Fee Increase Squeezes Our Students Once More:
Despite testimony from UMass unions and student pleas to maintain the 2-year freeze on tuition and fees, on June 17 the UMass Board of Trustees voted to raise this year’s fees by 6% for undergraduates and 8% for graduate students. That’s a lot of money for students trying to hold down jobs while going to school and taking on an average of $7,500 in debt every year.

While we are pleased to have finally received a written commitment and a date for our negotiated pay increases, we are committed to standing with students—who stood with us—against these fee increases. And we are not alone. Recently, Senate President Stanley Rosenberg joined us in calling on the UMass Administration and Board of Trustees to roll back or rebate the fee increases: “I am hopeful that the university will use its increased FY16 appropriation [an increase of 4%] to ease the financial burden of a college education on its hardworking students and their families,” Rosenberg, an Amherst Democrat, wrote to new University President Meehan in a letter earlier this month.

Join fellow UMB faculty, staff and students—and support your PSU leaders—at the UMass Board of Trustees Meeting:

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 16th
9AM, CAMPUS CENTER BALLROOM.

Let’s ask the UMass trustees to be true stewards of the University and advocate for fully-funded public education.
While we saw significant increases to public funding for higher education in the last 2 years of the Patrick administration, UMass’s funding level has declined 16.6% since 2001 (adjusted for inflation)—a long-term trend that is in part the result of income tax cuts phased in during the late 1990’s and early 2000’s. It’s time to turn this trend around and stop squeezing more money out of students and shortchanging employees.

Fair Share is a statewide campaign which offers a long-term solution that would make millions of additional public dollars available by raising more revenue, and raising it ONLY from the tiny percentage of Massachusetts residents whose annual income exceeds one million dollars. The Massachusetts Teachers Association has joined with hundreds of community organizations, unions and congregations in this effort to win a constitutional amendment to create a higher tax rate on income over $1 million, bringing the tax share of the wealthiest residents in line with the rest of us. If they paid their fair share, we would have enough revenue to expand early childhood education, improve our schools, make higher education more affordable, and fix our crumbling transportation system.

The PSU and other unions will be working this fall to help collect 65,000 certified signatures, the first step in winning a Fair Share amendment.

**A Half-Dozen Reasons Why UMass Staff Are Standing With Students Against Fee Increases**

1. **We are committed to serving students.** UMass Boston staff and faculty are deeply committed to providing a high quality, accessible and affordable college education for current and future generations of students. It really hurts to see students have to take on more jobs and more debt, or abandon their education.

2. **This is our university too, and we invest in it.** We work here and many of us studied here too. Employees invest their time and talents in UMass, and employee alums also make significant financial contributions to UMass. We pay tuition and fees too: many of our spouses and children attend UMass, and many of us also study here.

3. **The UMass Administration pits students against employees to escape responsibility for its own decisions.** Only a few weeks ago, in an 8/22 Boston Globe article the UMass spokesperson blamed employees for the student fee increase, saying that that the university could not rollback or rebate student fees as the Senate President had requested because “The new cost of faculty salaries will consume the entire increase in the state appropriation.

4. **We know a lot about where the money should go—and where it does go.** We suffer from the loss of public trust from the University’s misplaced spending priorities: paying for the former president Caret to profit on a waterfront condo; paying for cars and drivers for Presidents, Chancellors and others; anniversary blowouts and swag; and a high-rent UMass club costing the University hundreds of thousands of dollars a year.

5. **Students and employees are squeezed by the ‘top-heavy,’ corporatized way that UMass is directing its resources, with highly paid upper administrators multiplying across the system.** The $34 million in upper administrator earnings that the Comptroller (and the Boston Herald) reported in March 2015 is one indicator of this. And it points the way to even more expansion at the top, since these figures do not include the many additional millions in other costs associated with these positions: benefits, entertainment, travel and discretionary budgets.

6. **We want to live and work in a state that makes opportunity available to all students, regardless of their family income.** We know the benefits of an educated citizenry accrue to all of us, and we believe that such an education should be denied to nobody.