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From the President's Desk

by Mary Rose Kubal

Instead of my regular President's column, in this edition I am sharing a copy of the remarks I delivered at a rally in early October in support of the D'Youville University Chapter of the AAUP as they

continued their fraught contract negotiations. As of late December, they still do not have a contract.

Good afternoon,

I am here to offer the support of the New York State Conference of the AAUP and our members around the state. We are all concerned about the stalled contract negotiations at D'Youville and the lack of a raise for faculty during the past three years of significant inflation.

I would like to begin with a quote from Pope John Paul II's 1981 encyclical On Human Work:

"Workers have the right to form associations for the purpose of defending their vital interests...The experience of history teaches that the organizations of this type are an indispensable element of social life, especially in modern industrialized societies."

I don't know who needs to hear this, but university professors are workers. Educators are workers. There is a misguided perception out there that we are part of some cosmopolitan global elite. While our education does make us elite in some sociological definitions of the term, and we do value the skills and knowledge it has brought us – it mostly got us in debt and into relatively low-paying professor gigs.

Professors clearly aren't in this line of work to get rich, but we need to pay rent, mortgages, student loans, tuition for our own children. And we are struggling.

Some of us are hanging on by a thread – and it is the thread of loving what we do: teaching, mentoring, training a future generation of students to be good doctors and physical therapists, accountants and teachers, and good human beings

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State AAUP to Hold Spring Meeting April 26-27

The New York State Conference (NYSC) of the AAUP will be holding an in-person business meeting and Conference. The date of the Spring 2024 NYSC AAUP Conference is Friday, April 26th (the business meeting, open only to NYS AAUP members in good standing) will be on Saturday, April 27th).

Moving forward, and with the intention of “creating opportunities for positive change,” the focus of the spring 2024 NYSC AAUP (in person) conference will be on “faculty burnout” (formal title forthcoming – please watch your Action Network emails!) It will be held on the campus of Syracuse University, and our hosts are the SU AAUP Chapter.

Plans are already in the works to bring you engaging and informative speakers as well as action-oriented workshops and trainings provided in collaboration with the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation in the Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at Boston University. The goal of their intensive hands-on workshop is to help faculty and staff cultivate skills, access resources, and increase their capacity to be responsive to and within our growing mental health

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The College of Saint Rose to Close in 2024

The College of Saint Rose Board of Trustees has voted to cease academic instruction after the end of the 2023-2024 academic year. The College will continue to serve its undergraduate and graduate students and offer a full Spring 2024 course schedule. The decision came after the College has asked the City of Albany, Albany County, and the State of New York for emergency funding. None of those entities were able to provide an immediate bailout, leading to the Board's decision.

"It is with a heavy heart that the Board decided to close the college at the end of this academic year," Board Chair Jeffrey D. Stone said. The Board determined that the College does not have the financial resources to operate for the full 2024-2025 academic year and therefore cannot remain a standalone institution."

Like many small, private higher-education institutions in the Northeast, the College has struggled to manage operating expenses in the face of declining enrollment caused by both a shrinking pool of high school graduates and the prolonged negative impact of COVID-19, said Stone. In June 2023, the College had been warned by Middle States (MSCHE) that its accreditation could be in jeopardy because of insufficient evidence that the institution was following Standard VI (Resources, Planning, and Institutional Improvement).

College President Marcia White informed students, staff and faculty at an emotional community gathering that the 103-year-old independent college, founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Carondelet, would not reopen in the Fall of 2024. "We are heartbroken to have to share this devastating news with the students and our community," she said. "The Trustees and I are profoundly grateful to the College's faculty and staff who have remained committed to Saint Rose and have dedicated their lives to fulfilling its mission."

The closure comes after years of efforts to close budget deficits due to declining enrollments. These included eliminating academic programs, administrator, staff and faculty layoffs, reduced pension contributions, re-financing of the College's debt, the sale of campus buildings, and the implementation of new recruitment initiatives and strategies.

The College also engaged consultants in a failed effort to identify a strategic long-term partnership. Those efforts were unable to offset the ongoing deficit, and the projected operating cash deficit for current year is \$11.3 million

In December 2015, the administration of the College of Saint Rose eliminated twenty-seven academic programs and terminated the appointments of fourteen tenured and nine tenure-track faculty members as the result of an "academic program prioritization" process. Efforts to overturn the administration's actions ultimately were unsuccessful and the institution was censured by AAUP in May 2016 for violating the generally recognized principles of academic freedom and tenure.

The College will assist students to graduate in May or continue their studies elsewhere and will outline a clear pathway

for them to earn their degrees. That transition will be guided by a formal institutional teach-out plan, as required by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education and the New York State Education Department. The plan will enable the closure to proceed in an orderly manner to minimize its impact on the students and College community, officials said. More than 500 employees will lose their jobs.

The College of Saint Rose is the sixth New York-based institution to announce its closure in the past year. Cazenovia College, located in Cazenovia, closed in June after 199 years of operation, owing \$25 million to their creditors. The school is leasing its campus to New York state, which is using the site to train police cadets, through July 31, 2025. The \$1.5 million annual rent will go to the trustee, UMB Bank, which represents the bondholders.

Medaille University, which offered programs at its main campus in Buffalo and a branch campus in Rochester, closed in August after a planned merger with Trocaire College fell through. In June 2021, Medaille was one of several institutions sanctioned by the AAUP for violating principles of shared governance during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Alliance University (Formerly Nyack College) closed on

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Censorship Will Not Defeat Antisemitism

On December 12, 2023, AAUP president Irene Mulvey issued the following statement in the wake of the December 5 House of Representatives hearing where the Presidents of Harvard, MIT, and Penn faced questions concerning their institutions' responses to incidents of antisemitism following the October 7 attacks by Hamas and the Israeli military response:

The current clamor for political and financial interference in higher education in the name of fighting discrimination creates a climate of chilled speech and censorship that violates core principles of academic freedom. Attempts to clamp down on free expression do little to combat the scourge of antisemitism or other unacceptable forms of hatred and prejudice including those based on race, gender identity, sex, and religion.

The December 5 House hearing "Holding Campus Leaders Accountable and Confronting Antisemitism" characterized long-standing campus commitments to free and open inquiry as inherently antithetical to the safety of students, particularly Jewish students in higher ed. The resulting spectacle looked more like a performative McCarthy era witch hunt than a serious effort to improve campus tolerance and safety.

Universities have an obligation to protect the safety of their students and to promote a healthy campus culture. At the same time, universities have an obligation to ensure a climate promoting academic freedom and freedom of expression.

These obligations are not in conflict. The AAUP unequivocally rejects all efforts to curtail academic freedom and compromise the autonomy of universities and the speech and associational rights of faculty and students through a false choice between "safety" and free inquiry.

We must not allow partisan actors to exploit this moment to demand further control over university curriculum and policy in order to shape American higher education to a political agenda. Politicians and donors must not be allowed to determine what speech or conduct is permitted on a campus, or to sow division in order to restrict what may be thought, said, or taught on our campuses.

The AAUP has long condemned discrimination and harassment on college and university campuses while also championing students' right to hear and right to learn. Academic freedom and antidiscrimination initiatives can and should be pursued simultaneously. Equity and nondiscrimination will not be achieved if freedom of speech and academic freedom are compromised or legislated out of existence. Research, teaching, and the pursuit of knowledge must be allowed to occur openly, robustly and without political interference so that colleges and universities can fulfill their educational mission and model the intellectual conditions necessary for learning, for dialogue and productive disagreement, and for growth.

The College of Saint Rose to Close in 2024

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August 31, 2023, after 140 years of operation. On June 26, the University received notice from the Middle States Commission on Higher Education that its accreditation was being withdrawn.

The Long Island Business Institute, a for-profit institution located in Flushing, has informed the New York State Education Department that it will be closing at the end of the current academic year. Another for-profit, ASA College, ceased educational activity on February 24, 2023. While the

institution has not formally announced its closure, the College's accreditor, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education announced that the institution had closed on February 24, 2023, and that its accreditation has ceased on March 1, 2023. The United States Department of Education also considers ASA College closed, effective February 24, 2023.

A seventh institution, Kings College, did not offer courses during the Fall 2023 semester, as their administration continues to challenge Middle States' decision to withdraw accreditation.

State AAUP to Hold Spring Meeting April 26-27

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crisis – personally and professionally. In addition, a "train the trainer" program will be offered (if conference attendance supports it) so that individuals can take what they learned back to their chapters, departments, and institutions. Again, in a desire to collaborate with resources across the

state, the Mental Health Association in New York State (MHANYS) will also be present at this conference, and there are plans to offer various mental health and self-care tables if registration numbers are sufficient).

Watch your inboxes for early registration information to secure your spot at the conference and in the training.

Academic Freedom and Outside Speakers

Today, as college and university campuses nationwide experience an uptick in the cancellation of invited speakers, on November 29, 2023, the AAUP released a statement concerning how higher education institutions should address the presence of controversial outside speakers. The statement, “Academic Freedom and Outside Speakers,” reaffirms the “right to hear” principle and expands on the relationship between controversies involving invited speakers and increasing partisan political intrusion in higher education.

The AAUP holds that respecting faculty and student choices of invited outside speakers is a part of academic freedom and a safeguard against politically zealous or overly cautious college and university administrators whose first

instinct may be to censor speech that may challenge partisan political agendas.

“The cancellation of legitimate campus events and speakers we are seeing is alarming,” said AAUP president Irene Mulvey. “This statement will be helpful to faculty dealing with both inappropriate cancellations and legitimate protests, and should be required reading for all college administrators.”

The statement emphasizes the importance of a “right to hear” that includes and exceeds the presence of controversial outside speakers on college and university campuses and reaffirms academic freedom and shared governance as the cornerstones of higher education.

Defending the Freedom to Learn and Teach

The AAUP, on October 30, 2023, joined the American Federation of Teachers, the National Education Association, the American Association of Colleges and Universities, and the Network for Public Education in launching a Freedom to Learn Pledge to call out laws and rhetoric in multiple states aimed at banning books and curriculums, attacking teachers, and shaming LGBTQIA+ students, while pushing voucher and privatization schemes to undermine and gut public education.

The statement, from groups that together represent more than 4 million educators and 1,000 higher education institutions, highlights how far-right attacks on public education and academic freedom, which span K-12 and college, are part of the same extremist push to hurt learning and undermine trust in public schools.

The pledge proposes solutions in the form of federal and state bills to increase funding for all levels of public education, the vigorous defense of individual educators facing discipline or termination, and a renewed fight for more resources in the face of universal voucher schemes and austerity budgets.

The full text is below.

Public education at all levels is under assault. Political operators, partisan media, and ideologically driven think tanks continue to churn out racialized and anti-LGBTQIA+ rhetoric, sow distrust in the role of education as a public

good, and feed attacks on individual educators. Many hostile state legislatures across the country are enacting laws that undermine public schools, community colleges, and universities through curriculum bans; eradication of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs; attacks on science and public health; funding cuts; and voucher and privatization schemes.

We must recognize these attacks for what they are: Public education—pre-K through higher ed—is a fundamental pillar of American democracy and attempts to control and reshape education are part of a larger effort to weaken the very institutions that prepare students to engage in a robust, vibrant, multicultural, pluralistic democracy. Simply put, the assault on public education is an assault on our freedom.

We are educators from preK-12 and higher education; teachers and administrators; labor and management; parents, grandparents, and caregivers. We are united in our commitment to our students and to education as a public good—a pathway to individual opportunity, civic and democratic health, and economic growth. We pledge to defend the freedom to learn by:

- Promoting freedom to learn and access to education through working with coalition partners to support bills to increase federal and state funding for all levels of public education and protect the freedom to teach and the freedom to research.

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Polarizing Times Demand Robust Academic Freedom

On November 15, 2023, the AAUP issued the following statement:

Today, the integrity of research, teaching, and learning in US higher education is under sustained attack. In the aftermath of the events of October 7, 2023, powerful campus outsiders—including donors, legislators, and well-funded political organizations—have escalated demands that institutions crack down on what can be said or expressed on campus.

Since its founding in 1915, the American Association of University Professors has been the most prominent guardian of academic freedom for faculty and students. The AAUP has developed and promulgated standards to define, defend, and strengthen that freedom within the world of higher education. In our recent statement on academic freedom in the context of the current crisis in the Middle East, “Academic Freedom in Time of War,” the AAUP reasserted those standards, stressing that “institutional authorities must refrain from sanctioning faculty members for expressing politically controversial views and should instead defend their right, under principles of academic freedom, to do so.” Yet today, many colleges and universities are not only failing to protect academic freedom, but they are also actively undermining its scope and meaning.

By acceding to external political pressures and demands for political censorship instead of encouraging the utmost freedom of discussion, college and university administrations abandon their own responsibility for protecting the academic community’s central mission of education, research, and service to the broader society and to the public good. Administrators who claim to defend academic freedom and then condemn the content of faculty and student speech and expression that it should protect risk chilling speech and expression and eroding the very academic freedom that they claim to protect.

As recent AAUP statements, investigations, and reports have made clear, much current suppression of faculty and students’ rights of expression and association is tied to political campaigns “to restrict the public education curriculum and to portray some forms of public education as a social harm” (AAUP, *Legislative Threats to Academic Freedom: Redefinitions of Antisemitism and Racism*). Attempts to ban critical race theory, as well as efforts to discredit the teaching of US history—particularly histories of empire, slavery, gender, and sexuality—thus form the context within which the current controversies surrounding the turmoil in the Middle East unfold on college and university campuses. The political climate of fear those campaigns produced has prompted some college and university administrations to constrain faculty autonomy and academic freedom. They have unilaterally changed curricula, created academic programs and advisory/policymaking bodies without faculty consultation, and canceled classes, speaker invitations,

and public events. After October 7, as external demands for action escalated, academic administrators criticized, investigated, suspended, or fired outspoken faculty and staff members who expressed unpopular views. These violations of academic freedom and shared governance now undermine the ability of faculty members to make educational decisions about their teaching and research without fear of outside intervention or reprisal.

The AAUP rejects the characterization of pro-Palestinian speech or critiques of the Israeli state as invariably antisemitic. As institutional leaders combat discrimination and uphold principles of community, they should not lose sight of how “[p]roponents of overly broad definitions of antisemitism and proponents of eliminating teaching about the history of racial and other violence share a desire to mobilize the government to enforce particular, emaciated accounts of history, harm, and injury” (AAUP, *Legislative Threats to Academic Freedom: Redefinitions of Antisemitism and Racism*). These efforts to control what is thought, said, taught, and researched are antithetical to the educational mission of a university and the democratic values upon which it rests.

The AAUP therefore calls on college and university administrations to:

- Recommit themselves to fully protecting the academic freedom of their faculties to teach, conduct research, and speak out about important issues both on and off campus, as called for in *Academic Freedom in Times of War*.
- Protect the freedom of students to express their positions on such issues on and off campus. Students should be free to organize and join associations to promote their common interests, and students and student organizations should be free to examine and discuss all questions of interest to them and to express opinions publicly and privately, in the words of the AAUP’s *Joint Statement on Rights and Freedoms of Students*.
- Safeguard the independence of colleges and universities by refusing to comply with demands from politicians, trustees, donors, faculty members, students and their parents, alumni, or other parties that would interfere with academic freedom.

Just as we condemn all incursions on academic freedom by overzealous institutions or external actors, the AAUP condemns the climate of intimidation that now attempts to silence people who express unpopular views on the current conflict in the Middle East. College and university leaders have no obligation to speak out on the most controversial issues of the day. Their duty is to protect the academic freedom, free speech, and associational rights of faculty and students to speak on all topics of public or political interest without fear of intimidation, retaliation, or punishment.

Legislators Launch State Bills to End \$321 Million Yearly Property Tax Exemptions for Columbia and NYU

At Columbia University on Tuesday, December 12, the Professional Staff Congress (PSC) joined state lawmakers to unveil legislation which would end property tax exemptions for private universities who had over \$100 million written off their tax bill in the last fiscal year.

The bill would impact Columbia University, which is the largest private landholder in New York City and would have had to pay \$179 million last year if taxed, as well as New York University, which would have had to pay \$142 million. The bills would direct the revenue toward funding the City University of New York (CUNY).

State Senator John Liu and Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani introduced the first-of-its-kind bill in the state legislature.

“At a time when CUNY faces budget cut after budget cut and is in a constant state of disrepair, Columbia and NYU—2 of the largest property holders in NYC—are exempted from paying property taxes. It’s time that these institutions pay their debts to the working class of New York City,” said Assembly Member Zohran Mamdani, member of the State Assembly’s Real Property Taxation Committee who is introducing the bill in the State Assembly.

State Senator John Liu, Member of the Senate Committees on Higher Education, Finance, and Judiciary, stated, “Tax breaks put in place hundreds of years ago to support small nonprofit causes are today imposing far greater costs on the public treasury all the while providing diminishing benefit and possibly creating perverse incentives. These tax exemptions for large universities, who have great ability to pay their fair share, must be reconsidered in light of the current structural deficit in the city’s budget, and it makes perfect sense to direct these subsidies instead to public education here in New York.”

As the current real property tax exemption is enshrined in the New York state constitution, the first piece of legislation will

need to be passed in two consecutive legislative sessions to amend the constitution, before a state referendum on the bill. A second bill will need to be passed to repeal the exemption at the \$100m yearly threshold and to direct revenues to CUNY.

“CUNY represents both the rich diversity and possibility New York City offers with an undergrad body that is 80% students of color and nearly 50% first generation. Unfortunately, CUNY is also facing repeated patterns of disinvestment and serious financial challenges while some of the City’s wealthiest private institutions expand their campuses’ tax-free footprints. The legislation proposed by Senator Liu and Assemblymember Mamdani will balance these two inequities by leveraging the vast resources of our private universities to help fund CUNY and create a sustainable, more democratic higher education environment for all New York City students,” said NYC

Comptroller Brad Lander.

Senator Cordell Cleare stated, “I wholeheartedly support this legislation which represents the simple, yet singularly important issue of equity, both in terms of our tax policy and higher education investment and opportunity. Columbia’s endowment is nearly \$14 billion dollars yet they do not pay a penny of property tax despite their unyielding quest to acquire even more precious space on the northern end of the island of Manhattan, which has had innumerable disastrous consequences for the people

I represent. Contributing to our tax base and saving true institutions of public service and learning is the least they can do.”

CUNY, an engine of opportunity and economic mobility for New Yorkers is crumbling and perpetually underfunded. CUNY educates New Yorkers from racially and economically diverse backgrounds – more than 80% of freshmen attended NYC public schools, 80% of undergraduates are students of color and 43% are first generation students, and 50% of undergraduates



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End Columbia and NYU Property Tax Exemptions

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are from families that earn less than \$30,000 per year – and “propels almost six times as many low-income students into the middle class and beyond as all the Ivy League colleges combined.” Nonetheless, 300 unfilled faculty and staff positions have been eliminated, and only 8% of CUNY buildings are in good repair.

“New York has it twisted! Barred by state law from making wealthy, private universities like NYU and Columbia pay their fair share of property taxes, the city balances its budget by inflicting austerity on CUNY, the working people’s public university. Mayor Adams just cut CUNY again last month! With multi-billion-dollar endowments, tuition rates twice the typical CUNY student’s annual family income, and vast holdings of the most valuable real estate in the world, NYU and Columbia can easily afford to pay their taxes. And Albany can make it happen by ending the property tax exemption for the wealthiest private colleges,” said James Davis, President of the Professional Staff Congress, the union representing faculty and staff at the City University of New York.

“The right to a high quality and fully funded education should not only be granted to a select few with exceptional grades, to those who are able to afford paying almost six figures a year for a degree, to those who descend from legacy families. A high quality and fully funded education should be granted to all those who want it: working class students, immigrant students, first generation students, students who didn’t get perfect grades or didn’t have access to educational resources due to systemic issues. These bills are one of the first steps in making education in New York City equitable for everyone,” said Johanna Von Maack, a Hunter College student.

Assembly Member Danny O’Donnell said, “New York residents have been shouldering the costs of these universities’ tax-exempt status for far too long. It is high time for Columbia University and New York University to take responsibility for their extensive property holdings and contribute more equitably to our state and local communities. The proposed legislation aims not only to mitigate the financial strain on New Yorkers but also to ensure that both Columbia University and New York University contribute their fair share towards the collective welfare of our communities and improve the lives of millions of New Yorkers.”

“Columbia University and NYU are two of the wealthiest universities on this planet. The idea that these institutions are not somehow driven by profit, seek profit, or make profits belies the fact that they have an over \$20 billion endowment. Let-



ting these institutions off a \$320 million tax hook is modern day Robinhood, but in reverse; the city delivers free public services to a very rich institution that gives nothing back. I unequivocally support the repeal of NYU and Columbia’s tax exemption status in order to reinvest back into our CUNY system,” said Assembly Member Ron Kim.

“Private universities like Columbia and NYU enjoy over \$320 million in annual tax exemptions, while public institutions like CUNY struggle for funding. These universities

prioritize property accumulation over education, with Columbia’s tax break even exceeding Yankee Stadium’s. Despite substantial endowments, Columbia and NYU keep expanding property holdings, thanks to their tax-exempt status, giving them an unfair real estate advantage. They benefit from city services funded by property taxes while avoiding their own tax responsibilities, draining essential municipal resources. CUNY faces budget cuts, jeopardizing services and education quality. Our legislation repeals these tax exemptions, redirecting \$321 million to CUNY for equitable education. It’s time to share the wealth!” said Assembly Member Al Taylor.

“While CUNY struggles through decades of systematic underfunding, some of the city’s largest landlords aren’t paying a penny in property taxes. The combined endowments of NYU and Columbia are \$20 billion; piling on hundreds of millions of dollars in tax exemptions is highway robbery. I’m proud to support this common sense legislation to bring fairness to our property tax system and give CUNY the resources it needs to serve its proud public mission,” said Assembly Member Emily Gallagher.

“It’s unconscionable that while our public institutions, including public schools, are facing budget cuts, private one that can afford to pay their fair share in taxes aren’t doing so. This is about fairness and education equity for hard working New Yorkers,” said Assembly Member Manny De Los Santos.

“Our city’s resources should eliminate inequalities and invest in future generations, not be gifted to well-endowed private institutions to help grow their coffers,” said Assemblymember Grace Lee. “My colleagues and I are calling on Columbia and NYU to fulfill their civic responsibility to New York City by paying their fair share of property taxes, including the approximately \$321 million in exemptions they currently receive every year. For decades, our city has generously helped these universities grow, and now it is time for them to reciprocate. By reinvesting these funds into CUNY, we will foster a more equitable educational landscape for all New Yorkers.”

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Executive Director's Report



by Sally Dear-Healey,
Executive Director, NYSC AAUP

By the time you receive this the fall semester will be over and many of you will have found time for relaxation and celebrations with family and friends, even ‘Uncle Bob,’ who has never really understood the need for anyone, including you, to go to college let alone teach at one! On the home front you may have decorated your homes so that they felt more festive, purchased or made gifts for loved ones, baked cookies and other delicacies, and/or cooked delicious family feasts. No matter how you chose to spend your time, I hope at least some of it was joyful and peaceful!

The new year upon us, thoughts of the spring semester loom and final preparations begin in earnest. Suddenly the “break” feels all too brief (for those who teach winter/summer courses, there is no ‘break’ between semesters) and memories of the most recent semester begin to surface, including all the papers you graded; exams; students in crisis; students suddenly showing up to talk about missing or low grades, often in tears and begging for a hail Mary to pass; the endless (often senseless) meetings; the semi-obligatory department gatherings; etc. Let’s just say that I completely understand the cause for celebration when the grades are all officially in!

While there is no doubt that the opportunity to teach and/or do research truly is “living the good life,” for some that has never been or is no longer the case. More and more of our faculty claim that they are “burned out.” Sadly, as well as incorrectly, being burned out is often viewed as a personal character defect, implying some short-coming on the part of the individual if they are unable to ‘handle’ the stress of teaching, instead of it being viewed as a system issue. And in all honesty, it’s rarely the teaching itself that is creating the problems (if you are teaching and you don’t love it, that’s another conversation). That is unless you are teaching more and larger classes with fewer or no supporting resources or you also have a heavy service load, or you are one of many contingent faculty who teach multiple classes at multiple institutions in multiple locations. Others report they feel completely “gaslighted” by administrations and often their own peers who fail to acknowledge the stressors generated by often “increasingly difficult,” “fear-based,” “toxic,” “cutthroat,” and “progressively disrespectful workplace cultures.

Our NYSC Fall 2022 (virtual) Conference was on The Mental Health Crisis and Higher Ed: Recognizing and Standing up for the Needs of Faculty, Staff, and Students and Creating Opportunities for Positive Change. In addition to a taped welcome by State Senator Samra Brouk, Chair of the

NYS Senate Mental Health Committee, topics included workplace bullying, lessons from the psychiatric emergency room, and a panel discussion on how we can move forward and create opportunities for positive change.

Earlier that fall I had been invited to speak at the Mental Health Association in New York State’s (MHANYS) Summit on Mental Health in Higher Ed, as well as present testimony in Albany on faculty mental health in higher ed. I had hoped that my efforts would plant a seed and spark a greater interest in the need for supportive, comprehensive, and confidential mental health services specifically for faculty and staff in higher ed. However, in Governor Kathy Hochul’s November 30, 2023, announcement that more than \$5.1 million was being awarded to support 137 school-based mental health clinic satellites throughout New York State, including 82 high needs schools - all of which are definitely needed, from my reading there are neither initiatives or funds specifically targeted for faculty and staff mental health in higher education in New York State. In fact, the only mention of higher education was in relation to “a commitment to affordable higher education through SUNY, CUNY and community colleges” (no specific mention of private institutions). This is not good enough. We can’t let this be good enough. We need Governor Hochul to specifically support efforts to fund mental health services for higher education faculty and staff (at least) at the same level as students and K-12 teachers.

Moving forward, and with the intention of “creating opportunities for positive change,” by special request we have been asked to focus the spring 2024 NYSC AAUP (in person) conference on “faculty burnout” (formal title forthcoming – please watch your Action Network emails!) The date of the Spring 2024 NYSC AAUP Conference is Friday, April 26th (the business meeting will be on Saturday, April 27th). It will be held on the campus of Syracuse University, and our hosts are the SU AAUP Chapter (if you are interested in hosting a future spring meeting and conference, please get in contact with me).

Plans are already in the works to bring you engaging and informative speakers as well as action-oriented workshops and trainings provided in collaboration with the Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation in the Sargent College of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at Boston University. The goal of their intensive hands-on workshop is to help faculty and staff cultivate skills, access resources, and increase their capacity to be responsive to and within our growing mental health crisis – personally and professionally. In addition, a “train the trainer” program will be offered (if conference attendance supports it) so that individuals can take what they learned back to their chapters, departments, and institutions. Again, in a desire to collaborate with resources across the state, MHANYS will also be present at this conference, and we are planning on

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– philosophy professors like Brandon [Absher, D'Youville AAUP chapter president] are helping young people figure out how to live ethical lives in this era of growing inequality and the rise of artificial intelligence.

Political scientists like me are trying to teach our students the radical idea that we can respect different political positions even when we don't agree with them, that most politicians – as [NYS] Senator [Tim] Kennedy can attest – are working hard and reaching out across the aisle to make lives better for people in their communities.

This is the thread we are hanging onto – helping young people figure out where they fit into the world. Our work extends well outside of the classroom as we mentor our students, send care reports when they miss class, sometimes walk them across campus to counselling services. But we can't be the best teachers and mentors when we aren't paid a dignified wage and aren't respected as workers.

Despite the negative stereotypes about teachers and university professors, my lived experience is that educators are giving and caring people – you all know an educator, have been mentored and had your lives changed by educators – and it is this generosity that is often taken advantage of by administrators who know we want to be there for our students, that we aren't

in this line of work for the money. This is true, but at the end of the day we need to pay our rent and our student loans, send our kids to college.

We are not here today because we want to be. We are here because we have to be. I am sure Brandon and his colleagues would rather be doing their work – giving feedback on student papers, mentoring students as they make important life choices, preparing engaging classes.

But they are here because they have to be. Because they have been working for over two years without a contract. Have gone three years without a raise. Are fighting for dignified working conditions. The D'Youville AAUP faculty are exercising their “right to form associations for the purpose of defending their vital interests.” Just as Pope John Paul II set out in his encyclical.

On behalf of the New York State Conference of the AAUP I urge President Clemo and D'Youville administrators to return to the bargaining table in good faith and allow their faculty to focus on the jobs they want to do and the students they want to help. At the end of the day faculty working conditions are student learning conditions.

Thank you Brandon and your fellow union leaders for all of the good work you do every day.

Executive Director's Report

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offering various mental health and self-care tables (again, if our registration numbers are sufficient).

So, please watch your inboxes for early registration information to secure your spot at the conference and in the training. We hope to see you there!

As always, please don't hesitate to reach out if there is anything I and/or the NYSC can do to help support you as an

AAUP member or as a chapter, or if you 'just' need someone to talk to. We also want to hear from you about what is/isn't going on at your institution and/or with your AAUP chapter too. You can always reach me at sdearhealeyaaup@gmail.com or we can connect by phone (607) 656-9477.

Be well, stay safe, and in solidarity,
Sally

End Property Tax Exemptions

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“I welcome the support of elected officials to fund public higher education in an equitable, fair and just way. Any innovative initiatives and investments that are done this way will support the University. However, it is important to note that the years of Budget Cuts that CUNY has been facing, still calls for a fully funded CUNY by the state legislature. I call on the state to step up to ensure that CUNY students get a quality education,

get the resources they need to succeed, are not food insecure anymore and can afford basic necessities,” said Salimatou Doumbouya, Trustee and Chairperson of CUNY University Student Senate.

The idea for the REPAIR bills traces back to testimony delivered by then PSC President Barbara Bowen and First Vice President Mike Fabricant at a 2018 hearing of the City Council speaker's NYC Advisory Commission on Property Tax Reform.

Defending the Freedom to Learn and Teach

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■ Fighting back against legislative bans on the teaching of U.S. history, science and psychology, and other educational gag orders, and by defending individual educators who face harassment, discipline, or termination as a result of these laws.

■ Supporting efforts to provide more resources to our public schools, colleges, and universities and the students who depend on them every day, and resisting efforts to defund our preK-12 and higher education systems.

Academic Freedom and Fight Against Hatred and Bigotry on Go Hand in Hand

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten, Alabama State University professor Derryn E. Moten, University Council-AFT President Katie Rodger, Professional Staff Congress of the City University of New York President James Davis, and Henry Ford Community College Federation of Teachers President Eric Rader issued the following joint statement as attacks on faculty freedoms and students' identity continue to roil campuses:

“We do not accept the toxic rhetoric that pits standing up to antisemitism and Islamophobia against the fight to preserve academic freedom and the free speech rights of students, faculty and staff. We can and must do both. Conditioning job offers on one's views of this conflict is wrong. Doxxing is wrong. Threatening the jobs of employees who are exercising their free speech rights is wrong. Limiting debate and freedom of expression is wrong. Terrorizing Jewish or Muslim staff or students because of their religion is

wrong.

“Our two- and four-year colleges and universities must promote intellectual freedom and free speech. This is an essential role of higher education in a democracy. Our institutions have an obligation to keep students and employees safe and to stand up against bigotry—and they must honor it.

“The AFT will continue to defend our members' and students' academic freedom and First Amendment rights while at the same time protecting their right to a safe environment free of antisemitism, Islamophobia and other forms of hate.”

The 1.7 million-member AFT represents 70 percent of the organized higher education faculty in the United States. The AAUP is an affiliate of the AFT. On November 9, the union passed a resolution, “Condemning Hate and Affirming Freedom of Speech on Campus.”

PSC Opposes the Mayor's Cuts to CUNY and Other City Agencies

Professional Staff Congress (PSC) President James Davis stood with members of the City Council's Progressive Caucus, NYS Senators Jabari Brisport and Gustavo Rivera, Assembly Members Zohran Mamdani, Public Advocate Jumaane Williams, and The Peoples Plan coalition on Monday, December 11 to oppose Mayor Eric Adams's mid-year cuts to CUNY, libraries, schools, parks and other city agencies and institutions.

After the rally, President Davis and other PSC members testified before the City Council urging them to continue to fight against the mayor's cuts.

“The city's proposed across-the-board cuts to CUNY will

inflict unquestionable damage on our campuses, especially the community colleges, and make our advocacy at the state level far more difficult,” Davis testified.

Broadening his commentary, Davis said, “It is unconscionable that PSC members and students face austerity in a variety of services, not just CUNY. Libraries are expected to cut hours; Parks Department will cut maintenance staff; composting programs and associated jobs will be lost; a hiring freeze for teachers at DOE; slots eliminated from Universal Pre-K programs next year. If there is a problem with recruiting and retaining a workforce in a vibrant New York City, these cuts will exacerbate it.”

State AAUP to Hold Spring Meeting April 26-27

Watch your inbox for early registration information to secure your spot at the conference and in the training.

UUP Vows to Fight Program Cuts at SUNY Fredonia and Potsdam

United University Professions, the nation's largest higher education union, has come out strongly against plans to eliminate programs at the SUNY Fredonia and Potsdam campuses. SUNY plans to discontinue 13-degree programs and associated faculty and staff at SUNY Fredonia to reduce a projected \$17 million deficit. At Potsdam, the plan calls for the elimination of as many as 10-degree programs—and associated faculty and staff positions to close a projected \$9 million deficit. These deficits were caused in large part by a severe lack of state funding to SUNY campuses during the Cuomo administration.

UUP President Frederick E. Kowal said that UUP—which represents more than 38,000 members at 29 state-operated campuses and SUNY's three teaching hospitals—will do all it can to fight the planned cuts and save jobs at the two campuses.

“UUP will stand against any and all attempts by SUNY and administration to cut programs at SUNY Fredonia and any other SUNY campus,” said Kowal, who traveled to SUNY Fredonia October 30 to meet with members there. “We will fight every step of the way because we must. The heart and soul of SUNY—our members, our students, and our communities—hangs in the balance.

“Today's announcement is no more than a continuation of the systematic dismantling of SUNY that started under former Gov. Cuomo,” Kowal continued. “Further, it is a direct attack on the union workers who do the work of educating students at SUNY Fredonia and SUNY campuses across the state.”

The program cuts represent 15 percent of all majors offered at the college. During their announcement, administrators were unclear about exactly how large the deficit is at SUNY Fredonia. They cited a \$10 million deficit and also cited a \$17 million deficit. They were unable to say how much money the campus would save by discontinuing the 13 programs.

Kowal criticized SUNY's so-called restructuring plan for SUNY Fredonia, calling it a “manufactured crisis” intended to further reduce enrollment.

“This is about shrinking smaller campuses that don't make money,” said Kowal. “And it flies in the face of SUNY's own mission, to provide the highest quality educational experience with the broadest possible access through a geographically distributed system of diverse campuses.”

SUNY had more than enough money to erase the deficit at Fredonia and multimillion-dollar shortfalls at 18 other campuses. Through its strong advocacy, UUP was instrumental in securing \$163 million in new direct state funding to SUNY in the 2023-2024 budget, a record investment in SUNY by Gov. Kathy Hochul and the Legislature.

Instead, the SUNY Board of Trustees chose to distribute the

lion's share of that funding to SUNY's university centers. SUNY Fredonia received \$2.8 million, while SUNY Potsdam got \$2.5 million, according to a SUNY Board of Trustees Resolution.

“The money is there to close deficits at 18 campuses, but SUNY chose to distribute it another way,” Kowal said. “Instead of working to grow enrollments at these campuses, SUNY is using enrollment decreases as a reason to enact these cuts—which will further lower enrollments and could possibly lead to campuses being closed.”

UUP has been very concerned that SUNY would move to make program and staffing cuts at other small, rural campuses since September, when SUNY Potsdam administrators announced its plan to cut programs.

“As we've been saying all along, SUNY is using Potsdam as a template for similar cuts at financially troubled campuses, like Buffalo State University and SUNY Fredonia—which we saw come to fruition today,” Kowal said.

“We certainly understand the necessity of a long-range plan to guide campuses into the future,” Kowal continued. “But what was announced today isn't that. This is the second in a series of severe cuts at small campuses in economically depressed, rural upstate communities. This cannot continue. SUNY's reputation as a world-class institution of higher learning is at stake.”

Financially strapped SUNY campuses have never recovered from massive Great Recession-era cuts to SUNY and more than a decade of austerity budgets forced upon SUNY by former Gov. Andrew Cuomo. This has had a direct impact on enrollment at most campuses, particularly at smaller campuses like SUNY Fredonia and SUNY Potsdam.

When adjusted for inflation, direct state funding to SUNY was slashed by \$7.8 billion since 2008-09—a 39 percent decline. Under Cuomo, students were forced to shoulder the majority of SUNY's funding through tuition and fees. When Cuomo resigned, students were paying \$2 for every dollar the state provided.

“You don't cut your way out of a manufactured crisis — you invest and grow out of it,” Kowal said.

Kowal said UUP will push strongly for more funding for SUNY campuses in the 2024-2025 state budget, this time with a stipulation that the money be sent to campuses based on need.

“After massive state aid cuts to SUNY and more than a decade of Cuomo-era austerity budgets, our campuses must receive fair funding, which will allow them to close deficits and focus on growth.

“Everyday, our members at Potsdam and campuses across New York state provide our students with a world-class educational experience that will serve them throughout their lives,”

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Committee on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Accepting Applications for Chair

Committee on Retirement

Accepting Applications for Chair

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Committees and Councils continued

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Committee on Retirement

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New York State Conference Leadership

The **Administrative Committee** (AC) consists of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, and Secretary, all of which are elected officer positions.

The **Executive Council** (EC) consists of the officers of the Conference, four at-large members, the national Council members elected from the district that includes New York State, the At-Large Council members who are members of the NYS Conference, and the elected National AAUP Officers who are members of the NYS Conference. (Article III.2, Oct. 2014).

The **Steering Committee** (SC) consists of the EC and the chairs of standing NYS Conference committees and councils. (Article III.3, October 2014)
