



Report of the UUP President
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What exactly *is* a cubit?

As I mentioned last time, my use of weather analogies in describing the budget situation surrounding SUNY is becoming problematic—and rapidly so. Perhaps I should have started my earlier analogies with, say, a forecast for “gentle showers,” rather than “a rising storm.” The problem, now, is it’s hard to ramp up to a proper meteorological description for what’s coming next.

Over the past two-years, we’ve seen state funding for SUNY drop precipitously. Indeed, with the funding cut proposed by the Governor’s Budget for FY2010-2011 the decrease now stands at well over \$500 million. How can we describe this as being less than catastrophic? While I hesitate to invoke the image of a biblical flood, getting to know more about Noah and his preparations for it may be time well spent. According to Genesis 6:15, the arc was 50 cubits by 300 cubits, and 30 cubits in height. Maybe we should send a copy of the plans to each SUNY campus.

Executive Budget: The Good, The Bad, The Ugly

On January 19th, Governor Paterson released his Executive Budget for FY2010-2011, along with his Article VII Bill, which contains, in part, details on his so-called, “Public Higher Education Empowerment and

Innovation Act.” I’ll have more to say about the “Act” later on; for now let’s focus on the financial parts.

As a disclaimer, let me say that I haven’t had a chance to fully digest the several thousand pages of the Budget and Article VII Bill, so there’s likely to be some additional details that will be reported at the DA.

The Good: Next year’s proposed Budget contains—in large part due to our urging—negotiated salary increases, fringe benefits, and other mandatory costs at the traditional campuses as part of the “SUNY Base Funding.” The state subsidy for hospitals was not reduced and remains at \$129 million. I hasten to say, however, this does not cover the salary or fringe benefits of hospital employees. So, the “Good News” is exceedingly limited.

The Bad: The governor’s Budget reduces that “Base Funding” by some \$118 million for state-operated campuses and University programs. Said another way, the Budget cuts \$118M from what should otherwise have been made available to SUNY in 2010-2011. This brings the combined two-year cuts to \$528 million!

Once again, the SUNY hospitals would be forced to shoulder the burden of providing \$54 million in salary and benefits costs.

Hospitals would also pay \$20.5 million to the State Retirement Fund, to cover stock market losses over the past two years. There's also one great unknown. That is, how Medicaid actions may affect our hospitals.

Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) would be reduced by about \$50 million for 2010-2011. Proposed are increases of academic and other standards, and the individual awards would be reduced by \$75 for each recipient. Other restrictions placed on TAP award recipients include a decrease for students who are married but do not have children.

Included in the governor's Budget proposals is SUNY's share (approx. \$30 million) of what's called "negotiated personal service savings." This may translate into an additional payroll lag—or more onerously, a call for salary givebacks.

The Ugly: Unlike previous years, this Executive Budget does not line out the specifics of the \$118 million reduction. And, in doing so, there's no direction specifying how SUNY is to absorb this cut. Hence SUNY would be "left on its own" to determine how individual campuses would be required to handle the decrease of funding.

One particularly onerous proposal is the elimination of funding for the New York Theatre Institute (NYSTI). This blow comes on the heels of last year's attempt to merge NYSTI with The Egg. Essentially, the governor is proposing that NYSTI survive solely based on ticket sales and other revenues. Simply put: We cannot allow this to happen!

Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act

Let there be no doubt—this "Act" is SUNY Flex. Over the past several months, I've spoken at length with the Chancellor and members of the governor's senior staff about

our very, very serious concerns on all parts of this plan. Thankfully, some of my words have gotten through. But that's not to say that we still don't have serious reservations and objections to many parts of this "Act."

It's vitally important to recognize from the outset: If this "Act" goes forward as drafted, the overall impact would give New York State a clear imprimatur to abdicate its responsibility for financially supporting SUNY's operating budget. In other words, SUNY would get its wish to "go it alone."
❖UUP opposes this concept.

The "Act" authorizes the SUNY Board of Trustees—without executive or legislative oversight—to annually increase tuition across-the-board at both the undergraduate and graduate level up to 2.5 times the five-year rolling average of the Higher Education Price Index (HEPI). Since that HEPI average is approximately 3.9 percent, tuition could rise by nearly 10 percent in the coming year. It's important to note that the "Act" authorizes differential tuition for all campuses for 2010-2011—and that increase would be in addition to the across-the-board tuition hike mentioned above.
❖UUP opposes this concept.

The "Act" permits SUNY to expend all of its tuition and self-generated revenues without State appropriation. That is, there would be no direction on spending from the Executive or Legislative branches, as in past years.
❖UUP is seriously concerned how this would be monitored and reported, given the projected lack of accountability and transparency.

The "Act" permits the University to hold and control investment of all its revenues. Currently, the State Treasury holds such revenues.
❖UUP is seriously concerned how this will be monitored and reported. Again, this is an issue of accountability and transparency.

Although, SUNY is precluded from the sale of State-owned assets on its campuses, the University would be authorized to enter into leases, of up to 50-years, with private or not-for-profit entities. The governor was responsive to our concerns on this issue, so oversight for such leases would vest in the control of a State University Asset Maximization Review Board, comprised of appointees from the Governor's Office and the Legislative leadership. However, this three-member panel would not have to fully agree on the merits of a proposal. Indeed, if they do not assent within 45 days, SUNY would be authorized to move the project forward.

❖UUP cannot accept this proposal as drafted.

The "Act" permits the University to enter into service contracts with private and not-for-profit entities without prior authorization of the comptroller. And it authorizes public/private partnerships with not-for-profits, limited liability corporations, and private business entities. The governor's bill provides a degree of employee and labor protections, but they clearly need to be markedly strengthened.

❖UUP opposes such provisions as currently drafted.

The "Act" authorizes the State University Construction Fund to use alternative design/build techniques, and increases construction bond requirements.

❖UUP has supported this provision in past years.

The "Act" also authorizes the University to purchase goods without pre-audit approval of the comptroller.

❖UUP supports this provision.

In an overall sense, the governor's proposed new "Act" is an invitation for SUNY to buy into its eventual self-destruction. The "Mission of SUNY" to provide an affordable and accessible education to all of New York's

citizens will be set aside, as SUNY's fiscal needs are shifted from the State to that of our students and their parents. Clearly, if the State "takes a walk," SUNY would be forced to liquidate its assets and pass increased costs on to the only source of income it has left—students.

The road ahead just got a bit steeper. But we've trod this path before, and shoulder-to-shoulder we'll do it again! Here's what we need to do: We need to get as many UUPers as possible to meet with their legislators during our scheduled Advocacy Days—and we need as many UUPers as possible to meet with their legislators in their local district offices. This is "the real deal." The future of SUNY is at stake—as are many, many jobs! So let me remind everyone of my challenge from the Fall DA: "If not now, when? If not you, who?"

For a Change—A bit of "Good News"

At the Fall DA, I started my report by informing you about the labor difficulties that were swirling around the Hyatt Corporation as we opened our convocation at their Rochester facility. Much to my chagrin after returning to Albany following the DA, I was faced with news about a somewhat similar situation involving workers at TIAA-CREF's headquarters in New York.

Here's what happened: At the Manhattan headquarters of TIAA-CREF, there's a cafeteria that was staffed by members of UniteHere. When the previous lease expired, the food service operation was transferred to a new owner, who promptly fired all the employees and replaced them with non-union workers. When UniteHere's local president contacted me, I immediately wrote to Roger Ferguson, TIAA-CREF's CEO, and made calls to my contacts within the Manhattan facility. My message was clear and to the point: UUP—the nation's largest higher education union—will not allow our

major retirement partner to tolerate such actions within its walls!

While I won't claim that my "in your face" letter and phone calls saved the day, I'm pleased to report that all of the former workers were offered their old jobs back or a generous severance package—and all of them are extremely happy. What's more, the new company has agreed to recognize the union, is negotiating a new contract, and—amazingly—has offered immediately a package of employer-paid health coverage. As the A-Team's Col. Hannibal Smith would have said, "I love it when a plan comes together!"

Status of Resolutions from the Fall DA

Resolution in Support of the University of California Employees from the Executive Board. Letters were sent to the appropriate contacts within the UC system, including UPTC-CWA Local 9199, and AFSCME Local 3299.

Resolution in Support of Fired Boston Hyatt Workers from the Executive Board. A letter was sent to Hyatt CEO, along with a petition containing hundreds of signatures.

Resolution on Racist Language in the Media from the Executive Board. The resolution was posted on UUP Web site as directed.

Resolution from the Membership Committee Amending Policy on NYSUT Associate Membership. Language from the resolution was transmitted to NYSUT.

Resolution from the Membership Committee to Explore the feasibility of placing all public resources of UUP on LeaderNet. The project is currently underway. However, there are certain privacy issues that need to be resolved concerning listing of delegates' information.

Resolution from the Committee on Active Retired Membership to Remove Michael J. Astrue as Commissioner of the Social Security Administration. Letters to that effect were sent to President Barak Obama and all members of the NY Congressional Delegation.

Resolution from the Solidarity Committee in Support of a Boycott of the Holiday Inn Express Latham. An email detailing this situation was sent to chapter presidents in the Capital District for transmittal to their members.

Resolution from the Solidarity Committee on the Right of Iraqi Workers to Form and Join Unions. As defined by this resolution, a letter was sent to Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Resolution from the Labor and Higher Education, Solidarity and Women's Rights and Concerns Committees on the War in Afghanistan. Letters concerning this situation were sent to President Obama, Vice President Biden, and all members of the NY Congressional Delegation.

Resolution from the Women's Rights and Concerns and LGBTQ Committees in Support of ENDA. A letter supporting ENDA was sent to all members of the NY Congressional Delegation.

Resolution from the Committee of Vice Presidents for Academics on recent events at Binghamton University. Letters concerning Binghamton University's treatment of Professor Dear were sent to AAUP, its Committee A, and all UUP affiliates.

Resolution from the Human and Civil Rights and the LGBTQ Committees Endorsing Legislation Legalizing Same Sex Marriage. Letters to all NYS Legislators were sent conveying UUP's support of the pending legislation. The issue was also

addressed in The Voice, which was distributed to media outlets.

Resolution from the Human and Civil Rights and the LGBTQ Committees Asserting Equal Access to Quality Health Care as a Human Right. Letters conveying UUP's support of this legislation were sent to all NYS Legislators and the NY Congressional Delegation.

Resolution from the LGBTQ Committee Urging Chapters to Establish LGBTQ Committees. An email was sent to chapter presidents encouraging the establishment of an LGBTQ committee at their chapters.

Resolution from the Women's Rights and Concerns Committee in Support of Microstamping Ammunition. A letter was sent to Assemblywoman Schimel, Assemblyman Englebright, Governor Paterson, Senator Schumer, and Senator Gillibrand.

Resolution from the Cortland Chapter in Support of Health Care Reform. A letter was sent, as requested, to all UUP affiliates asking them to step up efforts.

Resolution proposed by the Western New York Delegates calling upon UUP to engage Alumni and parents in Outreach activities. Vice President for Academics, Fred Floss, an alumnus of two SUNY campuses has agreed to work on this project and will describe the status of this initiative as part of his DA report.

Chapter/Campus Visits and Other Activities

Since the Fall DA, I've traveled extensively to meet with UUP members at chapters and campuses, as well as with SUNY administrators, carrying the message of our Legislative Outreach Program. I've also carried the UUP message to our affiliates and others in a number of venues, including:

- Interview with The Legislative Gazette
- Testimony to Gov's Taskforce on Industry/Higher Ed. Co-operation
- AFT Executive Council & Higher Ed. Program and Policy Council
- NYSUT Executive Council & Executive Board meetings
- Meetings (several) with SUNY Chancellor
- Brooklyn HSC chapter meeting
- North Country Chapters Retreat
- Buffalo Center Executive Board meeting
- Optometry Chapter meeting
- NYC Higher Ed. Rally, with PSC
- System Admin. Chapter meeting
- Chapter Presidents/New Leaders Conference
- Outreach Retreat
- Buffalo HSC Chapter meeting
- Geneseo Chapter meeting
- ESF Chapter meeting
- Plattsburgh Chapter meeting
- Brockport Chapter meeting
- AFT Special Leadership Conference
- Purchase Chapter meeting
- Cortland Executive Board meeting
- Meeting with AAUP leadership
- AFL-CIO Annual Labor Celebration
- NYSUT Higher Ed. Council meeting
- Meeting with Department of Health
- Editorial Board meetings with Syracuse Newspapers
- Editorial Board meeting with L.I. Newsday

UUPers in the field

Since the Fall DA, the following UUPers have represented us at a variety of conferences and meetings. I thank them for their efforts and for taking time from their busy schedules to carry our message. Our "ambassadors" include:

CLUW

10/14/2009 – 10/17/2009
Los Angeles, CA
Tina Manning

NEA Minority Leadership Training

10/16/2009 – 10/18/2009
Boston, MA
Patricia Ghee
Darlene Mercado

AFT Civil, Human & Women's Rights Conference

10/23/2009 – 10/25/2009
Miami, FL
Eileen Landy
Rowena Blackman-Stroud
Patricia Ghee
Frances Goldman
Darlene Mercado
Yolanda Pauze
Edward Quinn
Patrick Romain

Employee Benefits Conference

11/8/2009 – 11/11/2009
Orlando, FL
Rowena Blackman-Stroud
Edward Quinn

AFT HE Special Leadership Conference

11/20/2009 – 11/22/2009
Washington, DC
Jamie Dangler
Pamela Malone
Bridget Russell
Arthur Shertzer

USLAW

12/4/2009 – 12/6/2009
Chicago, IL
Donna Goodman
Vicki Janik
Michael Zweig

AFT Healthcare Leadership Workshop

1/10/2010 – 1/13/2010
Silver Springs, MD
Carol Braund

NEA Women's Leadership Training

1/20/2010 – 1/22/2010
Boston, MA
Patricia Ghee
Darlene Mercado

I look forward to seeing you at the DA.

