

# ULA GRADUATION 2010

June 2010

The 2010 class of the Union Leadership Academy celebrate their achievements with union leaders from across the state at the graduation ceremony in May.



## SMLR's Union Leadership Academy Graduates Next Generation of Labor Leaders

Jennifer Cropper never thought she would make it very high in the ranks of her union.

Yet as a member of UNITE-HERE Local 54, Cropper did just that, starting as a shop steward and now earning the title of union organizer and field representative.

The backbone of her success? The Union Leadership Academy (ULA), a program that since its founding over 50 years ago has advanced the careers of its students by

helping them develop better leadership skills in the workplace.

This May, Cropper and 21 other continuing studies students graduated from the ULA program, which features eight courses on topics including employment law, dispute resolution, communication skills and employee health care benefits.

Each class lasts about six weeks and aims to enhance the knowledge of workers to create better workplace environments, said

Adrienne Eaton, Chair of the Department of Labor Students and Employment Relations. "ULA provides people with a chance to further develop their acumen and knowledge of labor," Eaton said.

Debbie McNeill, coordinator for ULA, said the program helps students learn more about their rights under the law, information they can bring back to their unions to help their members.

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# Graduation:

## Continued from Front

Even after they graduate, McNeill said students continue to attend ULA classes to enhance their leadership skills.

“Year after year they come back to the classes because they have gained so much knowledge and insight,” McNeill said. “[The graduates] come back to even further improve their union skills and improve their relations with their co-workers.”

ULA classes are offered at various locations throughout the Garden State- including New Brunswick, Newark, Trenton, West Berlin and Atlantic City- making it easy for adult learners to make it to their classes, said Tracy Chang, director of SMLR’s Labor Education and Research Now (LEARN).

“With the various locations, it makes it easier for those with jobs and families to access the ULA without long commutes,” she said.

Tiran Billups, a member of ATU Local 819 and this year ULA graduate, said program is vitally

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-Tiran Billups, member ATU Local 819 and 2010 ULA Graduate



important because it helps to improve the union representation of members in the Garden State.

“You’re dealing with people’s lives here,” Billups said. “That’s what we got out of this class-how to deal with our member’s lives more effectively.”

Billups said the program will help take his local out from “The Stone Age,” modernizing it through the use of computers and other systems to help ensure that union leadership can better represent its members.

Billups said he appreciated the hard work and devotion of all those involved with the ULA program.

“I applaud the instructors for how they were dedicated,” he said. “Everyone works another job and then comes to this class, even the

instructors. You see the dedication they have doing this.”

David Finegold, Dean of the School of Management and Labor Relations commended the program and its class of 2010 graduates.

“This program is very inspiring and helpful to those who want to develop their leadership skills,” Finegold said. “I congratulate all those who have worked hard to get to this ending point [of] graduation.”

Cropper said during her graduation address that she credits much of her success in her union to the ULA, giving her the courage and knowledge to become a better leader.

“No way could I be where I am now without having had these classes,” she said.

Near right: SMLR Dean David Finegold awards URA-AFT member Helen Pirrello with her ULA diploma



Far right: Instructor William Schimmel, poses for a photo. Schimmel was presented with the “Friends of Labor Education” award for his passion for teaching and dedication to ULA.





Top Left: Jennifer Cropper stands with her family after delivering her graduation speech.

Bottom Left: URA-AFT members and leaders Lucye Millerand, Laura Walkoviak, Debbie McNeill, Stephanie Atkins and Nat Bender congratulate fellow union member Helen F.M.S. Pirrello.

Bottom Right: ULA Graduate Wayne Clark stands with Tracy Chang, IUOE Local 68 Business Agent Salvatore Costanza (left) and Business Manager and Assemblyman Thomas Giblin (right).



## In Her Own Words: Jennifer Cropper's Graduation Speech Credits Success to Union Leadership Academy

“When I entered the union labor movement as a shop steward in 2002, I remembered thinking ‘Wow I may have stepped in over my head.’

I didn't know enough about organizing, grievances, job actions, etc. I questioned my leadership abilities. All I knew for sure was that ensure that people could keep quality jobs with benefits and job security as important to me.

So I jumped in with both feet. It wasn't long before I had all the on-the-job training I could handle. I was chosen to take part in our local volunteer organizing training and then in our leave of absence program. This was a great experience and I learned a lot through the countless organizing campaigns I went on.

However, I still felt something was missing.

Through friends and co-workers, I heard our local offered union leadership classes through Rutgers. That caught my attention.

The classes I took gave me so many answers and even more confidence as a Union Representative and Organizer. That was in 2008. Now in 2010, I have accepted a position with my UNITE-HERE local and can proudly say I am a Rutgers Union Leadership Academy graduate.

My experience thus far has been one I will remember always. I will continue to take classes as they come my way because I truly believe knowledge and dedication is the key to the success of the union movement.”

*-Jennifer Cropper, UNITE HERE Local 54*

# **Congratulations ULA Graduates!**

## **Class of 2010**

<b>Tiran Billups</b>	Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 819
<b>Raymond C. Blicke Jr.</b>	International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) Local 195
<b>Gerald M. Chudoff</b>	United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 152
<b>Wayne C. Clark</b>	International Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Local 68
<b>Veronica Cobb</b>	Amalgamated Transit Union 819
<b>Titus L. Cooper</b>	International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) Local 15
<b>Carla Corr</b>	UNITE-HERE Local 54
<b>Jennifer Cropper</b>	UNITE-HERE Local 54
<b>Curtis Paul Curry</b>	Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 518
<b>James L. Franklin</b>	Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU) Local 225
<b>Monica McCleod</b>	Office and Professional Employees International Union (OPEIU) Local 32
<b>Michael Mesi</b>	New Jersey Superior Officers Association (NJ SOA)
<b>Gail C. Pampanin</b>	United Foods and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 1360
<b>Helen F.M.S. Pirrello</b>	Union of Rutgers Administration-American Federation of Teachers (URA-AFT) Local 1766
<b>Joseph Scaletti</b>	Carpenters Local 1006
<b>Wanda Serrano</b>	Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 819
<b>Darlene M. Smith</b>	Union of Rutgers Administration-American Federation of Teachers (URA-AFT) Local 1766
<b>Barbara Spivey</b>	International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE) Local 194
<b>Wanda T. Taylor</b>	Utility Workers Union of American (UWUA) Local 601
<b>Sarina V. Teel</b>	Communications Workers of America (CWA) Local 1039
<b>Lawrence Walker, Jr.</b>	Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 518

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### **For more information on the Union Leadership Academy contact:**

Labor Education and Research Now  
School of Management and Labor Relations  
50 Labor Education Center Way  
New Brunswick, NJ 08903  
P: (732) 932-1740  
F: (732) 932-8677  
[www.smlr.rutgers.edu](http://www.smlr.rutgers.edu)

