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Robert Reich Forum  
Statehouse Rally Day  
"Know your contract"

## CAMPAIGN FOR THE CONTRACT – and more

Getting our contract funded won't be easy. A lot of faculty and librarians seem to have given up, believing there is no way we can win. IF people sit back and do nothing it's a certainty that we'll lose. There are no guarantees of victory – if it were easy our legislators or the university administration would have done it by now – but if the faculty and librarians fully mobilize I think we can win.

Since the beginning of September the contract campaign has moved to a totally new level. The MTA statewide has made our contracts the number one issue, not just for higher education but for K-12 teachers as well. The MTA has hired a union organizer to work with us – and Richard Sanders is one of the best organizers in the country. We are still putting in place the pieces of the campaign, but here are **some** of the things it will involve:

- Mobilizing all of the unions involved, across the entire state, and getting all of us working together
- An inside strategy using our lobbyists and connections with legislators
- Activating our members to help take our message to the legislature
- Working with parents, alumni,

## President's Message

When you're in the third year of an unfunded contract, no news is NOT good news. The fact that the legislature has not managed to fund a signed, sealed, and delivered contract is unprecedented in the labor history of this state.

Next spring, we face new rounds of negotiation, and no one wants to have this conversation with an agreed-upon contract still hanging in the balance.

So what are we going to do? Last year, the University community lobbied long and hard for a fair budget from the legislature. It didn't work. Forty-one million dollars was cut from our operating budget, much higher than the amount cut from other state colleges. One-time actions will not get the job done: we need a long-term, comprehensive plan aimed at funding the contracts, addressing the decline in librarians and tenure-track faculty, and restoring the University's budget. And we need to start quickly because the current legislative session, and with it a chance for a funding bill to be passed, ends on Nov. 19.

Over the next few weeks, the union will be scheduling meetings in every department on campus. We want to hear your concerns and enlist your help for our current campaign (see article below). The goal is simple: to make the union as powerful,

## MSP CALENDAR

### Tuesday, Sept. 23:

Labor Coalition Meeting  
1 pm, 122 Hampshire House

### Wednesday, Sept. 24:

MSP Board Meeting  
8:30 am, Campus Center 917

### Friday, Sept. 26:

New Faculty Reception  
3:30-5:30pm, Faculty Club

### Monday, Sept. 29:

Meeting with non-tenure track and part-time employees  
12 –2pm, Campus Center 805-09

### Tuesday, Sept. 30:

Reps Lunch  
12:30-2pm Campus Center 804-08

### Wednesday, Oct. 1:

MSP Executive Committee  
9am, 121 Hampshire House  
Reps Meeting  
12:30-2pm Campus Center 917

### Thursday, Oct. 2:

MSP Executive Board Meeting with Lombardi  
1pm  
Faculty Senate Meeting  
3:30pm, Herter Hall

### Tuesday, Oct. 7:

Tenure Workshop  
12-2pm, Campus Center 802

### Wednesday, Oct. 8:

MSP Executive Board Meeting  
8:30am, Campus Center 904-08  
Tenure Workshop  
12-2pm, Campus Center 901

### Friday, Oct. 10:

Higher Education Leadership Coalition (HELC) meeting

### Wednesday, Oct. 15:

MSP Executive Committee  
9am, 121 Hampshire House  
Meeting with Personnel Committees  
12-2, Campus Center 904-08

### Thursday, Oct. 16:

Faculty Senate meeting  
3:30pm, Herter Hall

### Fri.-Sat., Oct. 17-18

Homecoming Weekend  
All Union Tailgate Party  
Saturday football game

### Thursday, Oct. 23:

General Assembly  
TBA

## Why Aren't My Union Dues Buying Me Better Dental Benefits?

I hear this question a lot. The fact of the matter is that members do not contribute anything towards the purchase of their dental insurance. The Commonwealth pays 100% of the premium. So, as meager as these benefits are, they are basically free.

I also hear a lot of complaints about the limited coverage the plan provides. No argument there – what we get is more like a discount than insurance. The problem is that the Health and Welfare Trust has limited funds with which to purchase benefits. Our contract does *not* require the Commonwealth to provide a certain level of coverage, regardless of cost. Rather, the contractual agreement is to make a defined (per capita) contribution to the Trust Fund. It is then up to the Trust to find the best plan that we can with the funds that we have.

The contribution amount is in line with a “pattern” amount set by the state for similar trusts for all other state employee unions. Our trust’s resources have been further impacted because of the high usage by our membership: it is good for members that they use the benefits, but bad for the bottom line by driving the profit margin down for the dental plan vendor. Adding to the problem is the fact that the increase in the per capita contribution we negotiated two years ago [from \$8 per capita weekly, up to \$11] has, like our raises, not yet been funded. As a result, the Fund has been drawing down its cash reserves in order to pay the premiums for the current plan. And yes, you guessed it, the benefits may get even worse. Unless the income from Commonwealth contributions is increased to the promised level, the Fund will have no choice but to adopt a lower cost, and hence a lower benefit, plan.

The Trust Fund will be considering changes in the dental plan over the next year. One option may be to allow members to purchase better coverage by adding some of their own funds. While I do not yet know whether this is a viable option, I would like to know whether it is something members would be interested in considering. Please let me know your thoughts ([mwb@mgmt.umass.edu](mailto:mwb@mgmt.umass.edu)).

Melissa Barringer, SOM

Health and Welfare Trust Representative

## **PMYR: Are you getting what you should?**

Please be advised that resources are available in each college to support the plans submitted by faculty undergoing Periodic Multi-Year Review (PMYR). We were surprised to learn that not all faculty last year requested funds from their Dean to support their PMYR plans and projects. Although the Deans are not required to give everything you ask, they must allocate the money bargained in the contract for this purpose. If you don't get it, someone else will—so it doesn't hurt to ask. Each college has development funds for PMYR to fund research initiatives and other projects. Specific programs are also available through the Center for Teaching should teaching development be part of your plan. FYI: the average request is between \$1,000 and \$5,000.

A PMYR workshop will be held in early December for faculty going through the review this year. If you have questions before that time, contact Mary Fletcher or Jenny Spencer in the MSP office.

### ***MSP Thanks....***

Arlyn Diamond for her six years of service as the UMASS/ Amherst representative to the MTA Board of Directors. This commitment involved hours, and sometimes days, of meetings on every issue that MTA considered putting to a vote. Arlyn faithfully reported on MTA Board actions and consulted with the MSP Board on all matters that directly concerned us. Thanks to Arlyn's efforts, higher education concerns had a vocal, and articulate, advocate in our state organization. Indeed, MSP enjoys a much stronger voice in the state organization than ever before. Now free of this duty, perhaps she can spend more time with her horse. Happy trails.

## **Join Higher Ed Unions United Actions**

Since late last spring, a new coalition called Higher Education Unions United (HEUU) has met regularly to plan and coordinate actions aimed at getting our contracts funded. This group was behind the successful Spring Statehouse rally that many of you participated in.

During the summer, the group has also been trailing Governor Romney, making sure that someone from higher education is visible at every public event. The "Romney Watch" was particularly successful when Romney attended a conference on August 5 at Worcester State College. Romney ducked the 100 protesters by going the wrong way down a one-way street into a side entrance; but the protesters were able to assemble just outside the glass windows in the room in which he spoke. The event led to an on-the-spot meeting with Romney's staff where USA President Donna Johnson (UMASS/ Amherst) among others spoke eloquently about the consequences of the unfunded contracts.

This fall, HEUU is organizing a "State House Watch" for every day that the legislators are in session. The goal is to remind our legislators, day in and day out, that the unfunded contract situation is not going away, a strategy that apparently worked to get contracts funded in Wisconsin, even with its Republican controlled legislature. We are organizing a group of at least 10 people, from one or more of the state-wide campuses, to meet on the steps with signs and

lobbying materials Monday through Thursday until the contracts are funded. The UMASS/ Amherst campus will be joining other HEUU members on Mondays or Thursdays over the semester: signs, materials, and even rides will be provided.

Please contact MSP if you are willing to give a few hours of your time in Boston, once this semester.

### *President's Message cont.*

effective, and broadly representative as we possibly can. Our strength will be measured in how quickly and efficiently we can mobilize our members for particular actions.

If we resolve the current contract situation, our job is not over. MSP believes faculty and librarians need a stronger voice in the debate about the future of public education and the shape of our own academic workplace. The current assault on public higher education makes this discussion both more difficult and more necessary.

If your department has not yet held a meeting to discuss these issues, let us know. We can no longer afford to leave the work of the union to the usual suspects. The job is too big, and the stakes too high.

I look forward to working with you in the tough year ahead.

—Jenny Spencer,  
MSP President

*Campaign Cont'd*

local businesses, and community groups

- Talking to all our members in the next month, asking what they are willing to do, followed by a kick-off event, probably in late October, that launches a high pressure period
- Discussing and preparing for the possibility of more aggressive actions, whether job actions or picketing or civil disobedience
- Being committed to sustaining the campaign throughout the year, always being creative and adapting to circumstances, but always keeping the pressure on

Here's one example of a possible action that would come only late in a year-long campaign: The Democratic state convention will be held May 8 – at the Mullins Center. If our contracts still aren't funded by then, despite all our efforts, some of us plan to picket the convention asking delegates not to attend.

Getting the contracts funded is our number one priority. It will help the university retain and recruit quality faculty. It will make a day-to-day difference to secretaries and custodians and food service workers. It has the potential to add a large amount to the university's base budget. But funding the contracts is only one part of our

goal: we will be working to increase the university budget, restore faculty numbers, and in general increase faculty-librarian influence in shaping the character of the university.

If you'd like more information, or are ready to be involved, be in touch with me or the MSP office.

Dan Clawson, [clawson@sadri.umass.edu](mailto:clawson@sadri.umass.edu)

**Q & A****Q: Do we have a contract now?**

A: Yes. Even though the contract hasn't yet been funded, all other provisions are in effect, even the ones that require money—as long as it isn't included in the legislated money package. For example, money distributed as part of the PMYR program is available and promotional increments are being given. New programs such as parental leave have been used extensively during the first two years this contract has been in effect.

**Q: Why should I fill out my annual report when there's no merit money anyway?**

A: Aside from the fact that faculty members are required to complete an annual report, there are really good reasons to do so.

- The contract may eventually be funded (MSP/MTA continues to work on this), and the minute merit money comes through it will be distributed, based on information in your annual report(s).
- Even if this contract gets funded, we will be negotiating a new contract starting in January, and there will be merit money in it. In the past, we have negotiated with the administration to include unfunded merit years in new contracts by grouping two or more years on one or more of the effective dates for merit increases. This way no year's achievements go unrewarded—unless, of course, you haven't turned in your annual report for the year(s) in question.
- If you are not yet tenured, or have not yet been promoted to the highest rank available, you will need those completed and commented-upon annual reports for future personnel actions.
- You doubtless want to be a good citizen of your department and University, and your achievements help both those bodies look good.
- If your department head orders you to complete your annual report and you don't comply, you could be subject to disciplinary action for insubordination.