



**A Message From
CSU-AAUP
President
O'Neill:**

As we wrap up the most unusual spring semester many of us have ever experienced and conversations move increasingly toward reopening our universities, please know that I have been advocating with you in mind that any reopening plan places faculty, student, and staff safety paramount. These last two months, I have been serving on the Academics and Enrollment Management Committee and the Student Life and Support Services Committee, both of which are tasked with considering a host of issues around the reopening of our universities.

While safety is the number one concern, we also realize that some faculty must forge a path to on-ground courses and labs. A coordinated, thoughtful plan must be realized for those faculty who choose to do so in order for them to return to campus in a safe and healthy way. We are working hard to ensure this happens. I will continue to advocate for your academic freedom and your workplace safety – as well as that of our students and staff – in any reopening scenarios that are presented.

As I have reported to you previously, my first priority when the shutdowns began was to protect the evaluation process, both for renewals this year and for tenure applications next fall. To that end, I signed a MOA that extended the deadline for renewals this year and, importantly, included language that stipulated no candidate for renewal would be harmed because of extenuating circumstances due to Covid-19 and the associated campus closures. I next signed an MOA that essentially guarantees the same for penultimate year tenure applications.

Also of note, the other higher education union presidents and I sent a letter to Governor Lamont concerning unemployment insurance for adjuncts. In the past, the Department of Labor has rejected applications for unemployment for the summer, claiming that adjuncts have a reasonable expectation of employment in the fall. Our letter urged Governor Lamont to remove this obstacle because Covid-19 makes everything uncertain. We also sent this letter to every Democratic member of the legislature, and to all members of the Higher Education committee and Democratic members and ranking members of the Labor Committee. Currently, our attorney Gregg Adler is in conversations with the Department of Labor about this issue. I'll keep you updated on any subsequent events. CCSU part-time faculty member and CSU-AAUP Council Member [Chris Doucot published this op-ed on the issue](#), which appeared in print and online in The Hartford Courant.

I have been keeping a close eye on any discussions involving online learning and talk of that being the "new normal." As [Nicole Krassas' excellent op-ed explains](#), online learning has proven to be challenging for too many of our students and has placed extra workloads on our faculty who have had to adapt courses to an online format. In conversations with the BOR, I have expressed our concerns about any attempt to mandate online formats and reminded the system office of 4.2.2.1 in our CBA that states: "All members when teaching shall have professional freedom to conduct their courses, provided that the subject matter is that which has been specified by the University and the appropriate department."

Unlike the community colleges, the universities did not have any mandatory pass/fail policy instituted on us. This was due to several factors: language in our contract spelling out who determines grades (faculty do); conversations I had with Labor Relations at the BOR about this; and the fact that the presidents of the universities were less than thrilled with this possibility. As a result, each university Senate, after careful deliberation, was free to determine a policy as appropriate for their institution.

Per our contract, CSU-AAUP is required to exchange contract proposals with the Board of Regents by October 1. However, I am in continued conversations with Labor Relations at the Board of Regents about the possibility of a delay of this date and will keep you all updated.

Since the closures began, I have participated in online meetings with the presidents of the higher education unions and members of the system office. These meetings took place daily, until April 3, when we agreed it would be appropriate to hold once-a-week meetings. I also regularly participate in SEBAC meetings via Zoom. Currently there are no negotiations about concessions.

Be well friends and take pride in knowing you helped bring your students through one of the most unprecedented times we have seen as a community and enabled them to continue their growth and learning.

In solidarity,
Patty

**Adjunct
Unemployment
Compensation:**

CSU-AAUP is urging all part-time faculty members to apply for unemployment benefits when their contracts end, whether or not they have received information regarding teaching schedules for the fall semester.

"Many part-time faculty members may be eligible to receive unemployment insurance and should apply through the Connecticut Department of Labor at this website: www.filectui.com. Click the blue button on that page to begin your claim.

When members apply, the DOL will ask them if they work for an educational institution and whether they are between years or terms. The answer is yes to both questions. DOL will then ask if the member has plans to return to that or any other educational institution in the fall. Members should not provide an answer to that question. People employed by educational institutions are not eligible for unemployment during the summer or during winter break if they have "reasonable/probable" expectation of being rehired for similar roles the following semester.

Within Connecticut Gen. Stat. §31-227 [d] [1], the critical language in the statute states that institutional faculty members who teach during one semester are not eligible for benefits during the following semester or intercession "if there is a contract or reasonable assurance that such individual will perform such services for the educational institution during the following term." The controversy comes in the absence of any definition of "reasonable assurance" in the statute."

All such applications will likely be initially denied, and a hearing scheduled at which the union will argue on behalf of the adjunct faculty members that there is simply no reasonable expectation of employment in the fall given the uncertainties associated with the pandemic.

CSU-AAUP is working closely with other higher education unions and the DOL to secure an application of the statute that will permit adjuncts to start receiving unemployment benefits.

When you apply, please let CSU-AAUP know if you receive unemployment insurance or if you are denied these benefits. It is important to let your union know so that we can monitor this issue and be in the best position possible to coordinate and handle any appeals that may be necessary. Please email CSU-AAUP at aaup@ccsu.edu and let us know the status of your claim.

CSU-AAUP continues to work in coalition with other higher education unions on this matter and will provide updates when available.

**Governor's
Guidelines To
Reopen
Campuses:**

The ReOpen CT Higher Education Advisory Group, led by Board of Regents President Mark Ojakian, [released a report](#) May 6 that outlines conditions that must exist before beginning a phasing-in of campus life. These conditions are necessary to protect the health and well-being of students, faculty, and staff on each campus. While the advisory group issued guidelines, Ojakian mentioned that one size does not fit all. Each CSU campus is tasked with developing its own, detailed reopening plan to best meet the circumstances, needs, and challenges of their own campus and community.

The following conditions must be met before any campus reopening can begin:

- The prevalence of COVID-19 cases in Connecticut must be low enough (as determined by the Dept. of Public Health).
- The state must ensure colleges and universities have adequate supplies of viral diagnostic tests and adequate financial support to obtain, administer, and process them.
- The state should enable institutions to have adequate capacity to conduct contact tracing.
- The state should establish specific public health guidelines for universities on wearing facemasks, physical distancing, and the density of dorms, dining halls, and classrooms.
- The state should ensure adequate supplies of PPE and facemasks are available to colleges and universities.
- Adequate surge capacity must be available in nearby health centers and hospitals.
- The state should provide safe harbor from liability for those institutions.

To read a full copy of the report, [click here](#).

**SEBAC Stands
United:**

CSU-AAUP President Patty O'Neill and other SEBAC union leaders have been and will continue to be in constant contact to ensure all union members' perspectives are heard during Connecticut's ever-evolving response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please [click here](#) to read SEBAC union leaders report: The Latest On State Government Response To COVID-19. This report includes an outline of core principles for navigating through this public health crisis. The report analyses the steps the Lamont Administration has taken to date and recommends additional steps Connecticut should take to move further and faster in its COVID-19 response, both for state employees and the public we serve.

SEBAC leaders met informally with members of the Lamont Administration on May 5. [Click here](#) to read a statement from SEBAC about that meeting.

While the challenges facing our communities are unlike any we have encountered in recent memory, the solidarity and dedication of our CSU-AAUP members gives great hope that we will make it through together and come out of this stronger than ever.

**Thank A
Front-line
Worker:**

SEBAC leaders are asking front-line workers in various bargaining units to record 30-second videos of themselves after leaving work to show what life is like on the job during the COVID-19 pandemic. For union members who are able to work remotely, SEBAC leaders are encouraging them to record thank you messages for workers who are unable to work from home. While many CSU-AAUP members are able to work from home, some may also be working on the front lines.

If you are a member working on the front line or if you would like to show your appreciation for those workers, please consider [recording a short 30-second video](#) using your smart phone to express your thanks or to let others know the reality of working for the public good in the midst of this global pandemic.

Instructions on how to record your video can be found at this link:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Mm-wBtHBRn10Lg2Eb3GWYF0so4Mey_QN/view

Once you are finished, the video can be emailed to SEBACvideos@gmail.com.

SEBAC plans to share these videos in the coming weeks and months to remind people of the dedication, sacrifice, and courage of state workers.

Thank you and stay safe, healthy, and Union Strong.

**State
Employees
Deserve
Respect, Not
Blame:**

Some representatives in the Connecticut General Assembly are trying to scapegoat state employees during the COVID-19 crisis. They want the governor to break the contracts negotiated by State Employees Bargaining Agent Coalition (SEBAC) leaders — and that had already saved taxpayers nearly \$2 billion before the pandemic hit.

Public service workers are on the front lines of the COVID-19 crisis. Many have fallen ill, and, tragically, some have died from their exposure to the deadly disease. Using this public health emergency as a pretext for a political attack on working peoples' fundamental negotiating rights is simply wrong.

Please take a minute to contact your state Representative by [clicking here](#). Let them know your appreciation for the savings they've already produced to respect for their service and a little appreciation for the savings they've already produced to shore up Connecticut's finances.

Thank you for taking action!

**Wishing
Members A Safe
And Healthy
Summer:**

Please stay healthy and well over the summer! Be sure to keep an eye out for updates from CSU-AAUP on everything from reopening our campuses to negotiation survey results. We will keep you posted with the latest information. In the meantime, please [like our Facebook page](#) <https://www.facebook.com/CTStateUaaup> and follow us on Twitter @csuaaup to stay-up-to date on daily happenings in higher education and with your union.

For the most up-to-date information on ever-changing COVID-19 updates in Connecticut, please visit <https://portal.ct.gov/Coronavirus>

For detailed Corona virus information in the United States, please visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>