



MSP Chronicle

November 2006

Membership Meeting to Vote on Bargaining Proposals

**MONDAY, DECEMBER 11 4:30 PM
CAMPUS CENTER ROOM 163C
REFRESHMENTS WILL BE SERVED – PLEASE RSVP TO
msp@external.umass.edu**

MSP's Negotiating Committee, Officers, and Board are reviewing all the ideas that have been generated from our survey, our committees, our department meetings, our individual discussions, and our experience with the current contract. Now it is up to the membership to vote on the package of proposals MSP will bring to the administration at bargaining.

An Open Letter to Chancellor Lombardi from MSP President Max Page

The faculty, including the hundred and fifty who attended the General Faculty Meeting on October 26 are eager to hear if you are going to respond to our concerns. Will you double the allocation to the 250 Plan so that we can achieve the goals we set together just a year and a half ago.

There is no need to rehash the arguments about the allocation for the 250 program. The faculty understand your position: you have been forced, by the lack of funds from the legislature and the Presidents Office, to move more of the 250 money into capital expenses. While I have said (including to our new Board of Trustees chair, Steve Tocco a week ago), and will continue to say that we cannot become the place we want to be without more state investment in our capital and operating needs, the faculty at the General Faculty Meeting rejected your "either/or" approach. There are millions of dollars in your budget that are being spent neither to hire new faculty, nor to repair our ailing infrastructure. You have hired more administrators at a cost of \$1 million per year; you have bought and razed frat row for \$2.5 million, without plans for the use of the land; you have spent millions on dormitories designed to lure students from out of state; you spent a million on fixing up the Provost's Office. Do all of these ideas have some merit? Probably. But are they the top priorities? Absolutely not. Your faculty spoke clearly: you must change your priorities in order to make the 250 Plan a success. That does not mean us all living in tents. It means allocating our limited resources very carefully.

We fully expect that you will hear the principled critique from your faculty. This means returning enough money to the faculty hiring part of the 250 Plan to have a net increase of at least 50 additional faculty per year over the next five years.

Your announcement of the 250 Plan was the shining moment of your leadership here. And because the union had been pushing for such a plan for a year leading up to your announcement, it was also a moment where we

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UMass Loses Two Faculty of Color

Jenny Spencer, MSP Grievance Chair

The MSP strongly disagrees with the Provost's decision to initiate dismissal proceedings -- rather than accommodate unpaid leave requests -- for two valued faculty members with family and career issues. In the two instances reported here, the requests from faculty members, both faculty of color, would cost the University nothing. In the case of **Raquel Medina**, a respected and long-time tenured member of Spanish and Portuguese, the request was for an extension of her one-year leave without pay for a single semester, for family and research reasons. For her junior colleague, **Guillermo Irizarry**, the request was for a one year leave without pay to take on an administrative position at UConn. He had been told by his Department chair and Personnel Committee that a one year or six month

unpaid leave would certainly be approved. Because both faculty members strongly believed that their leaves should have been granted, they did not immediately resign when the leaves were denied. As a result, the administration began dismissal proceedings against them in September. The MSP's position is that both of these faculty members should have been granted Leave Without Pay, given their circumstances and the widespread past practice of the University. We will miss these two faculty members and appreciate their willingness to make the details of their cases public. Obviously, we will try to approach this problem in our upcoming bargaining sessions. The following letter written by Professor Irizarry eloquently, and sadly, captures our sense of this situation as well.

September 29, 2006

To Provost Seymour:

With this letter, I am submitting my resignation as a faculty member of the Department of Languages, Literatures, and Cultures. I do this with regret as I have found an intellectual home at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and have received great support from colleagues to develop professionally and intellectually.

At the beginning of this academic year, I was surprised to learn that Provost Charlena Seymour had denied my request for leave without pay, submitted when I accepted an offer from the University of Connecticut at Storrs as faculty in the Modern and Classical Languages, and Director of the Institute of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies. I also learned that her office had initiated procedures for my dismissal. At every moment, previous to this communication, my program director, the chair of the personnel committee of my program, and the department chair had assured me that the request would be approved. They expressed their desire that my experience in another professional setting enhance my scholarly development and that upon my return this would broadly benefit the University.

I believe that my employment rights have not been respected, at least in spirit if not in fact. I deem it, however, unwise and unproductive to struggle against the intent of Provost Seymour, as this would engender a hostile climate for me, for my colleagues in the Spanish and Portuguese program, and to other Latina/o faculty in the institution.

It is a sad day in academia when authoritarian behaviors go unchallenged, as this administrative style curtails the spirit of academic freedom we should unwaveringly defend. This situation undoubtedly affects my family and me deeply. But, more significantly, it harms the intellectual climate of the University, the morale of current faculty, the confidence of prospective hires, and the reputation of the University as an ethical employer. I hope that the administration sees fit to reconsider this practice in the future. The University of Massachusetts deserves to maintain its academic reputation, and its faculty merits strong ethical comportment from its administration.

Despite the slight disenchantment with which I leave UMass, I hope to continue collaborations with its faculty, the Spanish and Portuguese program, and the Center of Latin American Caribbean and Latino Studies. I hope that my case leads to a serious meditation on faculty rights and that my resignation is seen as an opportunity to consider working towards a stronger university where administration and faculty see each other as strong allies.

I thank you for the opportunity to work in such a formidable academic setting and wish all the best in your academic endeavors.

Sincerely,

Guillermo B. Irizarry, Assistant Professor

Bargaining Survey Results

Stephanie Luce, Labor Relations and Research Center

Hundreds of MSP members from across the campus responded to our contract survey, with particularly large response rates from the Library, Biology, the School of Management, History, and Math and Statistics.

Almost eighty percent of respondents said it was **very important** to push the administration to negotiate the new contract in a timely fashion, so that our raises can be funded before the current contract expires. The second and third top issues concern the 250 plan. Almost 7 out of 10 respondents said it was **very important** to hire additional full-time tenure-track faculty to meet our goal of a net increase of 250 faculty, and 64% said that it is **very important** to monitor the progress of the 250 plan to make sure it is implemented.

The next two top issues are related to wages: implementing an automatic cost-of-living system to guarantee raises even during state budget crises, and a campus-wide wage increase for all faculty and librarians. MSP members do not believe we need to pit hiring more faculty against capital needs. The need to improve working conditions, including building maintenance, was rated as the sixth most important issue.

Another key issue is the need to start health insurance immediately upon employment, as the current situation requires employees to work two full months before getting coverage. MSP members also say it is important to maintain paid parental leave for both men and women, upon the birth or adoption of a child, and reimburse departments so that no one is penalized for taking leave. It is interesting to note that these last two issues ranked so highly, given that they don't directly affect most current members. This reflects the fact that MSP members are quite concerned about making UMass a hospitable work environment for new employees.

The other two items in the ten most important issues are both related to "benchmarking". More than half of respondents say it is very important to monitor the implementation of benchmarking to ensure fairness and transparency, and to have faculty and librarian input in the implementation of the benchmarking process.

While some items, such as timely negotiation of the contract, show up as very important to all groups, a few items show up as particularly important by work area. Faculty in the North End of campus (CNRE, NSM, and Engineering) say their second most important issue is to reduce the cost of hiring graduate research or teaching assistants. Faculty in HFA are particularly concerned about starting health insurance upon employment, and 96% of HFA faculty say that improving working conditions is very or reasonably important. CSBS faculty rated the need to maintain parental leave as their third most important issue, and more than half of CSBS faculty say it is very important to increase diversity among the faculty.

Part-Timers and the MSP

Among the contract (non-tenure track) faculty, there are almost as many part-timers as full-timers. Many teach required courses and have a longstanding commitment to UMass. Following MSP's success in improving job security and promotional opportunities for full-time state funded contract faculty in the last contract, the union is now looking to make gains for part-timers – both benefited (at least 50% time) and unbenefited (adjuncts who are generally hired to teach a specific course). The latter group only started being represented by the MSP in September 2005, and this is the first time we will be bargaining on their behalf. Not surprisingly, job security, pay, and

benefits head the list of identified issues – but in meetings and surveys, part-timers have also raised important issues of recognition and respect.

After teaching on the Amherst campus for more than 17 years, this year, for the first time ever, I filled out an Annual Faculty Report, because part-timers are now part of the bargaining unit. Not that I loved the paperwork, but I was thrilled...like a brand new citizen taking my oath of citizenship.

Laura Holland, Art Department

MEET YOUR NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE!



Stephanie Luce, Labor
Center

I am an associate professor in the Labor Center, and have been at UMass since 1998. I received a Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. My dissertation and subsequent work have focused on the living wage movement, looking at both the economics of wage policies as well as the politics around their implementation and the campaigns behind them. I've been on the MSP board for the last few years, and am now serving as vice-president. I was happy to serve on the negotiating committee because I know bargaining is one crucial area to address the key issues that face our members, such as the 250 plan, benchmarking and increasing diversity at UMass.

I am honored to serve on the MSP Bargaining Team for this upcoming round of negotiations. I am the East Asian Studies librarian at UMass Amherst and work closely with faculty and students in the Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures as well as anyone using Asian language research materials in his/her research. I have been a union member for ten years and believe that the strength and solidarity of the union ensures that there all members are recognized for their contributions to the success of the university, whether they are bringing in millions of dollars in research grants, teaching students to write coherent arguments, or creating a usable library. I am particularly concerned that the MSP members who provide lower profile but essential services are not ignored during negotiations. We all need resources (whether computers, books, or labs) and protected time in order to fulfill our current obligations to the university and to keep abreast of research in our field so that we may continue to be effective leaders in the future.



Sharon Domier,
Library



Holly Lawrence, SOM

I have been involved with the MSP for the past four years. I started by working on contract faculty issues and quickly realized the benefits of organized effort. To that end, I worked on an MSP sub-committee designed to articulate contract faculty issues and propose possible bargaining points for the last contract. Since then my role in the MSP has grown – I joined the board, became an officer, and am now on the negotiating team for this contract. We have a number of issues to tackle this year, and I look forward to the experience. It's a privilege to work with this Union's many dedicated, interesting, and passionate people, who are, in the end, focused on a common goal – a better UMass.

When I became MSP President this past July, I committed us to the "mission impossible" at UMass: securing a good contract *on time*. To that end, I thought it would be important to have the president at the bargaining table, as a sign to the administration that getting a good contract funded by June 30, 2007 was our union's top priority. I have been involved in MSP almost from the moment I arrived at UMass and I stay involved because we are the conscience of the campus -- the most vocal group fighting for a more equitable, more accessible, and better university. When I am not working on MSP business, I teach urban and architectural history in our new professional architecture degree program, and I write about the history of New York, the politics of the past, and urban development.



Max Page,
Art, Architecture & Art History



Randy Phillis,

Biology

I have been on campus for 17 years and have seen the financial fate of the University swing and sway wildly. I am interested in working to stabilize the funding for the University and to improve the strength of the faculty. The biggest problem I see is that we have lost lots of great mid-career people because of their not being supported enough by the administration. And while we have terrific younger faculty, we have had trouble sufficiently replenishing our numbers. Having been on the MSP Board and served as an officer for three years, I am now part of our Negotiating Committee, committed to doing the best job possible for all parts of the campus.

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The 250 Plan

were unified as never before. I hope that unity is not lost. We can only advance the mission of the university if we speak with one voice.

However, because MSP worked so hard to get the legislature and the citizens of the Commonwealth to focus on the need for more faculty, if there is no change we will have to continue to publicize your administration's mistaken priorities.

I would much prefer to be able to publicize your renewed commitment – in words and in dollars -- to the 250 Plan. Please do let me know if we can expect to see this renewed commitment reflected in your new budget.

Sincerely,

Max Page, President, Massachusetts Society of Professors

Making UMass More Family-Friendly

Eve Weinbaum, Labor Relations and Research Center

If UMass is serious about recruiting 250 new faculty in the next five years, and also trying to retain excellent and diverse faculty and librarians, the administration will have to commit to making the university a better place to work, live, and have a family. After researching policies at our peer institutions as well as “best practices” elsewhere, and talking with many faculty and librarians, the MSP Family Issues Committee focused on the following issues.

Partner hire policy. Many searches failed recently because of partner hiring problems, and other faculty have left to be with partners elsewhere. UMass must streamline the process and make it much more transparent.

Maintaining parental leave. After hearing rumors that some administrators would like to limit the existing excellent parental leave policy won by MSP, we commissioned a study to evaluate the policy’s impact and to make the case to maintain or improve it.

Caregivers’ leave/elder care. Many faculty and librarians have primary responsibility for elderly parents or other family members in need of care. In these cases, the university should provide options of “modified duties” including course release, unpaid leave, and stopping the tenure clock.

Childcare. University Child Care (UCC), a perennial target for budget cuts, is underfunded and has long waiting lists. Faculty and staff have lowest priority for childcare slots, and pay \$250 a week per child. We propose expanding UCC and ensuring affordability and accessibility.

Housing. We propose including faculty units within residential areas of campus, in exchange for some teaching responsibilities. We are also exploring ways for UMass to subsidize home ownership for faculty and librarians trying to buy homes in the Amherst area.

A Work/Life Office. Too many departments and supervisors are not aware of the policies that exist. The union and administration should publish a handbook that explains the options, and establish an office with a dedicated staff person to make sure that policies are implemented fairly and in a timely manner.

These issues and several others under discussion form a “package” that would make UMass a more family-friendly and flexible work environment. All of these issues are important to individuals with different kinds of families. The administration should commit to a package of work/life issues that will allow us to recruit and retain the best and most diverse colleagues possible.

We expect to start negotiating on these issues the first week of December. The committee that has researched and formulated these proposals will become the bargaining sub-committee on family and work/life issues. We welcome input from everyone. Please contact Eve Weinbaum at 577-0458 or weinbaum@lrrc.umass.edu with any questions or suggestions.

Congratulations and Thanks to MSP’s newest
Department Representatives:

Michael Begay, Public Health
Grant Wilson, Astronomy
Nate Whitmal, Communication Disorders
Susan McKenna, Commonwealth College

If your department doesn’t have a union representative, talk to your colleagues and select one so that you stay up to date during negotiations.

Multi-Union Health and Safety Committee Forming

We work in the same buildings, breathe the same air, and have similar concerns about our health. That’s why MSP is joining with the other campus unions to form a joint Health and Safety Committee. The committee would investigate problems, be an information clearinghouse, and meet with campus officials to improve health and safety on campus. Contact MSP at mpp@external.umass.edu if you are interested.

Bonanza for Administrators

MSP President Max Page was one of 16 UMass union presidents to write to UMass President Wilson to protest the University's decision to pay non-unionized employees their raises 3 months early. Here are excerpts from the letter:

Dear President Wilson,

... you have chosen to speed up the raises for non-unionized managers at the same time as you have not fulfilled outstanding obligations to your unionized employees. Some lower-paid units have not received their pay raises; most of us have received no professional development monies. All of us have only this month received money that was owed going back to 2001. Can it be that you feel it is better for the university to offer higher paid managers extra months of raises while failing to pay money that is owed to many of your lower-paid employees?... this action undermines our faith in your claims about budget difficulties...at the Amherst campus the 250 Plan to add additional faculty has been cut back because, we are told, money just isn't available. Courses are being canceled and faculty laid off at the Boston campus. Do you feel that bonuses for managers are more important than more faculty in classrooms?...You are about to enter into contract negotiations with us. This action certainly reduces trust and invites us to increase our own salary demands and expectations.

Who Are the Research Faculty?

Research Faculty are a relatively small, relatively unknown, but very important group on campus.

They bring in a lot of research funding to the campus,

and in fact many of them have to raise money for their own salaries.

Their

situations vary tremendously -- some teach and some do not; half are full-time and half part-time; some submit AFR's and some do not. MSP, trying to represent every group within the union, recently did a survey and then convened a meeting of Research Faculty. Over 20% attended and it

was one of the most animated MSP meetings of the year! The same passion people bring to their research was evident as they discussed frustrations

stemming from the instability of their positions, unnecessary delays in the grant process, high costs associated with employing

graduate students, and problems maintaining their benefits as grants change. This wasn't just a gripe session but also a thoughtful discussion about possible approaches to improving their situations. MSP will continue working with this group to determine how to best represent them.

In our department, Research Faculty are an essential component of the academic ladder, acting as a bridge between the tenure-track faculty and students as well as technicians. In most (if not all) cases, the experience required to fulfill a Research Faculty role is found neither at the tenured level nor at the technician's. In my view, the job stability of the Research Faculty at UMass is key for assuring both the quality and the continuity of the academic process as a whole.

Ana Maria Salicioni, Veterinary and Animal Sciences

1,600 New Voters!

Dozens of MSP members opened up their classrooms this fall to a voter registration effort. The result: more than 1,600 new Massachusetts voters in time for the November 7th election! Hundreds of students also completed absentee ballot request forms, which will permit them to vote in elections in their home districts. ***“Right, left, or center, Republican, Green, or Democrat, a college student becoming a fully participating citizen feels like a success for her or his professors,”*** said Michael Ash, Associate Professor of Economics. MSP thanks all who helped, including the Student Government Association, MassPIRG's New Voters Project, and the Graduate Employee Organization.

Come to a Higher Education Summit
Friday, December 1 12-4 P.M. Campus Center 101

The MSP, together with the undergraduate student government and others, is sponsoring a higher education summit. Our aim is to be pro-active, setting out our own agenda instead of simply reacting to each attack on the university. We intend to present our goals to the governor and other key decision makers, and to work through the spring and beyond to make them a reality.

Before, during and after the December 1 meeting we will work to formulate and agree on our goals, produce short white papers providing facts and examples to support the goals, and to develop a plan to make these a political reality. Our tentative goals are:

- Reinvest in public higher education
- Make higher education accessible and affordable to all
- Hire more teachers and researchers
- Restore the university's outreach mission
- Democratize the university

We seek your participation, and encourage you to let the MSP office (mSP@external.umass.edu) know you plan to attend.

Massachusetts Society of Professors
121 Hampshire House
UMASS/ Amherst 01003

413.545.2206 • Fax 413.545.5798
www.umass.edu/mSP



