

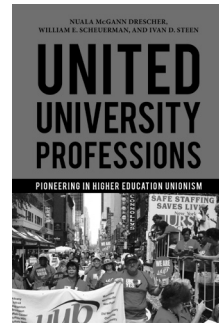
the nation's founding and founders, the 250th commemoration can remove mythology and replace it with history.

Reviewed by Devin Lander, New York State Historian, New York State Museum, Albany.

United University Professions: Pioneering in Higher Education Unionism

By Nuala McGann Drescher, William E. Scheuerman, and Ivan D. Steen. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2019. 307 pages, 6" × 9". \$95.00 cloth, \$33.95 paperback, \$25.49 e-book.

Nuala McGann Drescher, William E. Scheuerman, and Ivan D. Steen have coauthored a seminal book in labor history by chronicling the countervailing forces that led to the emergence and growth of the largest higher education union in the nation—United University Professions (UUP). The coauthors' insights are especially credible given their respective roles as long-standing professors in the State University of New York system and as prominent union leaders of the UUP. Moreover, historiography provides little treatment of the union movement in higher education. The coauthors had exhaustive primary sources at their disposal, which they fully utilized to craft an extremely comprehensive history of the formation, growth, and maturation of UUP.



To understand the emergence of the union, it is critical to set the stage with the unique circumstances surrounding the formation of public higher education in New York State, which culminated with the creation of the State University of New York system (SUNY). The history of higher education is steeped in its support of New York's private institutions. In fact, New York used resources available through the Morrill Land Grant Act (1862) to establish Cornell University. Normal schools (teachers colleges) were scattered across the state with the mission to train teachers. Up until the post-World War II era, matriculation into private institutions was the only other viable option for postsecondary education in New York State. With the advent of the GI Bill, the state was forced to establish a statewide public higher education system to accommodate the burgeoning enrollment of soldiers returning from the war. In 1947, President Truman called for the expansion of higher education with greater access for socioeconomically disadvantaged populations. With his own presidential aspirations, Governor Thomas Dewey wasted no time responding by signing the bill in 1948 that established SUNY. With thirty-two institutions, which included the

teachers colleges, it was clear that the private schools were still sacrosanct. Indeed, funding continued to pour into the state's private institutions. The mission of the public system was simply to complement not to replace the state's private institutions.

In 1957, Governor Nelson Rockefeller changed the entire complexion of public higher education in New York State with his vision for SUNY. His administration poured billions into SUNY's infrastructure and the "Higher Education Act of 1961 provided the legal framework for SUNY's emergence as a giant public university" (10). By 1970, SUNY boasted an enrollment of 300,000 students. While governance for SUNY switched from Regents to Trustees, local campus presidents wielded tremendous, unilateral control and power over individual campuses and salaries; they also served as the final arbiters of grievances. As one can imagine, the size and complexity of SUNY naturally resulted in an escalation of grievances. Moreover, nonteaching professionals (NTPs) had no job security, much less any leverage over workload issues, which was a real problem that would not be resolved for some time. Disparities also existed in the salaries for women. "Growth brought bureaucratization," and SUNY quickly became a managed, paternalistic university system (25). These circumstances combined with an end of SUNY growth and shrinking state budgets created the perfect storm for unionization.

The Taylor Law in 1967 (Public Employees Fair Employment Act) provided the enabling legislation for SUNY to unionize with the Public Employment Relations Board (PERB) serving as the administrative agency charged with administering the collective bargaining statutes. Despite the abhorrence to the notion of being associated with blue-collar workers and trade unionists, faculty and NTPs had no choice but to find a mechanism through which to voice and exert a measure of control over their own professional destinies. Professional organizations quickly moved into the fray to earn the right to represent SUNY faculty and NTPs. Throughout the SUNY system, there were pockets of allegiances to the more prominent national organizations like the National Education Association (NEA), the American Association of University Professors (AAUP) and the American Federation of Teachers (AFT/AFL-CIO) through the State University Federation of Teachers (SUFT). NTPs were loyal to the State University Professional Association (SUPA). Of course, the Faculty Senate and the Faculty Association of the State University of New York (FASCUY) were very active in vying to represent SUNY faculty and NTPs. The Civil Service Employees Association (CSEA), an affiliate with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), an AFL-CIO affiliate, also became a player as representation activity increased leading to collective bargaining unit determination.

All these organizations had ideological differences toward unionism. Moreover, there were issues with representing both professors and NTPs and questions about whether there would be multiple bargaining units or a single unit. The University Medical Centers and NTPs wanted to split from the very beginning. Amid this labyrinth of differences among these organizations, the Senate Professional Association (SPA) emerged from a merger of the Faculty Senate and the SUPA as a pragmatic solution to stave-off pure trade

unionism and to preserve the idyllic integrity of its knowledge workers as well as represent the NTPs under the umbrella of one organization. The PERB ruled that a single bargaining unit would represent SUNY faculty and NTPs, and SPA won the certification election on January 29, 1971. "SUNY faculty and professionals were the last state employees to enter collective bargaining after the passage of the Taylor Law" (35). Despite the initial success, SPA was ill-equipped in terms of the resources and expertise needed to engage in collective bargaining, much less to address the diverse needs of a university system that consisted of 15,000 faculty and NTPs from twenty-six campuses that included teachers colleges, agricultural and technical colleges, and university and medical centers. The SPA negotiated its first contract in August 1971 with resources and support through its affiliation with the NEA. The contract provided a 9 percent salary increase through 1973, "guaranteed academic freedom," arbitration procedures, and job security for NTPs (59). While SPA's leadership was delighted with the results, not all constituents shared that sentiment, given the loss of longevity. Shortly thereafter, SPA changed its name to SUNY/United then United University Professions (UUP) in 1973 after its merger with SUFT. Lawrence DeLucia (SUNY Oswego) became UUP's first president, succeeding Robert Granger, SPA's first president. It quickly became apparent "that in merger there would be survival" (73).

As soon as the first contract and its corresponding salary reopeners (mutual agreement to revisit salaries) ended, it was time to begin anew, a recurring theme throughout UUP's history. DeLucia served only one term amid efforts to impeach him. Samuel Wakshull (College at Buffalo) was elected in 1975 to serve as UUP's president. Initially, UUP's office—which consisted of Wakshull and Evelyn Hartman—was hit with state fiscal shortfalls, retrenchment, representation challenges, competition for state funding from the private institutions, and internal conflict. Wakshull and Hartman stood strong and moved UUP forward. Union membership and advocating for SUNY were the priorities. Legislation in 1977 provided secure resources through an agency fee (union dues). Membership increased, lobbying, and picketing through the SAVE SUNY campaign resulted in legislative budget restorations, a fourth rank for librarians was established, and a definition of retrenchment (notification) was included in the contract ratified in 1977. Despite some criticism regarding the contracts negotiated during UUP's first eight years, UUP's membership overwhelmingly voted to keep the union as its bargaining agent and supported the contracts with ratification percentages that ranged from 69 to 93.2 percent. With salary increases in the contracts, rank and file membership clearly voted their pocketbooks.

The early 1980s ushered in Nuala McGann Drescher's (College at Buffalo) presidency, boasting a membership of 13,000. Challenges included ongoing "philosophical differences" between the United and Reform caucuses within UUP, but the "evenly split" delegates between the two caucuses promoted cooperation (109). The United Caucus focused on "bread-and-butter" unionism, whereas the Reform Caucus "saw itself as the more democratic and idealistic element in the organization, committed to using the union's power to uphold social ideals of reform and change" and "check the establishment" (110). The United

Caucus “was by no means opposed to supporting broader social-justice issues,” when such initiatives “were in harmony with the basic agenda” of “promoting the welfare” of its members, “collectively and individually, through contract negotiations and enforcement to advance that welfare” (109).

The impact of Reaganomics during Drescher’s tenure led to the closure of SUNY’s demonstration schools (K12), and Governor Mario Cuomo’s proposed budget cuts were so deep that UUP reignited the SAVE SUNY campaign, which resulted in campus demonstrations (picketing) and lobbying by members as well as by thousands of students. President Drescher was a master tactician and enlisted the support of SUNY’s trustees and chancellor, who had historically been somewhat passive advocates for funding. She also enjoyed greater cooperation from the Governor’s Office of Employee Relations (GOER). John “Tim” Reilly (SUNY Albany) would succeed her on May 2, 1987, and inherit many victories that helped propel the union forward that included a workload agreement, professional development resources, a disparity fund, a tax shelter, successful adjudication of grievances, affirmative action initiatives, an AIDS committee, and the (federal) Pepper Bill, which negated the mandatory retirement at age seventy. Drescher’s administration also won job equity for NTPs, an Employee Assistance Program (EAP), two full-time vice presidents, health insurance through the Empire Plan, and greater labor-management cooperation, which in part led to the restoration of SUNY’s budgets and contracts with salary increases during her presidency.

For President Reilly, the priority included ramping-up legislative and political activities to positively impact salaries, benefits, and working conditions. The contracts negotiated saw increases for 1988–91 and 1991–95. Health insurance for part-timers with a two-course criterion was a major victory, as was the elimination of the mandatory retirement age of seventy. The state increased its contribution to the UUP Benefit Fund by 43 percent. Funding was increased for affirmative action and daycare. Unfortunately, the state’s fiscal shortfalls during this same period and Governor Cuomo’s subsequent cuts to SUNY could not be restored, and retrenchments followed on many campuses. UUP and the New York State United Teachers (NYSUT), UUP’s long-standing K12 affiliate, rallied its members, lobbied, and picketed, but it was all to no avail. When the governor released his 1992 budget for SUNY—although a \$50.5 million increase over the preceding year—it was noted that SUNY’s state allocation was at an all-time low of 34 percent. During these tumultuous fiscal periods, SUNY was saved by UUP’s legislative and political activism. User fees for certain campus services, natural personnel attrition, state tax hikes and, ultimately, tuition increases helped offset the cuts, and UUP’s effective legislative campaigns motivated the legislature to restore the SUNY budget in numerous instances. These contractual and financial battles took their toll on the union and depleted its treasury. Moving forward into the 1990s, William Scheuerman—who had served as UUP’s chief negotiator—would quickly return UUP to financial solvency, but like his predecessors, he would have to lead

them through a myriad of financial challenges and help the union adapt to the realities of shrinking state resources, more part-time faculty, fiscally conservative political leadership, and trustees who were not interested in supporting SUNY's growth.

Thanks to an elimination of term limits for UUP officers (2001), William Scheuerman (SUNY Oswego) served as UUP's president through 2007. He was also the Reform Caucus's nominee, which signaled a capstone in the evolving unity of the union, one that had been fostered by Scheuerman's predecessors through cross-caucus appointments and increased social and political activism. President Scheuerman's honeymoon was short-lived, however, when he faced the exigencies of Governor George Pataki's budget cuts, threats of downsizing, support for outsourcing, and trustees who supported neither SUNY nor UUP and instead promoted privatizing SUNY, and a state that coveted the millions of dollars generated by the University Medical Centers through the Clinical Practice Plans that UUP had fought to establish in the early 1970s.

During Schererman's tenure, UUP's membership grew to 27,000. Scheuerman's longevity, his role at the national level as an AFT committee member, and his effective leadership and commitment to legislative action equaled credibility that resulted in the union wielding tremendous influence. The UUP's voluntary member contributions steadily increased to support pro-public education and pro-labor candidates through NYSUT's non-partisan political action committee VOTE-COPE (Voice of Teachers in Education). The 1999 contract provided a 19.83 percent increase in salaries with a 96.15 percent approval of the membership. It was the only union to provide health insurance coverage for part-timers during the summer months. Highlighting UUP's political acumen, Scheuerman shared with delegates at the Winter 2000 Assembly that "chancellor Robert King, the former director of the Division of Budget [state], conceded that any plan SUNY would bring to the legislature without clearing it with UUP was dead on arrival" (200). There was also much greater cooperation from the Faculty Senate. Academicians who viewed the union as their *bête noir*, were now cooperating and supporting UUP, including SUNY's provost Peter Salins. The good rapport and collaboration continued with Scheuerman and Chancellor John Ryan, which led SUNY trustee Candace deRussy to remark that Ryan was in the "back pocket of the big union" (227).

The UUP had matured during Scheuerman's tenure. He stepped aside in 2007 to pursue other professional interests and Phillip Smith (Upstate Medical University, Syracuse), the former vice president for academics, was elected to serve as UUP's next president. His presidency can best be characterized as abysmal, according to the authors. Smith's administration faced the state's financial crisis in 2008 that was projected to be a \$10 billion deficit by 2010. By Smith's own admission, the 2011–16 contract negotiated under his watch was "the worst contract in UUP history" (250). When his constituents needed him the most to fight against SUNY cuts, he and other UUP officers were at a conference in Hawaii. In 2013, Fred Kowal (SUNY Cobleskill) stepped into the presidency and began the process of

restoring UUP to its rightful place as the largest and most powerful higher education union in the nation that grew from 3,500 in 1973 to 35,000 members at sixty-four campuses with an enrollment of 193,824 in 2018–19.

The story and journey of UUP can best be characterized as an authentic grassroots movement, conceived and propagated by its own leaders, faculty, and professional staff who recognized the need for collective action and were willing to make the sacrifices to preserve their self-determination. The postwar era ushered in this new breed of academic unionists who became professional unionists amid the backdrop of the social and political movements of the 1960s and 1970s, and “the changing economic realities and declining political support for higher education,” (29). “Austerity budgets endowed collective bargaining with added appeal” (30). For nearly fifty years, UUP grew its base membership and strengthened its relationships and coalitions with affiliate unions and political leaders. UUP has always fought to preserve academic freedom and negotiated contracts that included salary increases and enhanced membership benefits and working conditions. UUP has been the single, most powerful advocate for SUNY, which has prevented massive retrenchments and campus closings over the years. Despite its successes, fiscal challenges continue, and SUNY has also faced declining enrollment over the past decade. In 2018, in the “case of *Janus v. American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees*,” only those who join the union are required to pay the agency fee. As a result of the Janus ruling, “UUP’s reaction to a negative decision will now determine its future well-being and, more importantly, that of almost 40,000 members of the SUNY family that UUP represents” (250).

Reviewed by Will Kayatin. Kayatin holds a PhD from the State University of New York, University at Albany. His dissertation, “Higher Education Unions and Social Responsibility: UUP’s Response to Social and Political Change in New York State, 1973–1993,” was completed in 2004. He is currently and Educational Consultant for Transition and Higher Education at the Kentucky Valley Educational Cooperative. He is the author (with Joseph “Rocky” Wallace and Joe Blackbourn) of Rise, to Deeper Learning, Model: Real World Innovations = Systemic Enduring Engagement (2020), Equity and Access Pre K-12, accessed September 19, 2022, <https://ace-ed.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/RISE-2-Deeper-Learning-2.pdf>

Rescue Board: The Untold Story of American Efforts to Save the Jews of Europe

By Rebecca Erbelding. New York: Anchor Books, 2018. 400 pages, 5 3/16" × 8", 19 b&w illus. \$17.00 paperback; \$12.99 e-book.

In *Rescue Board: The Untold Story of American Efforts to Save the Jews of Europe*, Rebecca Erbelding, a historian and archivist at the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum (USHMM), provides the first book-length treatment of the War Rescue Board (WRB), the government agency created by President Franklin Roosevelt in 1944 to attempt to rescue European Jews from Nazi extermination. In this book, Erbelding seeks to address a divide in the historiography that has existed for nearly a half century. She argues that historians have staked out two camps regarding American inaction between 1939 and 1945 toward the Holocaust.

The first camp argues that possibilities for wartime rescue were extremely limited, particularly in the context of an isolationist and oftentimes anti-Semitic American society. The second camp, led by the late David Wyman, have countered that much more could have been done to save the Jews and who see such contextualization as excuses that pardon inaction (285). In her focus on the WRB, Erbelding argues that both schools have treated America's most significant effort toward rescue as an aberrant afterthought, "the one bright spot, however 'little and late'" (285).

In many respects, Erbelding sides with the former school of thought, asserting that "people who point to the 1930s and 1940s with outrage that the United States did not do more to save the Jews of Europe neglect the context of the period" (273). She points to the pervasiveness of racism and anti-Semitism in the United States, the crippling effects of the Great Depression, and the grip of isolationism on a large swath of the American population. Erbelding argues that "No one knew the word 'genocide' until 1944" (273) and that few contemporaries could have imagined the evolution of Nazi persecution of the Jews from the 1930s to the mass extermination of the Final Solution during the war. She convincingly shows that the nation's struggles to intervene or prevent genocide in the intervening decades—when the shadow of the Holocaust loomed in American consciousness—should give at least some historians pause in their willingness to condemn American inaction. While not pulling punches over Americans' antipathy and inaction toward the plight of Europe's Jews during World War II, Erbelding instead offers a nuanced examination of the lone example of America's determination to act. The War Refugee Board, as the author points out, remains "the only time in American history that the U.S. government founded a government

