

# psu Strong

PROFESSIONAL  
STAFF UNION  
MTA/NEA

Powering UMass Amherst and UMass Boston

## Jobs of Longtime Workers Cut to Solve UMass Boston Debt Crisis

By Peter Tattlebaum, PSU member

ONE-THIRD OF THE WAY through UMass Boston's 25-Year Master Plan, the campus continues to evolve on a daily basis. By the end of 2018, the number of buildings on campus will have doubled since 2009, including two residence halls and a parking garage. Enrollment continues to slowly rise. Yet as the master plan is coming to life, the university's administration came to the conclusion that centuries worth of worker experience will play no part in the campus's next act.

In the week before Thanksgiving, UMass Boston delivered the devastating news of staff layoffs. The ongoing budgetary deficit was the main reason cited for the elimination of 21 professional jobs, or three percent of the PSU workforce. Nineteen of the 21 are women. The employees had accumulated more than 433 years of experience. Sixty-one percent of the PSU members laid off had at least 15 years of service at UMass Boston;

six of them—five women—had more than 30 years of dedication to the Boston campus. By comparison, only 31 percent of PSU members have attained such seniority, indicating that senior staff had been targeted for elimination. Their last day of employment was February 13.

PSU had been mobilizing for months in attempts to thwart the layoffs and expose the roots of the budget crisis. Informational meetings were held to keep members updated, while officers made sure management followed the contract regarding lost jobs.

**Tom Goodkind, president of the UMass Boston PSU, had for months been decrying at trustee meetings and protest rallies the hypocrisy of trustees criticizing the proliferating debt, while approving decisions that led to the budget deficit.**

The layoff was a surprise to Peggy Roldan Patel, who worked as director of graduate admissions for many of her 25 years and was instrumental in the increase of graduate students. "We had assurances that our jobs were safe and that our department was safe," she said. The bond created between Roldan Patel and her office family made the termination even more difficult. "I

Longtime Workers *cont. on next page*



UMass Boston union members protested at a Board of Trustees meeting over layoffs triggered by fiscal mismanagement at the Boston campus. From left, Martha London (PSU), Joe Ramsey (FSU), Karyn Aiello (PSU), Heike Schotten (FSU), and Judith Erdman (PSU). Photo by Bay State Banner

### FOR AND BY PSU MEMBERS

Welcome to the inaugural edition of *PSU Strong: Powering UMass Amherst and UMass Boston*. We will publish four times a year, offering news, in-depth focus on issues, informative statistics, and celebrations of our members. The print edition will include links to online documents and web extras.

## Longtime Workers cont. from page 1

feel like a dying mother who needs to find someone to care for her children,” she said. Roldan Patel found the layoff to be an emotional rollercoaster. She says she had a great team of union colleagues who supported her throughout the ordeal—in-person, on the phone, and via email.

Barbara Graceffa, another key employee who was the director of marketing and communications for the McCormack Graduate School of Policy and Global Studies, thought she was heading into a work meeting the day her life turned upside down. She had dedicated 35 years to UMass Boston and was three years from collecting her full pension. Graceffa said, “The union was very supportive. They helped me weigh my options and informed me of my bumping rights.” In the end, Graceffa took the layoff rather than bump someone in her department. “That was something I could not do,” she said.

For many employees, UMass Boston had become more than a workplace. For Roldan Patel, “My daughter grew up here. When I first arrived, my intention was to stay until something better came along and 25 years later it became my family. We had three weddings and five babies.”

Jon Hutton, a UMass Boston employee for 36 years who worked in enrollment marketing, now faces economic challenges of forced retirement. “It could be up to four months before I receive my first retirement check. Yet I will have to pay my own health insurance during this time.”

Besides Graceffa and Hutton, four staff members who had devoted 30 or more years to UMass Boston have now lost their jobs in the layoffs. They are: Deborah Williams, 35.4; Sandra Bispham-Parkin, 33; Jill Griffin, 32; and Sonia Weir 30.5. **psu**

More at: [facebook.com/crumblingpublicfoundations](https://facebook.com/crumblingpublicfoundations)

## WE FIGHT, WE WIN

Through PSU's efforts, Rita Haidul-Campbell, a staffer with more than 30 years of employment and targeted for a layoff at the Boston campus, will be transferred to a new position with no loss in pay.

**PSU Strong/Editorial Committee:** Judith Cameron, Thea Costine, Carl Ericson, Jack Hirsch, Patricia Sullivan, Peter Tattlebaum, Ilona Trousdale, and Ferd Vulkan. **Designer:** Jack Cavacco

## A LASTING UNION

*Celebrating Anniversaries  
in Amherst and Boston\**

### 40 years

Georgianna Parkin  
*Director*

Mass. Small Business Development Center

Sandra Pirrello  
*Director of Advising/Outreach  
Humanities and Fine Arts*

### 35 years

Noel Cotterell  
*Director of Finance and Operations  
Government Relations & Public Affairs*

James Meade  
*Security Supervisor  
Police Operations*

Peter Tofuri  
*Learning Systems Management  
Administrator  
IT Ed Tech & Learning Commons*

### 30 years

Ranjanaa Devi  
*Director Performing Arts  
Fine Arts Center*

Kathy Evelyn  
*Office Manager  
Environmental Health & Safety*

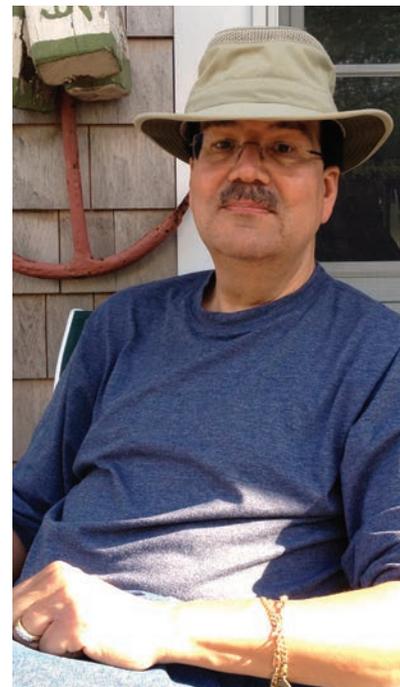
Sedigheh (Jamil) Moosavifard  
*Senior Systems Administrator  
It Comm & Infrastructure*

Lorraine Robidoux  
*Academic Advisor  
Engineering*

Carolyn Safarik  
*Administrative Analyst  
Environmental Conservation*

Thomas Scott  
*Machine Shop Foreman  
Astronomy*

*\*between December 2017  
and March 2018*



## A Strong Union

“A lot has changed at the university since I first came to work in 1980. My experience includes several years in three quite different campus divisions. The one thing that has remained constant and positive is a strong union, and their efforts to make our working lives better and more rewarding. Thank you to all the dedicated union representatives who continue to make this happen for us.”

—Dennis R. Bromery  
*Data Analyst,*

*Enterprise Systems and Development*

## Talk Back

Questions, opinions,  
letters to the editor:

[psu@external.umass.edu](mailto:psu@external.umass.edu)

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[facebook.com/psumta](https://facebook.com/psumta)

and on the web:

[umass.edu/psumta](https://umass.edu/psumta)

# Your Union at Work: Sick Leave Bank

IF THERE IS such a thing as a dream job, Joe thought he'd landed it when he relocated to New England for a position at UMass Amherst a few years back. The work was challenging and fun, his colleagues made a good team, and he was enjoying life in the Pioneer Valley.

But just six months into his new job, Joe was *literally* stopped in his tracks. While running errands one winter Saturday, another car skidded on ice and crashed head-on into Joe's car. Joe was seriously injured, breaking bones in his right arm and suffering a punctured lung. Doctors told him he'd fully recover but would need surgery and be out of work for several weeks.

Joe hadn't worked long enough to accumulate many sick days. He wondered how he was going to get through an extended sick leave. "I wasn't sure I could manage to take time off without pay," Joe recalls.

He was relieved, and surprised, when he called his supervisor to report his medical crisis, and was told that the PSU contract provides for a sick leave bank that allows PSU members to draw from a pool of days to use for personal injury or illness; maternity, paternity, and other parental leave (birth, adoption, or foster care placement); or to care for an ailing family or household member. The sick leave bank fills in when an employee has exhausted all of their accrued sick and personal time. An employee is allowed to retain two weeks vacation time.

By taking advantage of this benefit, Joe was able to take the necessary time away from work to heal—without financial stress—while still receiving paychecks. "The sick leave bank kept my income," says Joe.

The sick leave bank was established several years ago when management presented the union with the issue of unused sick time creating a liability on the balance sheets. Management proposed cutting the amount of sick days that a union member could earn in a year. In the end, a compromise was reached where the number of sick days were cut, but the "cut days" were rolled into the sick bank.

Since then, the PSU sick leave bank has brought untold relief for many members. In 2017, 62 members from the Amherst campus received sick bank leave; the number for the Boston campus is presently unavailable. Check with sick bank representatives for more details on the amount of leave available and procedures for applying. A sick leave bank board at each campus, made up of PSU members and management, meets regularly to review applications. Appropriate medical documentation and a return-to-work date determines whether sick leave is granted. **psu**



*Joe is a composite created to protect the privacy of PSU members who were granted sick bank leave.*

## For more information

on the sick leave bank policies, go to:  
[umass.edu/psumta/all-documents#sickleave](http://umass.edu/psumta/all-documents#sickleave)

## Amherst Campus Sick Leave Bank Representatives

Karen Lederer ..... [lederer@wost.umass.edu](mailto:lederer@wost.umass.edu)  
Liz Tousignant ..... [tousignant@facil.umass.edu](mailto:tousignant@facil.umass.edu)  
Jennifer Page ..... [jpage@umass.edu](mailto:jpage@umass.edu)

## Boston Campus Sick Leave Bank Representatives

Brenda Gordon ..... [brenda.gordon@umb.edu](mailto:brenda.gordon@umb.edu)  
AK Koutropoulos ..... [A.Koutropoulos@umb.edu](mailto:A.Koutropoulos@umb.edu)

## Elections Matter

PSU Amherst executive committee elections will be held March 21 for two co-chairs, grievance officer, recording secretary, and treasurer. Voting will take place between 11 a.m. and 2 p.m. in 803 Campus Center.

At a time when public sector unions are under attack, union leadership and member involvement are critical. Thirty-nine PSU delegates are needed for the MTA (our statewide union) annual meeting May 4–5 in Boston. Delegates will vote for president and vice president, policies, budget, and action plan for the year. Watch for emails on candidates, delegate nominations, and elections.

Amherst members email your nominations to: [psuvote@external.umass.edu](mailto:psuvote@external.umass.edu) before March 28. Boston members: [PSU-NEC@umb.edu](mailto:PSU-NEC@umb.edu) by March 23. A full slate of delegates ensures PSU concerns and ideas are heard loud and clear.

## PSU Addresses Racial Equity

PSU at UMass Amherst has formed the Committee on Racial Equity (CORE) with its first goal addressing the results of the November 2016 Campus Climate Survey on inclusivity, experiences in classrooms and workplaces, and administrative responses to complaints of unfair treatment. PSU CORE at UMass Boston, operating since December 2013, is focused on racial discrimination and inequality using contract language, research, and education to bring change.

At the Amherst campus, the new committee is mapping out plans for addressing and dismantling racism on campus. For example, the committee hopes to start a book discussion group to inspire dialogue on bigotry and its ill effects. "Getting people to talk about race and racism is one of the first barriers to overcome to address racism issues. If people are afraid to talk about it, problems can't be named and solved," says Jennifer Page, a founding member of the Amherst CORE.

Amherst CORE meetings are held every other Monday from noon to 1 p.m. The next meeting will be March 26. For more information and the meeting location, email [risa@schoolph.umass.edu](mailto:risa@schoolph.umass.edu).

At the Boston campus, CORE has looked at PSU staff salaries for race and gender inequities and learned from the Office of Diversity & Inclusion and others what resources are available for targets of racism. They have also worked on raising awareness on ways PSU members of color experience racism by developing educational theater for presentation to the broader community.

UMB CORE meets monthly at lunchtime. For more information, contact co-chair Fatmata Jah at [Fatmata.Jah@umb.edu](mailto:Fatmata.Jah@umb.edu) or PSU staff Mary Jo Connelly at [maryjoconnellypsu@gmail.com](mailto:maryjoconnellypsu@gmail.com). Shandell Hughes also serves as a cochair.



*Many UMass Amherst PSU members showed solidarity with our Boston members by protesting in December the layoffs on the Boston campus. A petition was given to the chancellor, urging him to lend a hand to help avoid staff cuts. Meanwhile, negotiating teams are fighting to get a fair contract. For the latest update on bargaining, go to [umass.edu/psumta](http://umass.edu/psumta).*

### PSU SALARY PROFILE

Salaries	UMASS AMHERST		UMASS BOSTON	
	Staff Number	Percent	Staff Number	Percent
Under \$40,000	31	2.4	14	2.2
\$40,000-\$59,999	428	32.5	194	30.6
\$60,000-\$79,999	518	39.4	229	36.2
\$80,000-\$99,999	241	18.3	150	23.7
\$100,000 and over	98	7.4	58	9.2

\*FTE December 2017

For more information on the Salary Administration Program go to [umass.edu/psumta/all-documents](http://umass.edu/psumta/all-documents).

A report on the results of the Amherst Campus Climate Survey, released in January, can be reviewed at [umass.edu/diversity/campus-climate](http://umass.edu/diversity/campus-climate).