USA President Annual Report 2004-05

This past year surely has gone by quickly and it has been one filled with many challenges for the University Staff Association. After all of our hard work we will finally be seeing the first payment of our retro funds on April 22, 2005, you should all be proud of your efforts on this issue. Congratulations everyone.

As your president for the last year I have been working on many fronts on your behalf. I have begun addressing classism issues, bargaining our new contract, enforcing the health and safety rights of our members, and general working conditions. Now more than ever it is imperative that we preserve the collective bargaining rights that we have.

I have continued to work closely with the area legislators to insure the balance of our retro, the 85/15 health insurance split, and the conversations are already beginning about the upcoming budget and what this will mean for the university.

In the upcoming year I will work hard to finish up our bargaining, schedule the next retro payment, continue to work on classism, health and safety and contract issues that our membership deal with on a day to day basis.

On a personal note, I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to serve as your president for an additional term, I look forward to the challenges but mostly with working with all of you.

In solidarity,

Donna Johnson
President USA
This past year was my first year as trustee for the Health and Welfare Trust Fund. This is the fund that oversees the dental benefit provided by the University. We meet once a month during the school year and in that time I’ve learned a lot about benefits in general but I’ve also learned more about the fund. Many employers don’t offer dental and the ones that do ask for pretty high premiums. Past union members and political leaders fought for this benefit and won and we are reaping those rewards.

I’ve also spent the last year on the PTAB (Parking and Transportation Advisory Board) Committee. As it’s an advisory board there aren’t actual decisions being made, but I’ve learned more about the parking office and about the flow of cars, buses and traffic at UMass.

This past year was my 2nd year on the LMWEP (Labor Management Workplace Education Program) Advisory Board. This group was formed to advise LMWEP in their mission to educate workers. This past year was spent talking a lot about classism and what we as workers can do to help and what the program can do to help. There have been good, lively discussions and LMWEP has been offering workshops to talk about class issues. I encourage everyone to see what they have to offer.

My work with the LMWEP Advisory Board ties in somewhat to my work on the CDSJ (Community, Diversity and Social Justice) initiative here on campus. I’m on the Academic Affairs team and have been for a few years. A survey was done for workers on campus in the Fall of 2003 and work is starting to be done in individual academic departments. Administrative departments are starting to create reports and work on action plans. One big issue across campus is that our members are not being treated fairly.

USA now has a classism committee and we hope that will start the ball rolling with education for our members about this issue, which is being talked about more and more on campus these days.

Through all this I try to keep up with the USA website. There is a lot I want to do but haven’t found much time to keep up with it. I hope to expand the section on links and the career development page this spring. E-mails from the President are now posted on the website for those that are not on the listserv and we will start posting the minutes from the Executive Board meetings this spring.

I’m looking forward to another two years of working closely with Donna and the new board.
Over the last year, as the Grievance Officer, I have:

- Attended better than 95% of Executive Board meetings (usually twice a month);
- Attended better than 95% of Steward Council meetings (usually twice a month);
- Instituted regular monthly Grievance Committee meetings, so that the business of, and information concerning contract enforcement was shared with Chief Stewards and other committee members on a regular basis;
- Established policies concerning regular information flow between volunteers;
- Instituted more informative reports to the Executive Board in order that officers, especially those who were not Stewards, were better informed of the nature and progress of grievance cases;
- Filed third step grievances on behalf of the Association;
- Processed some grievances, while encouraging full participation by appropriate Stewards and Chief Stewards;
- Advised Stewards and Chief Stewards of interpretations, citations, and appropriate practices relating to contract enforcement;
- Responded to worker inquiries, and referred them to appropriate Stewards and Chief Stewards;
- Arranged for grievance case assignments when out-of-district representation was required;
- Provided information concerning the contract to other volunteers and officers of USA.
Jim Plaza, Member at Large

Member at Large Annual Report 2005

I submit this report as a Member At Large (MAL) on the Executive Board of the University Staff Association. My primary responsibility has been as liaison between the Executive Board and the Stewards Council, reporting on their activities and any specific directives issued by these two bodies.

The work of the Executive Board and the cadre of district stewards have been focused on a number of areas during the past year including:

- A unit survey for contract (FY 05 to FY 07) negotiations;
- Lobbying for retroactive payment of salary adjustments for current contract (FY 01 to FY 04);
- Internal organizing/new member enrollment;
- Revision of the stewards training manual and training of new district stewards & building contacts;
- Investigation of Health & Safety concerns surrounding the E.B. DuBois Library renovations (i.e. grievances have been filed as a result);
- Arbitration filings and representation of unit members in grievances and layoffs.

Our Association’s elected officers and stewards have handled their union work during increasingly stressful times with sincere commitment and dedication, all the while handing the responsibility of their respective university positions. These dedicated volunteers deserve our thanks.

I look forward to serving for another two years as a MAL on the Executive Board.

Respectfully Submitted,

Jim Plaza
March 28, 2005
Sylvia Snape, Member-at-Large (Public Relations)

My primary job as a member of the Executive Board is to publish the Newsgram, USA's print vehicle for keeping members informed. Our budget has been down so we have gone to publishing bi-monthly issues. The communications committee was established to manage publications and we are always looking for articles of interest to USA members. If you have a story to tell or a concern to share please contact me at snape@english.umass.edu, or at 545-0643.

I spearheaded the Pencils for Springfield campaign and thanks to your response we provided the Van Sickle school with almost 7,000 pencils. Let's hope some of those middle school students will be with us at UMASS in four or five years.

MTA Director of District 48H (USA)

As a director of the only all-ESP units in MTA, I attend bi-monthly Board meetings in Natick. I also sit on the ESP committee, the group that brings you the ESP conference and the annual summer conference workshops for ESPs. In addition I attend the Higher Ed Leadership Council—a coalition of Massachusetts higher ed unions. Donna Johnson, chair of that council, and I are the only ESP members of that group, and we make sure that ESPs are considered in every issue that's brought before the group. Currently we are working together on bargaining across the state, standing in unison to balance the state-wide playing field to keep the Governor from dividing and conquering.

This is my first year on the board and I am on a learning curve. I can attest to the fact that Donna Johnson is a force to be reckoned with across the state. I am proud to stand with her and learn from her in this capacity. MTA is lucky to have her, and we are most fortunate to have her represent us. I stand in her shadow.

Sincerely,
Sylvia Snape