

## **UMass BOT Comments: July 20, 2020**

Good morning Chair Manning, President Meehan, Trustees and Chancellors. I hope you and your loved ones are all healthy and safe.

I work for UMass Boston's Labor Resource Center and I serve as the President of the Professional Staff Union, representing about 2000 staff at both the Amherst and Boston campuses.

I wanted to speak with you all today because my members and our coworkers across the UMass system are very concerned about the cuts that are being made on our campuses.

This is NOT the time to eliminate jobs in public higher education.

Teaching on-line requires smaller class sizes in order to ensure that our students are fully engaged. This means we need more faculty and Teaching Assistants, not fewer.

Advising on-line takes more time, and our students need more support to successfully continue their studies and overcome the daily challenges they are facing. So, we need more advisors and academic support staff, not fewer.

Our administrative offices are inundated with calls and emails, as students seek help to figure out course enrollment and financial needs. Again, we need more staffing to address their needs.

We are all seeking more IT support for teaching, studying, and working at a distance, and the IT help lines are overwhelmed with calls. We should re-employ our student workers who managed those lines and triaged the calls coming in.

And, as we've been reminded as a nation, our maintenance and custodial staff are essential. In particular, their jobs of cleaning and ensuring that our air handling systems are in full working order are vital to making our campuses safer places to study, work and live. We need to fully staff and fund these areas of work in order to reduce the chance of outbreaks on our campuses.

I'll say it again: this is NOT the time to eliminate jobs in public higher education.

But jobs are being eliminated across our campuses. And the reason we're being given is because you are requiring balanced budgets without the use of any reserves.

Why? What are you trying to protect?

Our system has reserves that should be used to stabilize our campuses during a crisis. And we all know that we're in the midst of at least 2 crises right now: COVID and an economic collapse.

This is the time to use those funds to ensure that our institutions weather this storm.

## UMass BOT Comments: July 20, 2020

The proof that we're doing the right thing isn't the amount of money in reserves or the size of our investment portfolios.

The proof that we're doing the right thing is the number of new students enrolling in our programs, the number of students returning to continue their education, and our graduation rates. All of those depend on the very human experiences our students have in and outside of the classroom – the connections they build with the faculty, staff and other students in their programs; the interactions they have that excite them about learning; the support they receive to accomplish their goals. Those are all built on interactions with the working women and men who are UMass.

Those women and men need you to follow the advice that we've been hearing from economists across this nation and the world: spend! Spend to ensure all our programs can continue to run. Spend to ensure our students get the support they need to succeed. Spend to keep our campuses clean and safe.

Thank you.

*Anneta Argyres  
Labor Extension Director, UMass Boston  
Professional Staff Union, president  
Anneta.argyres@umb.edu*