, but it would also allow future health care professionals studying at the University at Buffalo the same access as those earning degrees at Upstate Medical University Hospital, Downstate Health Sciences University Hospital, and Stony Brook University Hospital.

UUP urges the state to establish funding to create the University at Buffalo Medical Center Hospital.



6 Expand the Mission of Downstate Health Sciences University to be the Center of Maternal and Child Services

SUNY Downstate is located in the epicenter of a severe maternal morbidity crisis and has a mission commitment to serve the Central Brooklyn community regardless of income or ability to pay, making this academic medical center uniquely positioned to research and address maternal morbidity and children's healthcare issues.

SUNY Downstate should expand its services and mission to be the center of maternal and child services in Brooklyn. In conjunction with these efforts, we support the passage of the Chisholm Chance Plan (S322), introduced by Senator Myrie.

UUP urges the state to expand the mission of SUNY Downstate to be the center of maternal and child services in Brooklyn and pass the Chisholm Chance Plan.



EDUCATION

1 Correct the TAP Formula to Eliminate the Gap Permanently

The TAP Gap—the difference between SUNY tuition and what TAP (Tuition Assistance Program) covers—is a loss of approximately \$70 million every year that SUNY’s 29 state-operated campuses must absorb while providing a quality education. More than 40 percent of students receiving TAP attend SUNY. More than one-third of students at SUNY’s state-operated campuses receive TAP (plus the tuition gap/credit that SUNY campuses forego). SUNY’s 2020-2021 tuition was \$7,070; the maximum TAP award only covers \$5,000 of that tuition cost—covering only 71 percent of SUNY undergraduate tuition. The TAP gap was \$2,070 per student receiving the maximum TAP award. The current TAP formula is expiring, and now is the time to fix it— for good.

UUP urges the state to correct the TAP formula to permanently eliminate the gap.

2 Establish Additional Tenure Track Lines in SUNY

Faculty and staff at SUNY campuses across the state quickly adjusted and stepped up to provide world-class education and support to SUNY students virtually during the pandemic, and they continue to work tirelessly to keep students safe as some in-person learning has resumed.

SUNY must invest in educators. The success of SUNY students now and in the future depends on reversing a chronic shortage of full-time faculty positions. From 1996 to 2016, the percentage of tenured/tenure-track faculty declined from 60% to 39%. During that same period, the percentage of bachelor’s degrees awarded grew by 40% and the percentage of graduate degrees awarded grew by 32%. The state has provided no additional funding to cope with the growth. In addition, reports from campuses indicate that tenured positions vacated through retirements—due to the



pandemic—are not likely to be filled unless there is more funding, further exacerbating the relative decrease of tenured/tenure-track faculty that’s been the trend.

In addition, students are facing unprecedented challenges in their new learning environment and additional professional staff to support students’ educational, physical, and emotional needs are necessary to ensure students’ success on campus and post-graduation.

UUP urges the state to allocate \$100 million in state support to hire more full-time faculty and professional staff. These funds would also provide opportunities for part-time employees to become full-time employees.

3 Remove the Graduate Admissions Requirement for the GRE or Equivalent Exam

The GRE/equivalent exam requirement for admission to graduate teacher education and school leadership programs is an unnecessary barrier to recruiting diverse candidates for the teaching and school leadership professions. It is not a valid predictor of students’ ability to successfully complete graduate programs. There is no required score; it is simply a costly hurdle with no impact on the assessment of a student’s readiness for graduate work. It’s cost is a barrier for low-income students, and it serves as a deterrent for individuals who are changing careers (e.g., veterans, school paraprofessionals, and students from underrepresented groups) who face particular difficulties in securing the time and resources needed to obtain graduate degrees.

UUP urges the state to remove the GRE/ equivalent exam requirement for admission to graduate teaching and school leadership programs.



ACCESS

1 Double Funding to the Educational Opportunity Program

The state should aggressively expand SUNY's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) by doubling the number of students, staff and funding by 2025. EOP provides access and support to students who would not have otherwise been offered admission to SUNY. EOP has a proven record of success with more than 70,000 graduates, many of whom still live and work in New York. Restoring EOP funding can no longer be the answer. Funding must be systematically increased to expand programs and increase access to more students.

UUP urges the state to double the students, staff, and funding for EOP.

2 Create a Medical Educational Opportunity Program (MEOP)

Establish a MEOP with a target of 100 new students at the four SUNY medical schools in the next academic year. Studies show that by 2032, there could be a physician shortage of up to 121,000 doctors nationwide. MEOP will draw students from underrepresented and under-resourced communities. With proper support, at an initial cost of \$5 million to pilot this program, more diverse cohorts of students studying to be doctors and other healthcare professionals will complete their degrees and care for patients in their communities.

UUP urges the state to create a Medical Educational Opportunity Program with a goal of 100 new students in the first year.



3 Free SUNY Education for Workers on the Front Lines of the Coronavirus Pandemic

Public workers have been on the front lines of the coronavirus pandemic since it began in March 2020. They have risked their health and the health of their families to care for fellow New Yorkers and provide essential services—with limited PPE, resources, and support. These workers include bus drivers, sanitation workers, EMTs, health care professionals and other public employees who could not telecommute and served the public during this crisis.

UUP urges the state to offer a free SUNY education to any public employee who was a front-line provider during the coronavirus pandemic.

4 Waive Licensure and Certification Fees for New York State Front-Line Healthcare Professionals

Many of the occupations that have been in high demand throughout the COVID-19 crisis, and will continue to be long after, are regulated in a way that increases the cost to the healthcare professionals for continued licensure and certification. Many UUP members also had to purchase their own PPE during the immediate response to COVID-19, further increasing personal cost.

UUP urges the state to waive any state-imposed fees or other expenses related to renewal of job-related licenses or certifications for up to five years for healthcare professionals who worked at a public healthcare facility during the COVID state of emergency.



LEADERSHIP

Lead the way to a strong future for all New Yorkers with stable long-term funding and aggressive efforts to diversify SUNY.

1 Increase Funding to Advance Faculty Diversity

Ensure that at least 25% of faculty and staff positions in SUNY are filled by individuals who are African American, Native American and Latine by 2025. The SUNY PRODiG (“Promoting Recruitment, Opportunity, Diversity, Inclusion and Growth”) program launched in 2019 begins this important work, but we can do more. Less than 9 percent of SUNY faculty are racially or ethnically diverse (as of Fall 2018), while underrepresented minorities made up 27 percent of total enrollment in Fall 2020.

UUP urges the state to allocate funding for recruiting and retaining diverse faculty and staff at SUNY.

2 Stock Transfer Tax

UUP supports Sen. James Sanders’ (S01406) and Assemblymember Phil Steck’s (A03353) legislation. The revenue from a tax on stock transfers of 0.0025% would go into the general fund for the first two years to stabilize the state’s budget from the crisis caused by COVID-19. UUP has been successful in a bill revision that dedicates 2.5% of bill revenue to SUNY and 2.5% to CUNY beginning in year three that will support academic programs at both institutions, as well as SUNY hospitals and overdue CUNY infrastructure.

UUP urges the state to reinstate the state’s Stock Transfer Tax.

3 Ultra-Millionaires’ Tax

UUP supports the Shared Help Assessment to Rebuild Education Act (SHARE Act) proposed by Sen. Shelley Mayer (S.8329) and Assemblymember Deborah Glick (A.10450) and the Progressive Income Tax (Assembly Bill #TBD/ Senate sponsor Robert Jackson; Bill #S2622).

The SHARE Act creates a higher income-tax bracket for New Yorkers who earn more than \$5 million in fiscal years 2020 and 2021. The new revenue would go directly to public education and public higher education, with 85 percent to P-12 and 15 percent to SUNY and CUNY. A flat tax rate of 10.90 percent would be created for New Yorkers who fall in that new tax bracket. It would generate more than \$2.5 billion. The income bracket would expire after two years.

The Progressive Income Tax creates an equitable tax system where New Yorkers pay a higher rate if they earn significantly more money. Right now, individuals with incomes between \$21,400 and \$1,077,550 all pay roughly the same tax rate of 6.5%. Higher earners should pay a higher rate. The Progressive Income Tax raises the tax rates on the top 5% of New Yorkers. Raises: \$12-18 billion.

UUP urges the state to pass an ultra-millionaires’ tax.



4 Pied-a-Terre Tax

UUP supports Sen. Hoylman's (S00044) and Assemblymember Glick's (A04540) proposed legislation of tax on luxury residential property in New York City not used as primary residences by their owners. This tax would be between 0.5% to 4% on home market values above \$5 million. For condos and co-ops, the tax would be 10% to 13.5% on assessed values above \$300,000.

UUP urges the state to pass a pied-a-terre tax.

5 Legalize Recreational Marijuana

UUP supports the legalization of adult cannabis use and then dedicating 1% of revenue gained to Medical Higher Education Diversity grants. For decades, our African American and Latine communities have been underserved by and underrepresented in the medical field. UUP proposes using 1% of cannabis legalization revenue for scholarships and grants to expand our medical school diversity program, including UUP's Medical EOP initiative. Initial estimates would be approximately \$3 million with a cap on program funds at \$10 million.

UUP urges the state to legalize adult cannabis use and dedicate 1% of revenue gained to Medical Higher Education Diversity grants.

6 Tax SUNY Foundations for Adjunct Retention Program

As the financial crisis in New York state continues unresolved, the most vulnerable members of the SUNY community are adjunct faculty. Adjunct faculty are a crucial component to higher education. As such, UUP proposes a 0.5% tax on campus foundations systemwide, to be used for adjunct retention. With SUNY campus foundations' assets valued between \$1 billion and \$2 billion, this tax could save thousands of jobs.

UUP urges the state to impose a 0.5% tax system-wide on campus foundations to be used for adjunct retention.



7 Fully Fund New York State/UUP Contract

The state negotiates in good faith and agrees upon the terms and conditions included in the contract for public employees and yet avoids financial responsibility. It is unfair to place this burden on underfunded campuses. The state should be accessing and dedicating general fund appropriations to fully fund agreed-upon contract costs. The impact of this misappropriated responsibility has been magnified as already underfunded SUNY campuses are forced to shoulder this financial burden during a global pandemic when their scarce resources should be used to support student success. The state must cover these costs.

UUP urges the state to access and dedicate general fund appropriations to fully fund agreed upon contract costs.

8 Capital Gains Tax (Assembly Sponsor Ron Kim; Bill #A3352/ Senate Sponsor Gustavo Rivera; Bill #S2522)

A capital gains tax would tax income from investments like stocks the same as wages. Right now, rich people make much of their income from investments like stocks, not from their jobs. The federal government taxes investment income at a much lower rate than the income we make at our jobs. New York can fix this by adding a tax to investment income that's equal to the tax break the rich are getting from the federal government. Raises: \$7 billion.

UUP urges the state to pass capital gains tax legislation.

9 Heirs' Tax (Assembly Bill #TBD/ Senate sponsor Jabari Brisport; Bill #3462)

A progressive tax on large sums of inherited wealth. Many wealthy people make their money not from going to work, but from inheriting enormous sums of money. Working people pay taxes on the entirety of the income they make each year — the income they make from work. However, generationally rich individuals can make \$5 million in a year through inheritance and pay no tax on it.

Most New Yorkers wouldn't be affected by an increased tax on inheritances. Only the top 1 percent of inheritances would be affected, and only amounts in excess of \$250,000. Inheritances that would be exempted are: family houses up to \$2 million, money from pensions or retirement funds, and family farms. This would raise \$8 billion in new revenue.

UUP urges the state to pass and enact the Heirs' Tax.

10 Billionaires' Tax (Assembly sponsor Carmen De La Rosa; Bill # TBD/ Senate sponsor Jessica Ramos; Bill #TBD)

For the vast majority of New Yorkers, their family or personal wealth is their home. That wealth is significantly taxed already through their property taxes. Homeowners pay them every year. Meanwhile, if you own a massive stock portfolio, it is not taxed. A Billionaires' Tax would treat billionaires' gains in wealth as income, and these increases would be taxed at income tax rates. This would raise \$23 billion in the first year, \$1.3 billion per year thereafter.

UUP urges the passage of the Billionaires' Tax.



UUP SUPPORTS:

- With our community allies, NY Renews, passage of the **Climate and Community Investment Act (CCIA)** (Assembly Bill A09856, Senate Bill S03616). The CCIA would make polluters pay for the damage they do, create well-paid green jobs, invest in communities hit hardest by COVID-19 and the climate crisis, and get New York to a 100% renewable economy.
- **The New York Health Act**, which would provide comprehensive, universal health coverage for every New York resident and worker.
- **Assembly Bill A257C**, which requires the governor to publicly disclose all fossil fuel tax expenditures and installs a sunset date five years from passage for these subsidies, except on a case-by-case basis for those the state legislature deems essential.
- **Fighting any attempts to cut Medicare benefits** or any reduction in retiree benefits.
- **Refinancing existing capital debt to assist campuses with their financial challenges and improve SUNY's infrastructure.**
- **The Green Amendment**, a constitutional amendment to the New York State Constitution that would guarantee, "each person shall have the right to clean air and water, and a healthful environment."



SUSTAINABILITY



1 Reduce SUNY's carbon footprint by 25% in year 2021

SUNY must begin to implement aggressive measures to meet the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act (CLCPA) passed in 2019. Through the installation of solar, wind, and geothermal projects, SUNY—which accounts for 40% of the state's real estate footprint—must reduce their carbon footprint by 25%. Implementing broad renewable energy options for campuses, combined with reducing wasted usage, will allow SUNY to meet the goals for a greener New York and cleaner planet.

UUP urges the state to allocate funding for broad renewable energy options at SUNY, with the goal of reducing SUNY's carbon footprint by 25% in 2021.

2 Expand Degrees and Training/Retraining for Green Jobs at SUNY

SUNY can train the next generation of green energy experts with a focus on creating new degree and training programs at campuses across the state to meet the rising need for these professions. Students can earn their degree while receiving hands-on experience and helping advance the green energy goals of New York state.

UUP urges the state to aggressively expand degree programs across SUNY that serve to increase employment opportunities in green energy projects.

3 Establish SUNY as a World Leader in Climate Crisis Research and Mitigation

SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry (SUNY ESF) has the expertise to be and must become the leader in researching

the climate crisis and developing the necessary mitigation techniques. SUNY ESF is also uniquely positioned to study the impacts on environmental injustice on communities across New York. In addition, SUNY must lead the way in carrying out the goals of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act by expanding climate research and programs at all institutions.

UUP urges the state to dedicate funding for climate crisis research and mitigation at SUNY institutions.

4 Establish a pilot program of microgrids and battery storage at campuses across New York.

Through a pilot program of energy microgrids and battery storage, SUNY campuses and the communities they are located in can create and store clean energy. New Yorkers living near SUNY campuses would have the opportunity to take part in the energy microgrids and help maximize the capture of solar energy, wind turbine-generated electricity, and other renewable energy options. The generated energy would be stored on SUNY campuses. Students in SUNY green energy programs can receive hands-on experience by working on the creation and maintenance of the grids. When successful, the pilot program can be expanded to all SUNY campuses. This partnership between community and campus will result in savings for taxpayers, in addition to millions of dollars that can be redirected to educational programming.

UUP urges the state to dedicate funding for establishing a pilot program of energy microgrids and battery storage at campuses across SUNY.