SUNY faculty and staff OK 6-year contract with state

Kevin Moriarty, a full-time lecturer in Stony Brook University's Department of Technology and Society and president of the Stony Brook West Campus Chapter of United University Professions, is among those marching on March 1, 2018, for a new contract with the state. / Barry Sloan

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By Keshia Clukey

United University Professions, the union representing State University of New York system employees, has ratified a six-year contract agreement with the state, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo and the group announced in separate news releases.
The agreement, reached with the state in May, was approved by nearly 98 percent of UUP members who cast ballots by mail during the summer, according to a news release from the governor’s office.

The union, which has more than 35,000 members statewide, includes thousands of faculty and staff members at the four-year SUNY schools on Long Island.

The union said 14,582 members voted for the new contract and 334 voted against it. Nineteen ballots were declared invalid.

"We're really happy with the ratification of what is a very good contract," UUP president Frederick E. Kowal said. "The turnout was a record-setter. We've never had nearly 15,000 members vote in a contract ratification vote."

The last contract between the state and UUP, the nation's largest higher-education union, ended July 1, 2016. The new agreement is retroactive to July 2, 2016.

The pact includes 2 percent wage increases each year through 2021-22 and provides access to New York State Paid Family Leave benefits. UUP is the first public-sector union in the state to have Paid Family Leave benefits included in its contract since that policy took effect Jan. 1, according to the governor's office.

“This contract agreement fairly and appropriately compensates the hardworking men and women who are the backbone of our university system, while also protecting the taxpayers' bottom line,” Cuomo said in the release issued Wednesday. "I applaud United
University Professions for ratifying their contract agreement and commend President Kowal and the union leadership for their hard work on this achievement."

Starting in 2019, the contract also establishes a minimum starting salary for part-time faculty members, known as adjuncts, for each three-credit course they teach at state-operated campuses.

The budgetary impact of the contract is not yet available because it is difficult to calculate how many people would be affected by the various components — for example, to how many adjuncts it will apply, Kowal said.