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Powering UMass Amherst and UMass Boston

PSU Partners with Police to Improve Campus Climate *By Dan LaBonte, PSU Member*

Several members of PSU Amherst's Committee on Racial Equity (CORE) met with UMass Police Chief Tyrone Parham in December to open a dialogue focusing on community member incident reporting and police response. Prompting the conversation were rising concerns from PSU members about the increasing number of racially motivated incidents reported to UMPD and the direct impact on our members. Parham affirms, "UMPD values community input as we embrace a diverse and inclusive environment. Without input like the perspectives shared by PSU members, we'd be missing the mark."

The December dialogue centered on the use and impact of the UMPD confidential tips line. Parham shared with CORE members the context and importance of such a method of reporting, citing its use in drug-related crimes as well as the potential to reduce fear of retaliation for contacting the police. CORE members shared with Parham concerns about potential negative impacts associated with use of confidential tips lines. For example, implicit or explicit bias may be a motivating factor for a caller, thereby leaving information anonymously does not provide the opportunity for officers to explore the nature of the concern or investigate the validity of the information.

The robust discussion brought compromise and a promising way to simultaneously uphold safety and inclusion for all members of the campus community. Parham agreed to changing the UMPD website as well as modifying the tips line voicemail message. Shortly after our meeting, the main banner on the UMPD homepage, which lists two methods of community reporting, was revised to include "Emergencies" or "Non-Emergency: 413-545-2121." Previous to the change, the second option was titled "See Something? Say Something," with reporting options limited to

either the tips line or anonymous witness form (not including the 545-2121 non-emergency line option). The See Something phrase is part of a larger national initiative associated primarily with terrorist activity, and furthermore does not provide a clear context or definition for exactly what "suspicious" acts or behaviors community members should report. While the confidential tips line remains a method for UMPD to gather information from community members, it is no longer listed as the primary way to report non-emergency concerns. Recent changes to the tips line voice message emphasize UMPD's community partnership in addressing matters of safety and security on campus. Callers are made

aware that the line is not regularly monitored, producing undetermined response times, and thereby are provided a more comprehensive explanation of reporting options based upon the nature of their call. Callers are invited to contact dispatch in matters that do not necessitate remaining anonymous or that require more urgent police response, and subsequently asked to leave contact information for less urgent matters.

UMass is not the only institution of higher education to grapple with issues of hate proliferating on campuses. Over the past few years, university leaders have been challenged to demonstrate an improved capacity to actively engage with their community members around acts of injustice or hate. Just last semester, Chancellor

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Talk Back

Questions, opinions, letters to the editor:

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and on the web:
umass.edu/psumta

PSU Partners with Police to Improve Campus Climate (continued from page 1)

Kumble R. Subbaswamy issued at least four messages directly in response to instances of racial, anti-Semitic, homophobic, and transphobic incidents on campus, and called for our community to unite against acts of hate. Like our chancellor, we too have a responsibility in these difficult times to go beyond the passive or simply reactive; rather, we must join the effort to actively engage in building and sustaining an inclusive community shaped and defined by dignity and respect. Our recent meeting demonstrated that both Parham and members of PSU Amherst's CORE share an interest in collaboration, trust, and positive working relationships. It is the hope of CORE and UMPD to dialogue and cultivate our partnership so that we may continually address and respond to our

community members, and foster an inclusive campus climate. CORE is building PSU's capacity to address racial discrimination and inequality at both the Amherst and Boston campuses using contract language, research, and education.

If you are interested in learning more or joining CORE, contact Amherst

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A Dedicated PSU Associate Member

By Peter Tattlebaum, PSU member

The union victories achieved in West Virginia and Boston (Local 26 Marriott hotel workers), Los Angeles and other places reinforced the belief that resolve, persistence, and unity can win the battle against misinformation and austerity budgets. When a staff member not covered by the contract opts to use her own hard-earned money to pay dues, there is no surer sign of belief in unions and the power of solidarity.

That is the case of Louise Putnam, who has been working at UMass Boston since fall 2010. Her initial position was in the art department at the College of Liberal Arts. Previously, she spent more than 20 years in a nonunion job at the University of Virginia. When she arrived in Boston, paying union dues or agency fees was a culture shock. After speaking with and hearing the passion of PSU leaders, Putnam became a PSU member. In October 2017, she transferred to the non-unit position of executive assistant to the dean in the College of Liberal Arts. However, the anti-union climate permeating the country chipped away at her conscience and near the end of 2018, Putnam became PSU Boston's first associate member. An associate member is a staff member who is outside of the bargaining unit but wants to

continue financial contributions to PSU.

"[I am] concerned about the loss of power of individuals in the current climate," said Putnam. "There is a natural flow that pushes work down to the lowest common denominator."

A sense of duty, not only to other staff members but also to students, motivates Putnam to continue to support PSU as well as UMass Boston's mission. She sees the union as a vehicle for the staff, students, and administrators to unite for the betterment of all, an effort that cannot happen until the unions show their strength. By putting her money where her mouth is, Putnam is encouraging others to show the same commitment.



Louise Putnam



MTA Annual Meeting

Watch for emails about electing PSU delegates to the **2019 Massachusetts Teachers Association annual meeting** which will be held **May 3-4** at the Hynes Convention Center in Boston.

Union strength grows with engaged members. We need your voice, ideas, and passion.

YOUR UNION AT WORK: Equity Reviews

By Iris Jenkins, PSU member

The Salary Administration Program (SAP) provides the guidelines for determining job classification levels and salary ranges for PSU members. The SAP has several objectives, one of which is to provide for internal equity in salaries. Equity reviews are one way to address significant differences in salaries between individuals doing comparable work with similar seniority and qualifications.

Why might I request an equity review?

If you are aware of another staff member of the same position level as you, who performs similar duties, and earns a substantially higher salary, you may have a case for an equity review. The equity review process involves comparing your salary with that other staff member's salary, considering merit award history as well as qualifications and experience that affect starting salary. You can review salaries at cptrupayroll.mass.gov/#!/year/2019/.

These comparisons are not limited to an individual department or unit. Comparisons can be made between PSU members campus-wide. In the event that all things are similar with the exception of salary, you may be granted an equity increase.

The PSU contract indicates that adjustments will only be made when a substantial inequity exists. Although the contract does not define "substantial inequity," it does indicate that an equity increase will not be granted in the event that there is only a "slight variance" in salary.

How do I request an equity review?

Whether you pursue an equity review on your own or with the help of your supervisor or PSU, you must complete the "Request for Equity Review" form, which can be found on the



PSU website or UMass Human Resources page. You must also provide a copy of your job description, and a written justification for the salary increase being requested. The justification should explain why you think you are inequitably paid and provide the amount you feel is equitable. It is strongly advised that you work with a PSU specialist on your equity review request rather than pursuing it on your own. The process always goes better with union advice and research.

What happens after my request is submitted?

Your request will ultimately be reviewed by the manager of total compensation at UMass Amherst or the compensation manager at UMass Boston. The equity review process does not guarantee a pay increase, but it does provide an option worth pursuing, particularly since you have nothing to lose. There is an appeal process that can be pursued in conjunction with PSU in the event that an equity increase request is denied.

If you have questions about the equity review process, contact Amherst

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TUITION BATTLE

By Patricia Sullivan, PSU Member

When your spouse or dependent attends UMass, how much of a tuition benefit do they receive? As I've learned during my daughter's four years as a UMass Amherst undergraduate, the answer is complex, confusing, and changeable.

Since before the PSU began representing professional staff in 1989, there was a long contractual history of UMass waiving 100 percent of tuition for employees and family members. The original intent of the tuition benefit was to provide a nearly free UMass education for employees, spouses, and dependents.

Over the years, as state appropriations for education declined, UMass shifted much of the cost of education into mandatory fees and kept tuition artificially low. As a result, the 100 percent tuition waiver covered less and less of the cost of attendance.

PSU worked with many other UMass unions to address the decline of the tuition benefit, first negotiating for a freeze on fees for employees, spouses, and dependents and later, in the 2014–2017 collective bargaining agreement, agreeing to a waiver of 50 percent of fees for family members. In 2015–16, my daughter's first year at UMass, her tuition was \$1,714, while fees had escalated to \$13,193. She received a credit for full tuition and 50 percent of the "curriculum fee," for a total credit of \$6,699.

Beginning in academic 2016–17, the Massachusetts legislature allowed UMass to retain in-state tuition. As a result, the university's billing structure changed: my daughter's tuition for her sophomore 2016–17 academic year was \$14,590; fees were \$380. She received a 50 percent tuition credit of \$7,295.

In 2016, PSU filed a grievance alleging that UMass has violated our contract in failing to waive 100 percent of tuition

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THE LOWDOWN ON NEGOTIATING A CONTRACT *By Judith B. Cameron, PSU member*

Serving on the PSU bargaining committee is undoubtedly one of the toughest PSU jobs. Negotiations can drag on over months and come with highs of winning significant gains and lows of feeling thwarted with stonewalling by management. Despite the challenges, members of the bargaining committee who negotiated the 2017–2020 contract say their service on the committee is meaningful and rewarding—and encourage others to consider a term on the committee.

“I am on the bargaining committee because it’s one of the most interesting and engaging ways to serve our members, defend our contract, expand our rights and protections, and ultimately build union power,” says **Tom Goodkind**, a veteran negotiator and grievance secretary for the UMass Boston chapter. **Samm Smith**, a first-time negotiator from UMass Amherst, says her learning curve was steep yet she was able to make a tangible difference. “I’ve seen a completely different side of the UMass system and I feel like it’s permanently affected my outlook as an employee and as an advocate for workers’ justice and labor unions,” says Smith.

Serving on the bargaining committee is an opportunity to learn and grow and get to better know PSU members. “I have a much better grasp on the different people the union represents,” says **Jo Martone**, who has served for many years on the bargaining committee and in other union

roles. She believes serving on the bargaining committee is the most fulfilling of all the union jobs she has held.

With a bargaining committee election upcoming in the next several months, PSU negotiators had recommendations for the skills needed to be effective at the bargaining table and working through differences within the PSU team. “Patience, perseverance, and a good poker face will serve one well,” says **Thomas McClennan II**, a two-term bargaining member from UMass Boston. He and others noted that listening is one of the most valuable skills, much higher than speaking.

“Patience, perseverance, and a good poker face will serve one well.”

Editor’s Note: For a more comprehensive view on serving on the bargaining committee and to learn more about flat-rate raises, visit umass.edu/psumta

Election: 13 members, in 2019

Time Commitment: Full-day meetings once or twice a month and preparation work in between meetings. (release time granted)

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for our spouses and dependents. UMass denied the grievance and the matter went to arbitration. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of leadership and our attorney, PSU lost the arbitration in 2018. However, employees did gain some ground: while my daughter’s tuition increased to \$15,406 for the 2018–19 academic year and fees rose to \$480, the credit for spouses and dependents was increased from 50 percent to 60 percent, resulting in a tuition credit of \$9,244 for her senior year.

Tuition Benefit

	2015–16	2018–19	% Change
Tuition and Fees*	\$14,907	\$15,886	7
Credit	\$6,699	\$9,244	38
Credit % of Tuition & Fees	45%	58%	

*Costs vary from student to student