

# UCATS Momentum

Union of Clerical, Administrative & Technical Staff at NYU, Local 3882, NYSUT, AFT, AFL-CIO

Volume 43 2023 Issue 2

## Complete your contract bargaining member survey

**Use this QR code** to take our Contract Bargaining Survey or go to our website, [ucats3882.org](http://ucats3882.org). Your input will help us craft our presentations to NYU during contract bargaining which will commence in September, so answer the questions as if you were at the bargaining table speaking to NYU.

**Tell them about** the value of your work, how it has increased since 2017 or COVID or since you started at NYU.

**Have you taken** on more responsibilities or acquired new skills? Be as specific as possible.

Help us get the word out by sharing this with your UCATS colleagues!

**Email UCATS at [info@ucats3882.org](mailto:info@ucats3882.org) if you have questions.**



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# Ready, set, NEGOTIATE!

■ *Stephen Rechner, Law School*

*“What counts is not necessarily the size of the dog in the fight; it’s the size of the fight in the dog.”*

*–Dwight Eisenhower*

**Y**ou’ve heard it for months now – our contract with NYU expires on October 31 and there will be no raise this year until we reach an agreement and you ratify it. While most of you have spent the last few weeks wrapping up another semester at NYU and are now doing your summer vacation planning, the UCATS Executive Council has been preparing for bargaining a new contract with NYU, a process that formally begins in September, but is well underway for us. We are, in effect, building up the fight in our dog, as President Eisenhower once put it.

We spent most of the spring semester organizing our Communications Committee, our Mobilization Committee and our Bargaining Team, all of which have met several times now and are working on our action plans.

### Your role in the bargaining process

Now we are asking you to help by completing our Contract Bargaining Member Survey – the first action by our Communications Committee – which went live on May 8. This is your opportunity to speak directly to NYU. Your responses will guide our contract proposals and our bargaining strategy. We will share many of your responses to NYU



in the bargaining sessions (anonymously, of course).

Next month, we’ll be presenting you with our ideas for messaging on a series of new buttons and asking you to vote for your top three choices. We will then produce three buttons to roll out in September, one per week, during the first three weeks of bargaining.

*Since 1979 the fight in our dog has resulted in a union contract that is 51 pages of rights and benefits you won’t find in many other jobs.*

These actions aren’t the end, they are the beginning. The beginning of the fight in the UCATS dog to achieve a contract that reflects the value of the work you do to make NYU one of the top university choices for students each year.

Since 1979 the fight in our dog has resulted in a union contract that is 51 pages of rights and benefits you won’t find in many other jobs. Your leadership team is at the union gym building up the fight in our dog so we’ll be ready in September.

Negotiating your next contract is not a spectator sport. It will require all hands on deck, including yours. Completing the Contract Bargaining Member Survey takes no time at all and you can do it on your phone – so why not do it now!

## UCATS Momentum

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# UCATS members kept NYU afloat during the pandemic

■ Ary Reich, SPS

**O**n May 11, the US federal government ended the Public Health Emergency declaration for the COVID-19 pandemic. New York University, following suit, relaxed its mandated vaccine requirement for students and employees on the same day. Three years after the emergency was initially declared, life is reverting to pre-pandemic times. But as much as there may be desire to move past the interruptions of the pandemic, its consequences will persist.

It's time to reflect on those consequences. Paradoxically, the shared fear of sickness for our friends, family, and ourselves gave way to a country more politically and socially divided than it had been in over 50 years. At an individual level, cooped up in our apartments, stripped of regular interaction with our communities and loved ones, and glued to news and social media, only a few of us endured without the despair of feeling alone and powerless. Still today, for many of us, those feelings remain, and a simple declaration of the pandemic's end will not undo the damage it wrought.

## Our labor runs NYU

Yet we also must address how the pandemic affected us on a professional level – or, more appropriately, how we as UCATS members sustained NYU through the pandemic. With a membership base as diverse as UCATS, it should come to no surprise that our members' experiences were just as broad. What may be surprising to some is how fundamental



Ary Reich

we were to the transition and continued operation of NYU: our tech and IT employees spent the week before lockdown fervently installing critical software onto student/faculty/administrator/staff laptops for the transition to remote work; our library and bookstore employees showed up every day to continue working in-person when others had the luxury to work from home; and our dental assistants, adapting quickly to new health guidelines, put themselves at risk to continue to provide necessary care to patients. Where many of our managers were simply passing along directives, we were working. And that work – our labor – is what kept the university running.

That is the strength of UCATS, and from that strength comes our power. All of us have demonstrated our own vital contribution to the university, for when it was in its most desperate and chaotic state, we stepped up to perform the necessary actions required to save it. The university's higher-ups will argue that they crafted the policies and that they were the ones in the command center, but ideas alone are not action. Without our members' collec-

tive execution, the university never would have made it through.

## Raises should reflect our worth

Later this year, we will be re-negotiating our collective bargaining agreement with the university. Off the heels of record inflation, it may seem obvious to argue that we deserve a significant raise largely because our purchasing power has fallen. While that is true, the real reason we deserve a large raise is to match the worth we demonstrated over these past three years. Those of us elected as officers and stewards will make that case at the bargaining table. As insistent as we will be in bargaining, nothing can match the power of UCATS members in solidarity actions – marching, leafletting, working with our coalition partners, completing the Contract Bargaining Member Survey and, maybe even striking after October 31 when our current contract expires – if NYU refuses to acknowledge the value of our work.

In March 2020, nobody could deny the feelings of atomization, powerlessness, and division instigated by the pandemic. The university and federal government declaring an end to it in no way resolves or fixes those apprehensions. As members of UCATS, however, we have the opportunity to bargain a new contract in 2023 that reflects our value to NYU: rallying with our fellow union siblings to find the connection, power, and solidarity once thought lost. We can achieve the contract we deserve, representative of our worth, by working together sharing our story.

# UCATS voluntary benefits: Are you taking advantage of all you're entitled to?

■ Larissa McDowell, Law School

It was around 9:00 p.m. on a warm August night in 2016. My husband was out walking our older beagle around the block before tucking in for the night. I was dozing on the couch while watching TV when my phone started buzzing. I checked the screen, saw my husband's name, and knew something was off. You see, my husband is a texter. He *hates* talking on the phone so I immediately picked up. His voice thick with tears and stress; he tells me a stranger's dog broke its leash, charged at him, and started attacking our dog.

To save you the less happy details, we rushed our dog to Blue Pearl Emergency Vet in Midtown where they proceeded to do emergency surgery to repair the wounds she suffered during the attack. The bill came to just over \$1700, but any cost is negligible when your pets are members of the family. We paid the bill and went home and waited for her to recover.

We can thankfully report a happy ending to such a terrifying experience for both my husband and our beloved Boomer. It took a while for either of them to feel safe again while walking around at night but there was one aspect of the whole situation that provided us relief while we all recovered. The Nationwide Pet Insurance offered through NYU refunded us over half the costs of the emergency vet bill and continues, to this day, to be worth every penny.

Here's another anecdotal story that other apartment-renters in the city may be able to relate to: My



Larissa McDowell

husband and I previously lived in an apartment in a pre-war building. It was long overdue for some much-needed renovations, with one of the more important issues being the wiring. All of our outlets consisted of two-prong sockets, leaving nothing grounded and forcing us to compensate with adapters and power strips with built-in surge protectors to keep our computers from getting fried without notice.

We lived in that apartment for eight and a half years and, in that time, we went through four refrigerators. Yep, you read that correctly, FOUR. We thankfully moved out while the fifth was still managing to run despite the constant power surges in the wiring throughout the kitchen. During our time in that apartment, having cold, well-preserved food was a constant concern for us when it should have been a guarantee. Three of the four times our fridge died, we had just bought groceries and proceeded to lose anywhere between \$200-\$300 in groceries, vainly trying to keep things cool in the coolers we owned for camping during the summers.

Each time we helplessly watched the frozen food spoil, we took comfort knowing we had a saving grace. Our Traveler's renter's insurance through NYU has an annual claim benefit of up to \$300 in lost groceries due to a malfunctioning fridge. Again, it's such a niche issue that most people never have to worry about unless there's a blackout or a severe storm. Yet, through our renter's insurance, we had a little reprieve from the madness that can be living while renting in New York City.

## Something for everyone

I know there are many UCATS members who don't have pets, or own homes or cars, or don't expect to need legal services. So, while there are a plethora of voluntary benefits available to us through NYU, NYSUT, AFT, and more, and they may not all apply to one single person, there is certainly *something* for *everyone*.

Let's start with the ones that we can find easily through a website we're familiar with. A general click-through of NYU's Employee Benefits pages brings you to the Staff 2023 Benefits Guide. Most people focus on the top three-quarters of the list (and justifiably so). However, there are benefits that many people don't take advantage of simply because we don't realize they're there. These include group legal plans, identity theft protection, homeowners insurance, auto insurance, renters insurance, and pet insurance.

All of these secondary benefits are offered by NYU, through paycheck deduction, at competitive prices. However, we as UCATS

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# Mitigating COVID-19 contagion

■ *Kate Conroy, NYSUT Health & Safety Committee, Gallatin School of Individualized Study*

In a November 14, 2022 *TIME* magazine article by Abraar Karan, an infectious disease physician and researcher at Stanford University and Gavin Yamey, a physician and professor of global health and public policy at Duke University they remind us:

*During the COVID-19 pandemic, masks were weaponized for partisan purposes. “The politicization of mask use,” says William Hanage, infectious disease epidemiologist at Harvard University, “makes as much sense as politicizing gravity.” Masks are simply a tool—a protective barrier—that can help to reduce the spread of respiratory*



*infections, just as condoms are a barrier that can reduce the spread of sexually transmitted infections. And as we head into winter, with rising rates of multiple respiratory viruses, including flu, RSV, and new coronavirus variants, masks could help all Americans to avoid getting sick.*

As summer arrives, these truths remain. Even though the national state of emergency was lifted on May 11, “Masks Are Always Welcome” at

NYU. In crowded classrooms, offices, and conference rooms masks serve as a personal health safety measure. Some people wear masks to protect themselves from inhaling airborne viruses. Others of us wear masks to contain our germs, especially if we are sick, to protect others. If you are unwell, stay home! It is the most considerate choice. Would you want your co-worker to come in and spread a virus around making you sick, or would you rather they call out and keep you well? As a community we are responsible for and to each other.

Please continue to be supportive of those of us who still use masks and consider situations where wearing a mask will keep you or your coworkers healthy.

## Are you taking advantage of all you're entitled to?

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members also benefit from the opportunity to receive similar benefits with sometimes even more affordable pricing through our affiliations with NYSUT (New York State United Teachers), AFT (American Federation of Teachers), NEA (National Education Association), and AFL-CIO (American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations). You can find links to all of these additional membership benefits through the UCATS website.

Not only do we have access to benefits similar to those offered by NYU, but there are so many more at our fingertips if we only take the time to spare a few extra clicks of the mouse. NYSUT members

have access to student loan and credit counseling as well as travel assistance services. AFT provides discounts for travel expenses like hotels, airlines, car rentals, vacation tours, and theme parks, along with office supplies from vendors such as Office Max and Dell. The cornucopia of benefits we have access to as union members can be overwhelming. That, I suppose, is a better problem to have than not.

My experiences are just a small sample of the ways these additional benefits can be used to bring UCATS members peace of mind, whether it's saving money on the next flight out of the city to see family, or knowing that you can afford the cost of care to save a beloved furry family member's life.

*We as UCATS members also benefit from the opportunity to receive similar benefits with sometimes even more affordable pricing through our affiliations with NYSUT, AFT, NEA, and AFL-CIO.*

Exploring all of the many benefits available to you as an employee and as a union member will get you the most compensation for the work you do and the union dues you pay.

# Six percent won't pay the rent

■ Christopher Crowe, Bobst Library, Marty Correia, FAS

In 1988 we went on strike when, after a year of negotiations, NYU still refused to offer a new contract reflective of the value of our work. For 3 long weeks, all over campus, you could hear UCATS members chanting, “SIX PERCENT WON’T PAY THE RENT!” Yes, in those days, in the 1980s and even into the 1990s, a 6% annual raise was common. In fact, it was considered somewhat miserly. It’s been many years since we’ve seen a percentage raise that large. In fact, our last contract gave us an average raise of 2.67% per year. Partially, paradoxically, that is due to the great success we as a union have had bargaining for just compensation. Our base pay is comparably much higher than it was thirty and forty years ago. Three percent of a large number is greater than 6% of a smaller number.

## Inflation realities

We have also been fortunate in recent decades to have lived in an era of relatively low inflation. This has resulted in little societal pressure on NYU, or other employers, to dramatically increase their employees’ pay. But times have changed. We are in an inflationary era and that new reality needs to be reflected in our paychecks.

There are a thousand different economic theories as to the cause of inflation and how best to deal with it but most of them boil down to this: it’s an imbalance in supply and demand where there’s much more demand than supply. There are dollars out there, but not enough goods to spend them on, and so the goods that are available become much more precious, which means much more expensive. How could this be, in our modern, vastly productive economy? It seems that in our case, nowadays, production by and large isn’t the issue, it’s distribution. Getting goods into the hands of the people who want and need them.

As a country, we’ve had quite a shock in the last three years. The pandemic has wreaked havoc on our supply chains. We all remember how hard it was to find proper masks in the early days of COVID, or when store shelves were bare of toilet paper, or when none of us could find baker’s yeast when we all decided to bake our own bread. Similar issues persist even today.

One of the authors of this article recently scheduled a minor surgery which had to be canceled last minute and rescheduled. The hospital had run out of the very common local anesthetic that was necessary for the pro-



From the Archive: Picketing in front of Bobst Library during the 1988 UCATS strike.

cedure. This was not at an under-funded city institution, but at NYU Langone! The explanation: “Supply chains. COVID.” This is a systemic, societal issue that NYU is not responsible for, nor can it fix but, at the same time, a dozen eggs have gone in a year from a cheap commodity to an extravagant luxury.

As of the writing of this article, NYC’s Rent Guidelines Board is proposing steep rent increases for those lucky enough to have rent stabilized leases. And those are the fortunate few! Most UCATS members hand over 35% to 50% of their net pay to their landlords. Suddenly SIX PERCENT DON’T PAY THE RENT seems like a modest ask. If NYU wants a workforce that can actually survive in New York – and with the reduction of the work from home option, it seems very much to want a New York-based workforce – it needs to consider how its employees can afford to live in this city.

## Our wages must reflect our value

All working people need pay raises and everyone knows it. Right now in Albany, there’s a bill to raise the minimum wage which is \$15 an hour in New York City up to \$21.25 an hour by 2026. NYU knows this. They recently settled on a 4% “annual merit increase” for administrators not covered by union contracts. While that’s good news, it’s arguably not enough and NYU employees deserve more. Further: a top Administrative Aide II, a grade 10, who has been at NYU for twenty years makes \$120 less per week than an NYU ground-

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# Six percent

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sworker who just started this year. While groundworkers – and all hardworking laborers – are worth their pay, it is undeniable that pay grades and raises for traditionally male-dominated NYU Unions have historically been larger than for UCATS, whose members are mostly female and people of color. When this was brought up at the last negotiation in 2017, we were told that our members are compensated fairly. It wasn't true then; it's not true now and this will certainly be on the table again this Fall. This is why we need you to get involved and let the NYU administration hear your voice during this year's negotiation.

We earn our pay every single day and the University simply cannot function without us. We proved that

during these last three extraordinary years when – more or less over a weekend in March, 2020 – we literally moved the operations of the University from NYU's offices to our living rooms and kitchen tables. We kept the institution running like that for a year. When we were among the first workers NYU required to return to working onsite, even while the pandemic still raged. As one UCATS worker put it recently, "We risked our lives to come in so the managers and professors could stay home."

For all this, we're not asking NYU to make us rich, but we do need to live dignified, secure lives in a city whose cost of housing has gone off the rails. We demand that we be paid what we are worth, and not a cent less. Solidarity – forever!

## Health insurance claims denied – by AI!

■ *Stephen Rechner, Law School*

**THE PBS TV NETWORK** recently reported that health insurance providers are now using artificial intelligence (AI) software to routinely deny claims for tests and procedures prescribed by doctors. They specifically called out Cigna for using AI to deny claims in batches without a person on their end even opening a patient's file to review the specifics of their claim.

Adding to patients' woes, PBS noted that before patients receive any health care from a provider they are required to sign a waiver agreeing to pay for all provided care that is not reimbursed by insurance. As patients, we routinely sign these waivers because we have no choice, often not even reading them – refuse to sign and you will not receive services.

When a health insurer denies a claim, a health care provider will bill the patient directly for the full amount. It is then our responsibility as patients to determine the cause of the claim denial and seek a remedy. The remedy is to contact the health insurer and file an appeal. Typically, many appeals result in the insurer deciding to pay the claim. So why are health insurers denying claims on a mass scale if they are only going to pay the claim on appeal? Because the health insurer knows that the vast majority of patients do not file an appeal!

How can that be? There are many reasons. For one, everything today has to be done online but there are many patients for whom that is not an option – the elderly, the visually impaired, people in rural areas lacking internet

access. Another reason is that trying to get someone on the phone can require excessive wait times. For relatively small claims many patients will pay rather than endure the aggravation of filing an appeal. Still another reason is that many elderly patients are alone in the world; if they are flat on their back in a hospital or nursing home with no one to advocate for them on the outside, fighting an insurance company is not an option. Sadly, and cynically, health insurance providers know all of this. They likely even know what percentage of their customer base falls into each category and this is why denying claims wholesale is great for their business.

Even before AI, health insurance providers routinely changed their coding schedules for services with the intent of denying claims based on coding errors caused by a billing department of a health care provider using an outdated coding schedule. When a claim is denied for a coding error, the health care provider bills the patient and then it is the patient's responsibility to 1) figure out that the claim was denied due to a coding error and, 2) contact their health insurer for the correct code to pass on to their health care provider.

### How to protect yourself

Always remember that there is a difference between health insurance providers and health care providers and they operate at cross-purposes. Health insurance providers make their money collecting monthly premiums. Health care providers make their money maxi-

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# Coalition building for better contracts



Kate Conroy

■ *Kate Conroy, Gallatin, with Robert Platt, Bobst Library, and history from Stephen Rechner, Law School*

For more than thirty years, UCATS has won equal benefits for all through efforts to secure them for those of us in the LGBTQIA+ communities. In 1992, this was NYU's Statement of Policy and Equal Opportunity and Anti-discrimination:

*"New York University is committed to a policy of equal treatment and opportunity in every aspect of its relations with its faculty, students, and staff members without regard to... sexual orientation... This includes, but is not limited to recruitment, hiring or appointment, ...rates of pay and other forms of compensation, and participation in University-sponsored educational, social, and recreational programs."*

Yet no benefits were available to partners of gay or unmarried employees.

## A CASE STUDY IN COALITION ORGANIZING AND ACTIVISM

Kate Conroy, Gallatin, with Stephen Rechner, School of Law

*"The path to same-sex benefits wasn't a straight line."*

—Stephen Rechner, UCATS President

### The Problem

"In 1990, even unions were just beginning to acknowledge that there were homos in the house of labor and that we were some of their fiercest activists." Stephen Rechner reflects. In the 1990 contract negotiations, when denying benefits to same-sex partners who did not yet have state or federal rights to legally marry, NYU's Director of Labor Relations, Dick Semeraro said, "Not in a thousand years ..." with an unsupported claim that it would be too costly. His position may have been influenced by misinformation campaigns about the AIDS epidemic. The HIV/AIDS crisis had ravaged the Gay community for almost a decade. Through national rhetoric, the public was widely mis-educated about what was then being called the Gay Plague. Those dying of HIV/AIDS were dehumanized and the rest of the Gay community was stigmatized. Providing healthcare benefits to gay partners was seen as dicey.

Since then, through clarifying the disparity, coalition building, and rigorous negotiations our union won the rights we have today to provide for ourselves and our families. We saw what we deserved, we researched, we leveraged,

### The Strategy

ACT-UP formed to confront Mayor Koch for his inaction. Koch, a notoriously closeted gay man, was responsible for aspects of why the health crisis led to increased deaths and broken families during his tenure. After NYU denied partner benefits in our 1990 contract negotiations, UCATS fortified their efforts. 1992. When we joined a newly formed coalition, the Association of Lesbian and Gay Faculty, Administrators and Staff, ALGFAS. According to coalition member, Stephen Rechner, "We met monthly for a year to strategize. Before the days of Google we manually analyzed the costs and the percent of employee usage for employers then offering domestic partner benefits." With that data "ALGFAS called upon NYU to boldly go where most employers had yet to go. To offer benefits to this employee group whose families had been historically marginalized and wrongfully denied benefits given to heterosexual families as a right." Rechner continued.

### The Social and Political Climate

By 1993, AIDS activists demonstrated the liabilities of a decade of neglect. Partners wanted to provide for their sick relatives, but the laws

did not allow for that and it was costing the state and affected individuals in a lot more ways than grief. Now, being heard by sympathetic Mayor Dinkins, the messages were finally getting through. The state was stepping up to support AIDS treatment and research. Employers were beginning to step up to support benefits for same sex partners. Gay and Straight alliances in other industries, such as healthcare, blossomed. Sadly, Rechner continued "Even though the overall contract met with their approval, some of our own union members said they would vote against ratifying the contract because the domestic partner benefit was antithetical to their religious beliefs." The political misinformation climate then, much like that created around COVID-19 and about Drag Queen Story Hours, needed dogged dedication and data, data, data to reverse its negative effects. But the work soon paid off.

### The Negotiation

In the fall semester of 1993, outside of formal contract negotiations, but support from Trudy Rudnick, then UCATS president, Carol Alpert a tenured faculty librarian in the Law Library, Dean Williamson an NYU administrator, and Stephen Rechner, then UCATS shop steward

and we won. (Reference: 1992 article, *NYU Lesbian/Gay Association Forming in The 3882 Local News*.)

The idea that these triumphs happen over a meeting table after shouts and intimidation are in the imagination of films

about union work. The actual process is slower, steadier, and far more collaborative than a single impassioned speech.

In some cases, UCATS has bargained ahead of the curve, as with marital ben-  
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# Building for better contracts

presented the data to L. Jay Oliva, then NYU President. The pitch was this: “employers should provide the benefits offered to married heterosexual couples to same-sex couples as a matter of equal pay for equal work because the law denied same-sex couples the right to marry.” When it was Rechner’s turn to speak on behalf of UCATS, Oliva snapped, “I’m not discussing any subjects of bargaining with a union representative!” The room was shocked into silence until Stephen took a breath and calmly replied, “President Oliva, I won’t ask you to discuss any subjects of bargaining with me, but I do expect you to have the courtesy to listen to what I have to say as you have listened to Professor Alpert and Mr. Williamson.” Rechner continued that NYU needed to be on the right side of history on this issue and to do that they had to grant domestic partner benefits to all employees, including union staff. At that time, it was NYU’s practice when rolling out a new or improved benefit to offer it to faculty and administrators first, making staff wait for the next bargaining cycle to negotiate it into our contract. But we immediately brought the proposal for domestic partner benefits to the negotiations. Carol and Dean agreed to sit

on the union side of the bargaining table. “That was a big deal,” Rechner reflects, “especially for Dean who was an administrator without tenure or union job security. It also made NYU’s negotiators Dick Semeraro and Karen Bradley visibly uncomfortable.”

## The Win

In 1993, after pressure from the union, NYU came to offer domestic partner benefits to employees in same-sex families. We won the benefits for faculty, administrators, and staff at the same time for the first time in our bargaining history, a practice we have maintained on key issues ever since. As Rechner puts it: “The happy ending to this history is that although NYU was dragged over the finish line of domestic partner benefits” by activists and organizers rather than sprinting there on their own, “. . . it does not diminish the fact that NYU got there before most employers.” In fact, although he fails to mention ALGFAS or UCATS as being the agents for change, NYU President Andy Hamilton proudly boasts that NYU provided domestic partner benefits “before it was the law.” Everybody wins.

A fuller article on this process was authored by Stephen Rechner in *MOMENTUM*’s 2019, Volume 40 Issue 2.

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efits for same-sex domestic partners. Other times we bargained to catch up – like six weeks of paid parental bonding leave negotiated in 2017.

In any case, UCATS negotiations have secured

work-life balance benefits for all of our members at every stage of their lives/careers. These benefits include childcare subsidy, sick time for family care including eldercare, longevity increases as milestones are reached, negotiating retire-

ment benefit choice, and defined benefit pension at the end of your career, which we prevented NYU from eliminating in 2017.

One NYU student who started school in 1979, and joined the local after landing a job upon graduation, says that NYU, being academic and situated in New York, was ‘better than other workplaces.’ And, over time, “it has become a more open place. There are no reservations about being out, because visibility is far greater.” When the union gained domestic partner benefits in 1993 “it didn’t affect me personally, but it was a huge step forward, and I teared up. In terms of progress. NYU was in the middle of the pack when it came to benefits.”

Those of us who are members of the LGBTQIA+ community have decades of experience in organizing for human rights, which have informed our approaches to securing benefits and compensation for our union. Join us in further developing our contract to keep pace with inflation, health care, and retirement security for all our members.

*“We did it with marital benefits for same-sex domestic partners in 1993, and if current members are willing to put in a similar effort we will have our best shot at meeting their needs and*

*aspirations in bargaining by October 31, 2023.”*

*–Stephen Rechner,  
UCATS President*

But there is still more to do. A staff member who joined in the early 2000s was gratified to be able to use domestic partner benefits, although when their partner reached medicare age, the NYU benefits ended. “There was no notice, and we kept getting these bills we weren’t expecting. It was difficult to get an explanation.” For upcoming bargaining, this might be an issue they want addressed. Another might be life insurance policies for domestic partners. ‘As it is, NYU only provides life insurance for me.’

He is excited about the coming together of various constituencies at NYU. Workers, students, faculty, and other schools. “It’s great when people come together and support each other.”

For upcoming bargaining sessions we will be collaborating with the Coalition for Labor Action by Workers and Students (CLAWS) at NYU. Together we will develop strategies for mobilization, communication, and bargaining.

## What can YOU do?

Your part can be as small as wearing a UCATS union slogan button, com-

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# Coalition building for better contracts

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pleting the bargaining survey, or signing up for email notifications. You can do even more by distributing info to members in your area or by attending a demo during our

negotiations period. You can join CLAWS, which is open to all UCATS members, and we encourage you to share your talents in support of our bargaining team. All member contributions are wel-

come and productive in the process of securing a favorable contract.

Use the QR code here to sign up for the UCATS listserv of announcements and invitations to participate.



## From the Archive

### NYU Lesbian/Gay Association Forming

Henry Wiemhoff, Midtown Center

**G**rowing out of discussions about domestic partner benefits, a group of lesbian and gay staff, faculty and administrators at NYU have formed a coalition and begun meeting to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest to one another as employees of the University. Thus far the focus of their meetings has been on how to get NYU to fully comply with its stated policy of anti-discrimination, with particular reference to the issue of domestic partnership benefits.

According to University policy:

"New York University is committed to a policy of equal treatment and opportunity in every aspect of its relations with its faculty, students, and staff members, without regard to ... sexual orientation ... This includes, but is not limited to, recruitment, hiring or appointment, ... rates of pay and other forms of compensation, and participation in University-sponsored educational, social, and recreational programs." [from *Statement of Policy and Equal Opportunity and Anti-discrimination*]

In fact, **none** of the benefits that married employees are given for their spouses and families—such as tuition remission and group health insurance coverage—are made available to NYU's gay or unmarried employees.

#### A Meeting with Lambda

At an initial meeting on August 27th, seven faculty, administrators and staff, including Local 3882 President Trudy Rudnick, and members Henry Wiemhoff and Stephen Rechner, met with Paula Eitlebrick, Legal Director of Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund. Members learned that over the years a number of individual efforts have been made, unsuccessfully, to bring NYU's actual policy

in line with its official Policy Statement of Anti-discrimination. Among these efforts have been the Union's demand for domestic partnership coverage for the staff, rejected during the last several contract negotiations, and a letter to President Oliva last May from a representative group of lesbian faculty.

The coalition has gained new momentum through their disappointment with the report of President Oliva's Benefits Study Committee (known as the *West Committee*). The committee gave only a weak endorsement of the need for yet "further study" of the issues. (The coalition feels strongly that, in the future, any University group that considers issues of direct consequence to lesbians and gay men, such as the *West Committee*, ought on principle to include openly lesbian and gay members.) While more and more companies, municipalities, and states are adding domestic partner benefits with no adverse effects, we are disappointed that NYU is not taking a greater leadership position on this issue.

As the new semester begins, the coalition is planning a major outreach program to attract more members and to educate the NYU community to the importance of this issue, including a forum on domestic partner benefits later in the year.

#### A Historic Event

In the meantime, the coalition held an **Information Session and Reception** for all lesbians and gay men at NYU to kick off the new semester, on Thursday, October 1st. Over 60 staff, administrators, faculty and students attended! The event featured a presentation of issues of current interest to the group, followed by a lively discussion.

If you would like more information about the coalition and its activities, call the union office at (212) 254-0982.

**Come out to a meeting and bring a friend**

The next meeting of the Gay and Lesbian Association will be October 29, 1992.

The location is still to be announced but call the union office and we'll get you the info.



## Health insurance claims denied

(Continued from page 7)

mizing both the volume of services they provide and the cost of those services – procedures, tests, screenings, office visits and prescriptions written to name a few. Put another way, health insurance providers make more money when they deny more claims and health care providers make more money by submitting more claims.

So, when your health insurance provider denies a claim always contact them to find out why.

If it's a coding error, request the correct code and then contact your health care provider and ask them to resubmit their bill to your insurance with the correct code. If it is something other than a coding error then file an appeal with your health insurance provider.

Even though they have an incentive to deny claims you are still a paying customer and even health insurers want their customers to be happy. Customers who have the ability and take the time to file an appeal are also customers who might file complaints with their State Attorney Generals or the Better Business Bureau, and who also might post unfavorable comments on chat boards or write their members of Congress.

Since AI is now the likely cause of your claim being denied, it is also more likely that your claim will be paid when you appeal because when you appeal a human being will have to look at why the claim was denied and determine if the denial was for a legitimate reason or some minor technicality that should not matter.

You can watch the PBS report that prompted this article on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uc2uG6LhFQQ>

# UCATS in action



## March 19— New Deal for CUNY Rally

UCATS officers Rob Lesko and Stephen Rechner rallied and marched in support of our union siblings from the Professional Staff Congress, PSC-CUNY. Andrea Vasquez (center) is the First Vice President of the PSC.



## March 24— Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire commemoration on Washington Place



## April 28-29— NYSUT Representative Assembly

Melinda Person (center) is the newly elected President of our state federation, New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), pictured here with UCATS delegates to the 2023 NYSUT Representative Assembly (l to r) Christopher Crowe, Stephen Rechner, Kate Conroy & Marty Correia.

# Bulletin Board

## UNION-NEGOTIATED CHILDCARE SUBSIDY

Applications for the 2023 childcare subsidy will be sent by email to your NYU Home Account email on or about Monday, August 28, and the deadline to submit your application will be on or about Monday, September 11. Since our contract expires on October 31, we don't have a negotiated fund amount for calendar year 2024, but we expect that NYU will keep it at \$180,000, plus any unclaimed awards from 2023. The UCATS childcare subsidy increased \$25,000 over the term of our 2017-2023 contract.

## DO YOU WANT A GREAT NEW CONTRACT ON NOVEMBER 1?

Here is the UCATS member to-do list to help your bargaining team negotiate:

1. Sign up for UCATS email and encourage your coworkers to do the same;
2. **READ** the email we send you;
3. Complete the Contract Bargaining Member Survey and encourage your coworkers to do the same;
4. Speak positively about UCATS and all we are doing on your behalf – and let your managers hear you so that they report to the NYU higher-ups that UCATS members are paying attention to what's happening and that members support their bargaining team. Encourage your coworkers to do the same;
5. Tell your managers that UCATS is bargaining for them too; they will get more if UCATS members get more.

## SAVE BIG \$\$\$ ON HOME INTERNET/CABLE

**Have you been** with the same internet/cable TV provider for a long time? Your monthly bill is probably huge. If you check your provider's website you'll find they are likely offering much lower rates to new customers. How can you get those rates? Cut the cord and in 30 days you will get a nice letter from your former service provider telling you how much they miss you and offering you those new customer rates. Summer is a time when you will be away on vacation, or at least spending more time outdoors, and the 30 days without internet/cable TV will fly by. There are also great YouTube videos that will teach you how to use your phone as an internet hotspot; if your internet needs are minimal you may never need to pay for home internet service again!

## HAVE A GREAT SUMMER!

**And remember** – your union membership includes big discounts on hotels, car rentals, theme parks and vacation packages. Just go to [ucats3882.org](http://ucats3882.org) and click the "Other Member Benefits" link in the left column and browse the member benefits websites of our state and national affiliates (NYSUT, AFT, NEA, AFL-CIO).

