

SUPPORTING UMASS FOR THE LONG HAUL

MSP is in the early stages of organizing a working committee on legislative relations. The Executive Board is convinced that it is vital for MSP to establish stronger and more regular lines of communication with our legislators, and to create political capital through mutual support. The Board has been brainstorming about ways to achieve these goals, and **Laura Jensen** from Political Science has agreed to chair the new committee. If you have ideas for strengthening our legislative relationships or are interested in working with this committee, please contact Laura at 545-6185 or jensen@polsci.umass.edu

MSP STEPS UP ITS POLITICAL ENGAGEMENT

As reported in the last issue, the MSP decided to play a bigger role in state politics this fall. The Executive Board endorsed 6 incumbent Legislative candidates this fall: **Sen. Stan Rosenberg, Rep. Ellen Story, Rep. Steve Kulik, Rep. John Scibak, Rep. Chris Donelan, and Rep. Peter Kocot.** We are happy to report that All 6 won by wide margins! Prior to the endorsement, the membership was notified that this process would be taking place, and encouraged to contact Board members with their thoughts.

An MSP member served as a liaison to each of the candidates and asked them how our members could best help in their campaigns. As a result of our efforts, 49 MSP members volunteered to participate in various ways. A big THANKS to all of you and to those members who, unbeknownst to the union, helped out as well. Members held signs during visibility events, put lawn signs up in front of their homes, did mailings, participated in phone banks, wrote letters to the editor, and attended a candidate house party.

Since current state employees are barred by law from raising money for candidates, MSP also brought together a group of retirees who made fund-raising calls. They raised about \$600 on behalf of MSP for Senate Ways and Means Chair Therese Murray's campaign (one of MTA's "targeted" races).

Finally, MSP, at Senator Stan Rosenberg's request, also organized and co-sponsored the campus debate between Stan and his Republican opponent, James Miller.

See inside for a special message to the MSP from Senator Rosenberg

PERIODIC MULTI-YEAR REVIEW: FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

I'm coming up for PMYR. What is the process like?

The MSP negotiated the PYMR process on this campus to be developmental, not punitive, and we've developed a 20-page packet covering everything you need to know. Please call Lori Reardon (5-2206) and she'll be happy to send you a copy. The one sentence version: You write a statement (of 1,000 to 2,000 words) reviewing the last six years and discussing your plans for the next few years; your department chair adds your AFRs for the last six years and your teaching evaluations, and then it all gets reviewed by the department personnel committee, department chair, an elected committee at the dean's level, and the dean and provost.

I heard from a colleague of mine that he got money as a result of going through PMYR. How does that work?

You have two opportunities to get money. First, there are what are called College Development Funds which you can get as a direct result of

your review. On this campus, there is a pool of \$150,000 per year, from which each college/school receives an amount proportionate to the number of PMYR candidates it has. If you need resources for professional development, money to fund research or other projects, equipment, etc. you need to outline in your PMYR statement what you want and why you want it. The average award is around \$3000 so be sure to request the funding you need.

The second source of funding is through the Center for Teaching. After you complete your review, you will receive a personal letter from the Center inviting you to submit proposals for funds to increase your teaching effectiveness and enhance student learning. Awards are up to \$3,000.

Don't forget the MSP luncheon on Wednesday, December 8th at noon. If you haven't RSVP'd yet, please do so immediately so we can reserve a space and a lunch for you.

Over 20% of people who have been billed for their MSP dues have recently converted to payroll deduction. Thank you!! This saves a lot of work for the MSP Office (and for you as well). If any other member or agency fee payer thinks they might be interested in converting, please contact MSP at 545-2206 or msp@external.umass.edu. We'd be very appreciative.

MSP is interested in bringing together groups of faculty with common concerns. Information are groups of Women in Science and Engineering and Gay/Lesbian Faculty and Librarians. See Page 4 for a more detailed report from International Faculty and Faculty of Color. Please let MSP know if you have an idea of a group you would like help organizing.

TO MSP MEMBERS FROM SENATOR STAN ROSENBERG

I can't thank you enough for your endorsement of my re-election effort, and for your efforts on behalf of the Hampshire and Franklin county delegation.

I want you, my friends and supporters, to know how much I appreciate your efforts to return me to office. I take very seriously the responsibilities of serving you in the Massachusetts Senate and the confidence you have placed in me. I enjoyed the opportunity to discuss the issues with my opponent and I am eager to take on the challenges that lie ahead. But I am especially energized to continue working in partnership with the people of western Massachusetts to promote the values that won a resounding victory here on Election Day. And enhancing our public higher education system heads the list.

Last April, Senate President Robert Travaglini (D-East Boston) appointed me to a special Senate panel on higher education. The seven-member Task Force on Higher Education, which I have been co-chairing with Senator Steven Panagiotakos (D-Lowell), vice chairman of the Senate Committee on Ways and Means, has been charged with developing a comprehensive 10-year strategy to address shortfalls in the Commonwealth's higher education system. During the last few months we have been focusing on developing strategies for fully funding the system and for assuring quality and affordability for low- and middle-income students. We have also been addressing the capital needs of the campuses and the role each segment of the system plays in an overall economic development strategy for the state.

When he made the appointments, Senate President Travaglini said: *"I believe that as a Commonwealth we need to make public higher education a top priority. In order to do that effectively, the Senate needs a complete assessment of our current system and to develop a fresh approach to improving that system. I have asked Senators Rosenberg and Panagiotakos to lead this effort because they possess the vision that is needed to successfully complete this very significant task."*

The areas of concern that led to the creation of the task force include the following:

- The recent fiscal crisis precipitated dramatic cuts in state funding for public higher education, forcing increases in tuition and student fees that are now among the highest in the nation.
- Massachusetts is the only state in the country that is spending less on public higher education today than we did 10 years ago.
- Massachusetts ranks 49th in the nation in state spending on Higher Education per \$1,000 of state income and 48th in the nation in state spending on Public Higher Education per capita.
- According to the Massachusetts Institute for Social and Economic Research, between 1998 and 2000, the average full-time worker with a bachelor's degree earned \$53,000 which was \$21,000 more than the average worker with a high school diploma and \$11,000 more than the average worker with an associates degree.

I firmly believe that we have to redouble our efforts to strengthen our public higher education system, and that includes funding the contracts. If we don't, we run the risk of becoming a second-class state with a second-class economy. The task force will submit its recommendations early in 2005 and I hope to share those plans in a future MSP newsletter. In the meantime, I would be interested in knowing your thoughts on improving our public higher education system. You can send me an e-mail message by going to my website – **www.stanrosenberg.com** -- and clicking on the feedback form on the left side. Or send regular mail to my Boston office – Senator Stan Rosenberg, State House, Boston, 02133-1053.

There is much work to be done and no time to waste.

CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS UPDATE

END OF DOMESTIC PARTNER BENEFITS?

Currently, the University provides employees' same-sex domestic partners some benefits equivalent to those provided to spouses – e.g., tuition waiver, bereavement leave, use of athletic facilities, etc. (Health benefits are controlled by state law, not by bargaining, and have now been extended to same sex partners who marry.) These benefits were agreed to when same-sex partners could not marry in Massachusetts, and the purpose was to provide them, insofar as possible, with the benefits they would receive were they able to marry. Unmarried, different-sex partners did not receive these benefits, presumably because they could get married.

Now that same-sex couples are able to marry in Massachusetts, the administration believes that the rationale for these benefits no longer exists, and is concerned that if it maintains them, its actions could be challenged in court as discriminatory against different-sex unmarried partners.

So the administration has proposed that these benefits for same-sex partners be eliminated following a 6-month waiting period after the contract is signed, giving partners time to decide whether they would get married. Under the proposal, benefits would automatically be reinstated were a change in the law to eliminate same-sex marriage. Employees living in other states where same-sex marriage is not possible would retain the benefits.

The bargaining team does not wish to make a decision on this sensitive issue without input from the membership. So what do you think? If you have opinions, comments, or questions about this matter please send them to the MSP at mzp@external.umass.edu or talk with a member of the bargaining team:

Melissa Barringer, School of Management

Kay Fite, Psychology

Mark Brenner, Political Economy Research Institute

Barbara Morgan, Library

International Faculty and Faculty of Color

The first meeting of the MSP for international faculty and faculty of color was held on November 14. We had a modest turnout and a very productive discussion. A majority in attendance were junior faculty. We grouped the concerns expressed by participants under 4 broad categories:

- low levels of hiring and retention (including mentoring)
- teaching issues (including use of student evaluations without context)
- difficulties of visa processing (including its effect on hiring decisions)
- the need for systematic data on issues concerning faculty of color and international faculty (including data on ALANA students).

We are setting up sub-committees for each of these issues. If you wish to serve on one, please

contact MSP at mzp@external.umass.edu. We will have our next meeting in February, and would like to hear from ALANA faculty and international faculty about your concerns!

We also discussed a request from ALANA students on campus. A community initiative of faculty, students and community members has been formed whose main purpose is to be informed of the efforts of the Campus Diversity Commission that Chancellor Lombardi has set up, as well as provide valuable information to the Commission. The Community Initiative is currently seeking five faculty members to serve on their body which expects to meet from now until March.

If you are interested in any aspect of this work, please contact Sangeeta Kamat (skamat@educ.umass.edu) or Paula Chakravartty (pchakrav@comm.umass.edu).

STUDENT GOVERNMENT PRESIDENT SPEAKS HIS MIND

***Eduardo Bustamante** is the President of the Student Government Association (SGA). An Exercise Science major from Amherst, Eddie has been a columnist, ALANA Affairs researcher, and SGA Senator in the two years prior to his election as SGA President. He and 3 other student leaders discussed issues of common concern with the MSP Board on November 17. The MSP Chronicle had a chance to interview Eddie afterwards.*

Chronicle: As SGA President, what are your main goals this year?

Bustamante: Affordable, accessible, quality higher education. We already have quality here, but the \$15,000 cost of attendance is too high. We need more need-based financial aid. We are working on a textbook rental system like some other state universities have. We need more faculty, better advising, and smaller class sizes. We're looking into the idea of 4 classes per semester.

Chronicle: Looking beyond the recent KKK-9 racial incident, what larger issues do you see affecting the racial climate on campus?

Bustamante: Race issues are often a byproduct of class issues. UMass should be using a social justice mission to attract all citizens of the state. When the emphasis is on recruiting more upper class students, there then appears less need to fund diversity programs. The increased emphasis on standardized test scores (MCAS and SAT) in admissions and financial aid is another source of problems. We hope faculty will work with us to reverse these trends.

Chronicle: What issues are students facing around governance?

Bustamante: According to Trustee documents, students have primary responsibility for all things funded by students. But the administration tells us we're just a suggestion box. The Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs has been pushing his agenda for student government and undermining the principles of self-government.

Chronicle: Any final comments?

Bustamante: I love UMass, and especially the faculty who are the heart and soul of the school. UMass has provided me with good opportunities and I want it to be accessible for those that come after me.

PUTTING OUR MONEY WHERE OUR MOUTH IS

Our dental insurance, provided through a trust fund negotiated in the union contract, is funded entirely by the University. The University's FTE contribution increased from \$8 per week to \$11 when the current contract was funded. [The Fund won't receive retroactive payments until we receive our retroactive pay.]

Once a person is in the bargaining unit, s/he is automatically enrolled in the dental plan after a 6 month waiting period. A bargaining unit member's family members can also be enrolled in the plan at no cost by filling out a form found at http://www.mackbenefits.com/MTA_Dental_Enrollment_Card.pdf. The dental plan is Met Life Dental. To use the plan, a person goes to her/his dentist, tells them that the dental plan is Met Life Dental and that our **group number is 93994**. [Met Life Dental does not issue cards.] The individual's number is her/his Social Security Number.

Minimal as our benefits are, MetLife is losing money on us and will be increasing its premiums significantly next spring, which will put a severe strain on the Trust Fund. This may necessitate reducing benefits, member contributions to the premiums, or some sort of multi-tier benefits structure. MSP Vice President **Melissa Barringer** sits on the Board of the Trust and will be representing MSP members' interests as any changes are discussed, but given the financial shortfall most options have problems.

The plan can be used with any dentist who will accept it, but Met Life Dental has a list of "Preferred Providers" who have negotiated lower fees and whose services are reimbursed at a higher rate. To see this list or to find a dentist, go to the Met Life web site www.metlife.com/dental or call them at 1-800-942-0854.

RETRO PAY: UPDATE AND ACTION

A year ago at this time we were winning a great victory on our contracts. For those of us who had been here since 2001 and were still on the payroll, our pay went up an average of 15.96 percent.

But we are still owed a substantial amount of retroactive pay, and we are still fighting for it. That money is especially important to our retired members, because not only should they get a lump sum, but their pensions should be raised permanently. We, and all the other unions owed money, will be holding an **action at the State House in early January** to remind the legislature that it has unfinished business, and that its number one priority must be to pay us the retro. We will coordinate car pooling, and if there is enough demand, we will rent a bus. We will keep you posted as details become clear, and we hope you can join us.

Here's a brief review of the history and where we stand: Following through on a promise made a year ago, the legislature passed an appropriation covering our July 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003 retroactive pay this summer. When Governor Romney vetoed it, the legislature was no longer in formal session, and so did not override the veto. Supposedly we have a promise to pass that piece of our retroactive money in January, but given the history, we are not taking anything for granted.

We are urging the MTA to work toward having ALL of the retroactive pay voted in January, and Senator Stan Rosenberg has said he would try to guide that through. Everyone realizes this will be hard to do, but we are making a strong effort. At a minimum we want to be sure that the legislature again passes the partial retroactive payment in January.

That's why it's important that when the legislature is back in session, we are there to remind them that their FIRST priority should be to take care of unfinished business. They must honor the commitment they made a year ago. Please be in touch with the MSP office (misp@external.umass.edu; 5-2206) if you might be willing to participate. This action is especially important to support our retired members. (Be sure to pass the word to them.)