

BOT SPEECH – APRIL 11 2017

Good afternoon. My name is Anneta Argyres; I work at UMass Boston and I am the VP of the Professional Staff Union there.

As you may recall, I addressed this body last fall, raising concerns about the Board's demand that UMB balance its budget. Since then, we've continued our investigation of UMass's financial situation.

Through that investigation we've learned that last year UMB brought in enough revenues through tuition, grants, gifts, and the state appropriation to cover the costs of educating our students and running and maintaining our campus. Indeed, we brought in about \$13.5M more than what it cost to run the campus and our programs. However, the \$9M of interest on debt plus the \$19M listed as "depreciation" which, we have learned, was paid toward the principal of that debt, left us with a \$5 and a half M deficit.

Similarly, this year the projected amount we'll be paying for interest and principal payments (approximately \$35M) exceeds the now well-publicized \$30M deficit.

Based on this, it is clear to us that the only "structural" deficit we're facing is the cost of rebuilding the structures of our campus. As I mentioned last fall, this rebuilding is essential, ensuring that the utilities upon which the whole campus depends – water, heat, electricity, internet, air conditioning – are protected from the slowly collapsing substructure. It is also essential that we begin to replace our classroom buildings which have been plagued with leaks, and which, frankly, we've outgrown as our student population has expanded.

To insist – as it is our understanding that this Board is doing – that we must pay for these costs fully out of our operating budget means that we must cut academic and student support programming; that we must spend money meant to educate students on interest and principle payments instead. It means that students must pay for a diminished education. This is unacceptable to our students and to our staff and faculty, and it should be unacceptable to you.

There are steps you can take – which we think you must take – to address this situation.

- First, you can allow UMB to spend its savings to help pay off this debt.
- Second, this Board should make available some of the Central Office’s reserves—which as of June 2016 totaled over \$100M in unrestricted assets—in order to pay for a portion of this debt since rebuilding the Boston campus is an investment in the UMass system.
- Third, the Board should endorse and actively lobby for the Fair Share Amendment. (I trust you all know that despite the fact that this state’s revenues now exceed the revenues prior to the recession of 2008, the amount we invest in public higher education has not returned to the pre-2008 levels.)
- Finally, this Board should commit a portion of the funds from the Fair Share Amendment to cover the rebuilding of UMB.

I ask you to think for a moment about what’s at stake if you don’t take these steps. You will be limiting the education of one of the most diverse student bodies in the UMass system. At UMB we educate about 23% of UMass’s undergraduate students and 55% of UMass’s students of color – 47% of UMass’s Black and AA students and 39% of the Hispanic students study at UMB. And 61% of our students are first generation students. Cutting our educational programs to pay for building debt will reduce the breadth of education these students receive. While some may believe that that is as it should be – that UMB should be reduced to a training ground for local industries – we reject that vision of our students’ worth.

Over 100 years ago the women of this Commonwealth – white women, brown women, immigrant women – fought, as the song goes, for bread and roses. They fought for fair wages to keep them alive **and** for “roses”, for the things that give life meaning. This is a proud part of our Commonwealth’s history. Now, we must all stand – you along with us – and fight for the same for the students of UMB. Yes, they need education’s bread– the skills needed for gainful employment – but they also need the “roses” that education offers to us all – the joy of the creative arts, the excitement of discovery, and satisfaction of fully participating in our democracy.

Take these steps to help pay for the rebuilding of UMB, and to ensure that our students can have those roses that they deserve.