



MSP Chronicle

March 2006

Changing a Law of Nature

by Max Page, Art Department

Like the sun rising in the east and setting in the west, we have come to believe that it is a law of nature that an MSP contract takes months if not years to negotiate, and at least as long to be funded by the legislature.

The MSP hopes to change that this coming year. Our current contract (which we hope to have funded by this summer, nearly two years after the contract began) will end on June 30, 2007. We are starting now to plan for next year's contract campaign so that when this contract ends, we will have a new contract, and funding, in place.

To achieve this goal requires what all union victories require: application of early, consistent, and growing pressure. Too often, the first discussions of the contract begin just months before the existing contract is to end, leaving little time to move all the forces that need to be moved to get us a good contract. The biggest roadblock consistently is the

Governor's Executive Office of Administration and Finance (and not just under Republican Governors!). The university negotiating team cannot make a salary offer without consulting that office because, ultimately, it is the Governor who must present the financial aspects of the contracts to the legislature. In this last round of negotiations, the bargaining team was not even able to begin discussing our raises until six months after our previous contract had ended because the Governor's office simply hadn't approved a salary offer.

The MSP is taking a number of steps to get us to our goal of a good and timely contract. First, we will have a survey of our members ready to go by the beginning of the fall and a bargaining team in place early in the fall semester. We would like to have a formal set of proposals for our new contract (covering the issues members express as their key priorities) ready to present to the administration by the end of the fall semester.

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Come to MSP's Spring Lunch

Join your colleagues for lunch and discussions about the current contract and retro, advancing the 250 plan, and winning a decent budget for the university. Then brainstorm what we should push for in the next contract.

12:00 noon

Wednesday April 5

Reading Room on 1st floor of the Campus Center (across from the Blue Wall)

Please reply by email (msp@external.umass.edu) no later than March 30th to reserve lunch.

Legislation to Support Higher Education

The State Senate has passed “An Act Supporting Access and Excellence in Public Higher Education.” This legislation is based on a blueprint created last year by the Senate’s Task Force on Higher Education co-chaired by Senator Stan Rosenberg. This is potentially very good news for the University. The bill is now awaiting action in the House.

The bill would do many things, but some of its key provisions would:

- Call for investing approximately \$400 million (adjusted for inflation) over 7 years to fully fund the formulas established by the Board of Higher Education and the UMass President’s office in the 1990s to calculate each campus’ annual operating needs.
- Authorize each campus to establish a “rainy day fund”, known as the Student Charges Stabilization Fund, with a defined minimum contribution from its annual budget.
- Allow each campus to carry over to the next fiscal year any unspent state appropriations.
- Cap the annual growth in student charges to the three-year average in inflation, except in certain defined circumstances.
- Allow each campus to retain tuition. [Under current law tuition reverts to the state’s general fund.]
- Increase need-based financial aid by \$24 million.

It is a long-term plan, complicated by the inability of the Legislature to make budget commitments for future years. Still, this is an important moment when public higher education could finally see a significant boost in state support. You can help make this a reality:

FUND UMASS: Faculty, students, and staff working together

Join the **April rolling lobby days** for higher education funding! During the first 3 weeks of April, teams of MSP members, students and staff will be going to the State House on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday to lobby for improved funding for the University:

- To fund the 250 Plan and hire more faculty
- To fund our contract and pay the last installment of retro from the previous contract
- To improve overall support for the University
- To stabilize tuition and fees to make UMass more accessible to all Massachusetts students

Would you be able to join us one day? Please email msp@external.umass.edu with

- Your name and phone number
- Which day you would like to go: April 4, 6, 11, 12, 13, 18, 19 or 20
- Could you be a carpool driver, and if so, how many people can comfortably fit in your car?

Diversity and Search Committees: Some unintended consequences and suggestions for improvement

by Nilanjana Dasgupta, Psychology Department

New University guidelines come close to requiring that every faculty search committee must have at least one faculty of color on it (typically, but not necessarily, a member of the department). As far as I understand, the purpose of this policy is to ensure that at least one person on the search committee is giving careful consideration to any minority applicants in the pool. There are several unintended consequences of this new policy that I think are seriously harmful to the goal of increasing faculty diversity.

(1) Because of this policy, minority faculty at UMass are currently serving on a disproportionately large number of search committees relative to our peers. For example, two colleagues of mine who are new at UMass are serving on two or more search committees this year. Minority junior faculty members are most likely to be negatively affected because they may feel unable to decline the request to serve on committees and may not even know that they are involved in more service work than our peers. Because of the amount of energy and time it takes to do a good job on search committees, such heavy service takes time away from junior faculty's research time. If we keep over-utilizing minority faculty for service responsibilities, I think UMass will be in serious danger of losing current minority faculty -- because some may leave for other institutions where they are not inundated with extra service, and because some may not be able to publish sufficiently in order to obtain tenure. It will be ironic indeed if the university loses minority faculty instead of gaining more at least partly because of this service policy.

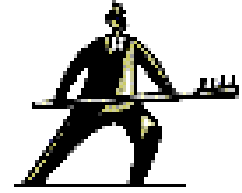
(2) I have heard the suggestion that instead of over-utilizing a few minority faculty members within a department, search committees should consider recruiting minority faculty from different departments (or even graduate students or community members) to serve on these committees. While this may work in a few cases, the dynamics of search committees are heavily dependent on the credibility and expertise of its members in the field and the specific content area. A minority faculty from a different department who does not know the discipline of the specific search (or a graduate student or community member who clearly doesn't have equal status in this situation) will not be very effective in persuading other faculty members on search committees.

A potential solution

First, I think every search committee should include a faculty member who is a member of the department's Diversity Committee. Faculty who serve on the Diversity Committee are usually deeply invested in increasing the diversity of the department and are also "primed" to think about this issue on a weekly basis. These individuals, regardless of their own ethnic group membership, are people who know something about this issue and are motivated to act on it. It seems to me that including them as "diversity representatives" on faculty search committees is an excellent way to share the responsibility of enhancing campus diversity among more of the faculty, instead of confining that responsibility to the few of us who happen to belong to ethnic minority groups and may or may not have the most commitment and expertise.

Second, the university and the department should be transparent about the role of the diversity representative on the search committee. What exactly is their job? Has it been defined in some public document that is shared with search committee members? Does the Chair of the Search Committee understand the role of the diversity representative? Right now I sense quite a bit of confusion about the role of the diversity representative—search committees don't know what exactly this individual's task is and, interestingly enough, the diversity representative him or herself doesn't know s/he is supposed to be in that role!

Responses to this perspective are welcome (mzp@external.umass.edu).



Our Dental Coverage

Melissa S. Woodard (School of Management) is our Trustee on the governing body of the MTA Health and Welfare Trust Fund. She reports that *"we are no longer considering cuts in the benefits. Since the contract (the last one, not the current one) got funded, we are in a much improved financial situation. Also, at the last meeting, we reviewed our provider's proposal for upcoming years. There will be no increase in premiums for the next 15 months at least, which means we won't have a larger drain on our reserves."* This is good news for MSP members. If you have any problems with your coverage, contact our administrator, McKenzie and Co., at 800-295-9516. Remember that our group number is MTA93994 and our provider is Met Life Dental (800-942-0854).

Hard at Work on Many Fronts

In addition to working on the Senior Lecturer Promotion (see article on page 7), the MSP and the administration agreed in the new contract to set up several joint committees to further explore some important issues. Please contact any of the people listed below if you have thoughts or ideas on any of these topics.

Relationship of summer research, Continuing Education, and other forms of additional compensation to the calculation of retirement benefits

Bob Hallock (Physics)
Rama Janaswamy (Electrical and Computer Engineering)
Eliot Moss (Computer Science)
Bob Nakosteen (Management)
Patricia Wadsworth (Biology)

Campus Physical Planning (seat on Faculty Senate Committee)
Max Page (Art)

Job security and promotion issues for part-time faculty

Jean Forward (Anthropology)
Holly Lawrence (Management)
Jerry Levinsky (Legal Studies)
Steve Simurda (Journalism)

Family needs of unit members

Nerissa Balce (Comparative Literature)
Paula Chakravartty (Communication)
Jennifer Lundquist (Sociology)
Joya Misra (Sociology)
Dean Robinson (Political Science)
Eve Weinbaum (Labor Studies)

We are still looking for an MSP representative to serve on the Faculty Senate **Service Departments Committee**. Please let MSP know if you are willing to serve on this committee which recommends policies designed to improve a wide range of campus services.

Welcoming Contingent Faculty to the MSP

MSP has recently been reaching out to our contingent faculty – those whose appointments are under 50%, get paid by the course, get no benefits, and don't necessarily teach every semester. Under our new contract, they are in the MSP bargaining unit, and beginning next year, will be assessed union dues. MSP has been meeting with small groups of them in order to learn more about their concerns and involve them in developing the union's approach to their issues. The most recent step was an on-line survey. Here is some of what we learned. Of the people who replied:

- Two thirds are women; 1/3 have doctorate degrees; more than half attended UMass; and the vast majority have belonged to a union before.
- Over 3/4 have taught required courses for majors and many serve on thesis committees, supervise independent studies, work with graduate students, and do other service.
- Half have taught more than 4 semesters and 40% have taught 3 or more different courses; 1/3 also teach at another school.
- 62% are paid under \$6,000 this semester.
- They often don't know until the last minute when they will be teaching, and fewer than half know whether they will be teaching after this semester.
- Most are not provided a computer; half have no phone; few have adequate office space.

If you want to help organize this group of MSP members, please contact the MSP office (413-545-2206, mSP@external.umass.edu).

No Vacation at the Library

by Pam Juengling, DuBois Library

MSP successfully negotiated restoration of leave time for numerous librarians who were charged for time off on Friday, November 25, 2005. These MSP members had planned to use vacation or other leave time for the day after Thanksgiving. On November 21, Library employees were notified that the W.E.B. DuBois Library would be closed on November 25, due to planned maintenance work, and that they were required to report their planned leave time. Previously, employees in the Integrated Science and Engineering Library had been told that that Library would also be closed on November 25 for maintenance work, and that they too were expected to report leave time.

Campus Administration applied the Emergency Closing Policy to these scheduled maintenance situations, requiring employees who had put in for vacation time to use their own leave time even though their department/buildings were closed. Affected MSP members felt that implementing an emergency policy in a non-emergency situation was an inappropriate application of the policy, and also saw that the policy was being applied unevenly. Working through the MSP Office, those librarians filed a grievance. There was considerable support from other staff of the Library not directly affected by the policy, but who considered the action to be unjustified. A petition signed by 38 individuals accompanied the grievance. A tentative grievance hearing date was set. Before that hearing, the Administration expressed interest in settling the grievance without a hearing and ultimately agreed to restore the leave time for the grievants and all others who had been charged leave time that day.

Senior Lecturer Promotion Update

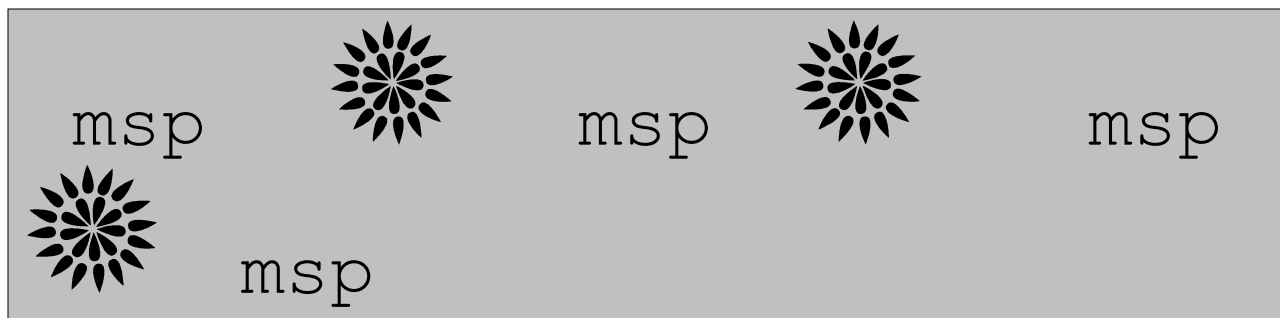
by Holly Lawrence, School of Management

The joint committee to establish the eligibility, criteria, and process for the Senior Lecturer promotion is in the final stage of reaching an agreement. All full-time lecturers on a multi-year appointment with at least ten years of state-funded service (the last two of which have been full-time) are eligible for promotion. Thirty-six lecturers are eligible for promotion (and the accompanying \$5,000 salary increase) over the first three years, beginning September 2005. They will be contacted about their eligibility once the bargaining agreement has been finalized.

What follows are the broad strokes of the criteria and process for review.

- Lecturers will have to demonstrate meritorious performance in the area(s) of the individual's responsibility, as well as show promise of continued professional development and achievement.
- Once candidates are notified of their eligibility (in the year proceeding that in which candidates will amass their required service), they will assemble a portfolio of accomplishments in their area(s) of responsibility, including a personal statement, a current *curriculum vitae*, and any other materials they believe are essential for adequate consideration of the case.
- Like other faculty promotions, the Senior Lecturer promotion case next goes before the departmental personnel committee which will make a recommendation and pass the case on to the department chair or head. However, what is different about the Senior Lecturer promotion process is that the case then goes before a college review committee, to be made up of 3 to 5 full-time state-funded lecturers, elected by the full-time state-funded lecturers in the respective schools and colleges. The purpose of these soon-to-be-established college review committees is to ensure that all Senior Lecturer promotion cases reach a review committee of peers. After the college review committee makes a recommendation, cases continue on to college deans and then to the Provost for final approval.

The Senior Lecturer promotion reflects long-awaited recognition of the value lecturers bring to the University, and the union committee that negotiated the details (**Steve Brewer (Biology), Holly Lawrence (Management), and John Stifler (Economics)**) sees it as a fine victory. Another committee (see page 4) is now beginning to look at the possibility of promotional opportunities for part-time lecturers.



Changing a Law of Nature *Continued from page 1*

Second, we have been working with the campus labor coalition as well as MTA's Higher Education Leadership Council (the heads of all the MTA higher education unions) to make sure that all of the higher education unions are on board with the new schedule. So far, all of the unions are eager to push for resolving negotiations on time.

Third, we have already put the campus administration on notice that we are serious about ending the insane process we currently work under, and that they need to put the people further up the food chain on notice that we are serious. We want to begin formal negotiations in early 2007, and will expect the administration to have their proposals prepared and be ready to bargain quickly and in good faith. We

have already begun meeting with some of our constituencies and may begin discussing certain proposals with campus administrators in the fall.

If we are successful, we might just see the sun rise over Southwest and set over the President's House.

Threats to Academic Freedom

Michael Ash, Economics Department

Several UMass faculty now appear on academic watch-list websites, such as NoIndoctrination.org and FrontPageMag.com, which purport to expose political bias among college teachers. Although the websites adopt the rhetoric of balance and academic freedom, the criticisms are right-wing and the featured faculty are almost without exception liberal or radical. Profiled UMass faculty with whom we've spoken have joked about appearance on watch-lists as a badge of honor but have also confided that the monitoring and listing has a chilling effect on their willingness to engage in dialogue with students on complex issues.

Earlier this year a new book entitled The Professors: The 101 Most Dangerous Academics in America identified the top achievers in this category (no UMass faculty made the cut). Also at issue are bills, misleadingly titled Academic Bills of Rights, introduced in legislatures of at least 14 states, including Massachusetts; these laws would "*directly involve the state and/or federal government in oversight of curricula and teaching, and faculty hiring and promotion in both public and private institutions of higher education...*" (AAUP 2006).

The MSP Officers and Board have begun discussions of these threats to academic freedom. Some themes that have emerged from the discussion include:

(1) the encouragement of dialogue, community, and respectful disagreement in the classroom rather than a turn to an enclave model where progressive students seek progressive faculty and conservative students seek conservative faculty.

(2) the notion that classrooms occupy a niche between public and private space and that classroom communication should be shielded from continuous outside scrutiny in order to make the classroom a safe place for students and faculty to try out ideas.

(3) a sense of alarm that attacks on academia strike at one of the few locations in the American public landscape that can provide independent and well-researched critiques of the use and abuse of power. Because universities and the ideas they generate are not for sale, universities can offer more objective and critical analysis than can other public institutions, such as electronic and print mass media.

(4) the disrespect that watch-list campaigns show for student independent thought. The attack campaigns are predicated on the notion that students are easily indoctrinated by faculty. The notion is condescending and ignores the lively, independent, and critical minds that students bring to the classroom. If the indoctrination effort is blatant then students will resent it and punish it with comments and complaints, and there's no need for intervention. If the disagreement between students and faculty is subtle, e.g., disagreement over competing interpretations in a history class, then it is very unlikely that outside monitoring could possibly help. It would be madness to submit faculty lectures and notes to external fact-checking.

(5) the need for more information from MSP members. How many professors have been targeted and by what organizations? Do many professors feel intimidated?

Resources:

American Association of University Professors, The "Academic Bill of Rights" Campaign
<http://www.aaup.org/Issues/ABOR/aborintro2.htm>

Steve Olbrys, "Dissoi Logoi, Civic Friendship, and the Politics of Education"

Communication Education, forthcoming

William G Tierney and Vicente M. Lechuga, "Academic Freedom in the 21st Century"
Thought & Action Journal, Fall 2005 <http://www2.nea.org/he/heta05/>

Soldiers, War and Conscience: *A Trade Union Perspective by an Iraq Vet*

Andy Sapp is a UMass graduate (School of Education), a high school teacher, MTA member, and long-time union activist. He recently returned from a tour of duty in Iraq as a staff sergeant in the Massachusetts National Guard, and he is now a member of Iraq Veterans Against the War. Hear Andy speak about

- His experiences in Iraq and
- What the war has to do with unions

Tuesday, April 4 12 NOON Campus Center Room 101
Faculty and Staff must RSVP by March 29 to
sluce@econs.umass.edu to reserve a free lunch.

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