

psu Strong

PROFESSIONAL
STAFF UNION
MTA/NEA

Powering UMass Amherst and UMass Boston



News from Retreat

Some 50 PSU Amherst members gathered in February to brainstorm ways to make our union stronger. Six major themes emerged: contract enforcement, equity, identity/pride, communication with members, communication with administration, and preparations for next contract negotiations. The chapter board will decide next steps.

Photo by Frank Aronson

Contract Enforcement> Protect Union Jobs—Prevent Unit Erosion

> PSU Fights for Fair Implementation of Retroactive Raises

By Liz Smith, PSU member

PSU has filed a grievance on behalf of 28 Amherst members who won pay raises through equity reviews or promotions after July 1, 2017 and did not receive their full retroactive pay for the 2017–2020 contract. Human resources prorated these employees’ retroactive raises by only giving them bi-weekly increases from the effective date of the negotiated raise through the date of their equity or promotional increase. For example, if an employee received an equity increase in October 2017, they only received three-months-worth, or one-quarter, of the FY 18 raise, resulting in the loss of more than \$1,000. The incorrect calculation of retroactive pay also impacts salaries for the remainder of the contract since future contract raises are based on the wrong salary.

The university’s decision to withhold full increases in these situations has set back affected PSU members who fought for more equitable pay and/or received an increase due to significant changes in their responsibilities. Missing out on their full raises immediately put them below others at their new salary level.

PSU filed the grievance on the grounds of a contract violation and is working to rectify the situation as quickly as possible. In the meantime, **if you received an equity or promotional increase after July 1, 2017 and believe your retroactive pay rate may have been impacted, please let PSU know by emailing psu@external.umass.edu or calling 413.545.4509.**

By Ferd Wulkan, PSU staff

“Unit erosion” isn’t about soil or water. It’s when union jobs, either filled or vacant, are converted to non-unit positions. It’s a problem PSU is investigating and we look to our members for help in identifying when union jobs are taken out of the bargaining unit. There are two reasons why a professional position can legitimately be excluded from the PSU bargaining unit – i.e. not covered by the union contract.

A position could be “managerial.” This does not mean supervisory—there are many supervisors in our unit. Managerial employees help make high-level policy for the university. The other legitimate reason a position can be non-unit is when it is considered “confidential.” This does not refer to handling sensitive academic or medical records; it means confidential with regard to labor relations. All other professional positions (half-time or more) must be in the PSU bargaining unit.

Management generally prefers to have more positions out of the unit—where employees have fewer rights and administrators can wield power unchecked by collectively bargained rules.

PSU is contesting several significant cases of unit erosion as well as other smaller instances. You can help! **If you are aware of a plan to remove a position from the PSU unit, or the removal has already taken place, please let us know.**

If you have questions about unit erosion, please contact
Amherst
Robert McDowellrobert.mcdowell@umass.edu
Boston
Tom Goodkindtom.goodkind@umb.edu

PSU is You!

By Iris Jenkins, PSU Member



PSU worked with the Massachusetts Teachers Association (MTA) in January on “*PSU is You!*,” a video project aimed at encouraging both new and current members to think of the union as “*our union*” rather than “*the union*” and to become more involved in union activities. The project created nine short videos featuring individual PSU members. The videos will have many purposes, including:

- serving as part of the new employee orientation
- introducing PSU at department or building meetings
- raising awareness about PSU on social media

During the video interviews, members share how PSU has helped them, why and how they decided to become involved in PSU activities, and the overall impact PSU has on their lives. The members featured are: Jennifer Page (College of Information and Computer Sciences), Brad Turner (Information Technology), Jacob Hirsch (Polymer Science and Engineering), Karen Lederer (Women, Gender, Sexuality Studies), Guadalupe Arevalo (Center for Women & Community),



Patricia Sullivan (University Relations, Communications), Samantha Smith (News and Media Relations), Iris Jenkins (Research Compliance) and Natercia Teixeira (Center for Counseling and Psychological Health). Although these PSU members come from diverse backgrounds and experiences, they all feel similarly about the value of PSU membership. When asked what PSU is to them, responses include, “community,” “solidarity,” and “empowerment.” They speak of, “strength,” “inclusion,” and the “protection of our rights.”

Although the creation of the videos was supported by MTA, PSU is developing its own capacity to produce future videos. **If you are interested in participating in future videos, please contact the PSU Communications Committee (psu-comm@external.umass.edu).**

The videos will be posted to the PSU Facebook page sometime this summer. Remember, **PSU is YOU!**



Risa Silverman, outreach director for the School of Public Health and Health Sciences, was elected in March to fill a vacant *co-chair* position for PSU Amherst.

My Dream for PSU is to build connections and power among all of us in PSU as well as strengthen connections to the other unions at UMass and in the region. This is a really important time for unions to work together.

First Goal: To get to know more PSU members by listening and learning from you. I love that PSU raises up and unites the staff on our campus.

What would you like members to know about you? I enjoy bringing people together and I like union work because we are practicing democracy together. I am a mom with two daughters, ages 17 and 20.

What do you do in your free time? I am trying to make time to learn guitar, spend time outdoors, listen to live music and dance more.

YOUR UNION AT WORK: Performance Management Program (PMP)

By Dan LaBonte, PSU member

The Performance Management Program (PMP) provides a formal means for professional employees to plan, discuss, and evaluate performance goals with their supervisors in an annual cycle. PMPs have been used in Amherst and Boston since 2001 for Unit A members with a different process for members in unit B. Before the PMP was negotiated, the review process can only be described as ineffective. UMass Boston Grievance Secretary Tom Goodkind says, “There were no goal-setting meetings, no self-review or interim reviews, no performance improvement plans, and no guidelines—the process did not foster encouragement or constructive criticism.”

What do I need to know about the PMP process?

In the PMP there are several core performance categories: work results and quality, organization, learning and development, communication, respectful relationships and community building, and job specific competencies. Supervisors are also reviewed on three additional criteria focusing on leadership capabilities. Although there are established evaluation criteria embedded into an annual process, “PMP isn’t just about producing an annual document,” says UMass Amherst Secretary of Grievances Robert McDowell, “it’s about facilitating an ongoing, productive dialogue and feedback loop between supervisor and supervisee, culminating in an annual document.”

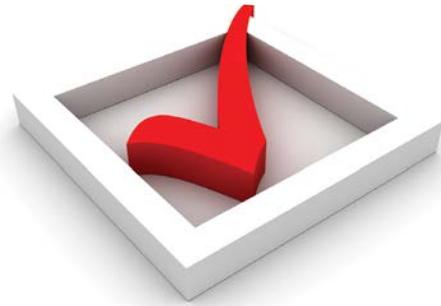
Step 1: Performance Planning

For the first step, employee and supervisor work collaboratively to establish three to eight **SMART** goals (**Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Relevant, Trackable**) that align with the work unit’s mission or strategic direction, positional job tasks, and/or skills and knowledge development to achieve work priorities. While the supervisor should initiate the goal setting process at the beginning of each performance cycle, the employee has the right to do so if not started in a timely manner. If the employee initiates and the supervisor does not respond after 90 days of the start of the performance cycle, the employee’s proposed work priorities become the goals for that evaluation period. If the supervisor and employee cannot agree upon goals, the supervisor shall determine employee goals. Collaborative planning is a crucial component to reaching successful goal outcomes. Goodkind advises that employees and supervisors should not only “mutually determine goals that are reasonable and realistic given current resources,” but also check in on goals consistently throughout the year.

Readers Survey—We Heard You

In our readers survey, you told us that articles about the contract, PSU news, and member stories were high priorities. We also learned that some members want to receive only a digital newsletter. If you would like to be removed from the mailing list for the print version, please send an email to psu@external.umass.edu.

For complete survey results go to umass.edu/psumta.



Step 2: Coaching and Ongoing Feedback

During the middle six months of the annual performance cycle, it is strongly recommended that the supervisor and employee have a minimum of one meeting to conduct a review of the performance plan. Ongoing, two-way discussion with continual feedback is just as critical as planning. McDowell says that performance concerns should be communicated as they arise rather than discussed and documented for the first time at the end of a performance cycle. He also notes that our contract indicates the need for supervisors to proactively provide improvement plans. More specifically, section 15.3 states, “If an employee is likely to receive a less than satisfactory evaluation, his or her supervisor shall, whenever practicable, inform him/her of this likelihood approximately 90 days before the evaluation is to be done. At the same time, the supervisor must inform the employee what specific improvements in job performance must be made in order to receive a satisfactory evaluation.” Should an employee perceive supervisor comments to be either misrepresentative of their performance or included in the review without any prior performance issue discussion, the employee should speak directly to their supervisor about the specific concerns and/or contact their PSU grievance secretary to determine best next steps.

Step 3: Performance Review Meeting and Form Submission

At the end of the performance cycle, the final step of PMP is the submission of the performance review form. Goodkind says, “I advise members to take the self-review seriously and respond directly to anything and everything with which they disagree in the evaluation, providing documentation wherever possible.” Once complete, the signed performance review form is remitted to human resources. An employee’s signature indicates that a performance discussion has been conducted and does not necessarily imply agreement. As part of the annual PMP, a new performance planning worksheet with performance goals for the next performance cycle year must also be developed.

A 52-page PMP Handbook is available at: umass.edu/humres/sites/default/files/PMPHand.pdf.

The document is also posted to the PSU website.

PSU Strong Editorial Committee:

Judith Cameron, Iris Jenkins, Dan LaBonte, Jennifer Page,

Liz Smith, Peter Tattlebaum, and Ferd Wulkan

Designer: Sarah Jarman

PARTY TIME! HELP PLAN FOR PSU'S 30TH BIRTHDAY

By Judith B. Cameron, PSU Member

In the fall, PSU will celebrate its 30th anniversary of representing and organizing the professional staff at UMass Amherst and UMass Boston. We want YOU to help us celebrate this milestone. And there is much to celebrate: contracts that provide raises, job protections, and benefits such as paid sick leave. PSU is also a force for improving campus climate and vociferously challenging administrators intent on adopting harmful policies for students, staff and faculty.

PSU was launched October 12, 1989 when 72 percent of staff on both campuses voted to go union. At the time, the five-campus system had not been created. Amherst and

Boston came together as one union because the professional staff saw themselves as particularly vulnerable, since both classified staff and faculty had long been unionized.

Lend us your ideas for a celebration by emailing psu@external.umass.edu

Editors Note: Information for PSU history was taken from accounts written by **Ferd Wulkan**, PSU staff and longtime union organizer. Go to umass.edu/psumta/all-documents, to read *PSU's First Decade* and an article about why union members left SEIU and chose to become part of MTA.



BOSTON BATTLE FOR PARKING FEES OVER, FOR NOW

By Peter Tattlebaum, PSU member

The battle over parking fees at UMass Boston is over (for the time being) and the outcome tells us much about the new administration's attitude towards its employees and students.

After months of negotiations, mediation and fact-finding sessions, then more negotiations, the union and administration were not able to reach an agreement because the administration refused to ensure discounted parking for part-time students and employees. While our bargaining team was able to ensure that employees who park on- or off-campus could purchase monthly passes for about \$6 a day (\$112 per month off-campus and \$122.22 per month on-campus), the administration refused to agree to a similar discount for those who park on- or off-campus three times per week or less, despite the fact that over half of our students and employees do so.

Instead of ensuring that all students and staff have access to discounted parking, Interim Chancellor Katherine Newman's administration has imposed parking fees that force these part-time parkers to pay the cash rates of \$9 a day off-campus and \$12–15 a day on-campus.



PSU Amherst and Boston members, serving as delegates to the **Massachusetts Teachers Association Annual Meeting**, gathered May 3 in front of the Fund Our Future booth to show support for the campaign to increase funding for public education, from pre-k to higher education by \$1.5 billion a year.

Talk Back

Questions, opinions, letters to the editor: psu@external.umass.edu

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