

# MSP Chronicle

The Massachusetts Society of Professors | Representing Faculty & Librarians on the UMass Amherst Campus



## From the President's Desk

By Eve Weinbaum, MSP President

**C**ongratulations on the end of another academic year! It feels like the semester has flown by, although at the same time we are all exhausted after many months of hard work. I hope you get to relax a bit before your summer work begins; you have earned it.

Thanks to the many faculty and librarians who attended our general assembly meeting on April 27. It was great to see so many of you participating and ready to get to work defending academic freedom, faculty governance, and our common agenda to make UMass Amherst the best university it can be for our students, faculty, librarians and staff.

As you know, the MSP is deeply concerned about threats to peer review and faculty governance in tenure and promotion decisions at UMass Amherst. During the past three years, we know of at least twelve individuals who received negative tenure and/or promotion recommendations from administrators despite having strong support from their faculty colleagues and excellent external letters from experts in their fields. As far as the MSP knows, administrators had never overturned unanimous faculty decisions even once at UMass Amherst before the 2014-15 academic year.

We are also concerned that vulnerable groups have been disproportionately harmed by administrators' recent negative tenure decisions. Of the first ten individuals whose positive faculty recommendations were overturned by administrators, nine of them had been partner hires or had taken a parental or medical leave before tenure. Faculty of color, international and LGBTQ

faculty were also disproportionately represented in this group.

The MSP contract states: "The faculty shall have primary responsibility in the area of personnel matters." We have proposed at the bargaining table that we should clarify Article 11 by adding this explanation: "This shall mean faculty peer review recommendations shall be given the greatest weight," which expresses the intent of both the union and the administration when the contract language was originally ratified.



The contract also states: "Academic administrative officials may make a recommendation or decision counter to the original faculty recommendation only in exceptional circumstances and with compelling

reasons in written detail." The MSP is concerned that this principle has been violated repeatedly, as administrators have overturned faculty tenure decisions without exceptional circumstances nor compelling reasons.

Finally, the MSP contract states that "current academic standards and criteria for faculty personnel actions" must remain in effect for the duration of the agreement. This is crucial because junior faculty must know the standards they are expected to meet in order to be tenured or promoted, and senior faculty must be able to mentor and advise their colleagues in the time leading up to tenure. When administrators change the rules through arbitrary and capricious decisions, academic

*The faculty shall have primary responsibility in the area of personnel matters.*

SAVE  
the  
DATE

MTA Annual Meeting, Hynes  
Convention Center, Boston,  
May 19 - 20,

Rally for Public Education,  
Boston Common,  
May 20, 2 PM

MSP Grant applications due June  
30, 2017

Have an upcoming event  
enhancing MSP's mission you  
would like MSP to announce?  
Contact the MSP office at:  
msp@external.umass.edu  
(413) 545-2206

standards are jeopardized and faculty governance is undermined.

At the general assembly, MSP members unanimously voted to create a Task Force on Faculty Governance. This group will thoroughly research the events of the past couple of years, including tenure and promotion decisions, as well as other administrative actions that have undermined democratic faculty governance at UMass. We would love to have as big a group as possible join this Task Force – please email msp@umass.edu to participate.

We have accomplished so much this year thanks to the large group of faculty and librarians who have come out and participated in MSP events. Thank you for your support. We look forward to a summer of action, research, planning and rebuilding, and we will be ready to hit the ground running in September. Please keep in touch, and have a wonderful summer.

# Update on Contract Bargaining

By the MSP Bargaining Team

We reported to you in February our priority items in this round of contract bargaining. The team has made progress, but there is still work to do.

**NTT Professional Leave** One big item is to improve our already strong contract language for non-tenure-track (NTT) faculty. We've asked the administration to provide professional leaves for NTT faculty not unlike sabbaticals that tenure track faculty and librarians have. We invited a number of NTT faculty to a bargaining session in March to tell the administration negotiators why professional leaves are important to NTT faculty as a means to stay up to date in one's professional area, and thus to stay up to date in the classroom. The many compelling stories had an effect, and the tone of the



Testimony by NTT faculty at a bargaining session.

negotiations has shifted from a flat "no" to actual negotiations.

**Anomaly Process** Another big item for which the bargaining team has proposed contract language revision concerns anomaly pay. If you have served on a departmental personnel committee, you know that making recommendations on salaries that are anomalously low has been difficult at best, and often produces a "not anomalous" rejection from the administration. We proposed a major overhaul of the anomaly process which was rejected by the administration. We again invited MSP members to provide testimony at a bargaining session in April. There were stories from DPC and LPC members about the difficulty of the process and from individual MSP members who were suggested for anomaly increases by their personnel committees but then were turned down. The administration has begun to negotiate with us on the anomaly process, once again due in large part to the testimony of our members.

**Continuing and Professional Education** The last big issue that we are pushing has been on the table before: improved contract language about Continuing and Professional Education (CPE) and online instruction. This issue is a difficult one in part due to the dispersed nature of the faculty who teach CPE courses, in part due to the large number of non-unit instructors whom the administration hires to teach CPE courses, and in part due to the money-generating aspect of CPE courses. The former two make it challenging to engage the instructors of CPE courses and the latter makes the administration reluctant to make any changes that might upset the cash cow. We hope to increase the

CPE compensation minimums for unit members, to ensure that CPE course instruction is offered to unit members before being offered to non-unit members, and to strengthen language about creators' ownership of the intellectual property of online course materials.



The MSP bargaining team at a team caucus. Clockwise from front left, Mickey Gallagher (MTA), Dave Gross, Kathleen Lugosch, Christine Turner, Steve Brewer, Eve Weinbaum, Lori Reardon (MSP). Also shown are 6 computers, 4 smart phones, 1 apple, 1 orange and 1 coffee.

**Salary Increases** We have also proposed salary increases that will keep up with the cost of living and will cover recently announced increases in health insurance costs. The MSP's proposal was coordinated with other higher education unions across the Commonwealth, and has been presented at several bargaining tables. So far we've gotten no response from the administration about our proposal, and we haven't received a counter offer (the so-called "economic parameters") from the state. Once we



Testimony about anomaly salary recommendations at a bargaining session.

have the financial parameters in play, then we anticipate that the bargaining pace will pick up.

**Other Items** We have been negotiating bridge funding for research faculty members who temporarily lose external funding, a solution to the health insurance gap period for new hires, revamping the computer replacement program, and administration proposals.

Stay tuned for emails from the MSP about our progress and any actions in which we may ask members to engage. Because there may be rapid movement in the negotiations once the "parameters" are released, we may need to mobilize quickly. ■

# Marching for Science in Boston

By Jennifer Lundquist

On Saturday, April 22 three buses of UMass members headed east to join the Boston March for Science. Many others marched at the main event in Washington DC and at satellite events in other cities, including locally in Amherst. The College for Social and Behavioral Sciences and the MSP worked together to organize the Boston bus trip and funding assistance was provided by the College of Natural Sciences. Watching my colleagues come together in defense of scientific integrity despite the long travel, the rain, and the cold was a heady reminder of why I am gratified to be part of this community. It's not often that faculty, staff, graduate students and administrators find unity in a common purpose. If ever there was reason, the national turn to anti-science policy has presented that opportunity.

Saturday was the first gathering in recorded history of protesters marching on behalf



of science. That statement alone speaks volumes. Thousands of people converged at each of the over 600 marches throughout every state in the US and across cities around the world. Eureka!

Why did we march? For many reasons. There has been controversy over whether scientists should involve themselves in politics. The Washington DC March for Science organizers respond: "In the face of an alarming trend toward discrediting scientific consensus and restricting scientific discovery, we might ask instead: can we afford not to speak out in its defense?" I couldn't agree more. I think Galileo would have agreed, too. Here are some of the many reasons we at UMass took to the Boston Common:

...because governmental decision-making should be based on systematic data and knowledge, not corporate interests, personal opinion, or the short-term time



frames that influence elections.

...because "alternative facts" have no place in the scientific method.

...because science and the scientists who practice it should represent all people.

...because we want to preserve the planet for her children

...because science comes from the verb "to know" and the desire for knowledge is a basic human instinct

...because science-deniers have been appointed to crucial scientific government agencies.

...because environmental regulations are being rolled back while the antiquated coal industry is being revived.

...because robust scientific policy is fundamental to democracy.

...because there has yet to be an appointment to the White House top science advisor post.

...because the proposed national budget would eviscerate research funding from the agencies that fund critical research and graduate education.

...because we cannot abide the dismissal of scientific scholarship as a partisan belief system.

...because travel bans are discriminatory and will exact a long-term chilling effect on international fieldwork, graduate training, and global research collaborations.

...because we believe that the benefits of scientific

research must be shared with those who need it most.

...because science can and should be a positive force for humanity and the planet.

Perhaps most striking to me about



Saturday was the wide range of disciplines represented from UMass. While including those who fall within the conventional STEM designation of science, many hailed from the arts and humanities. Whether we consider ourselves scientists or not, as scholars we share a deep appreciation for the painstaking methods that undergird the production of knowledge. And as people, we all benefit from the fruits of science. In a recent conversation with a colleague who considers her research to be more interpretive than scientific, she said: "I have found it interesting to now be in the position of having to defend science, after all these years of interpretive skepticism and emphasis on the ways facts are constructed, etc. I still believe that but, hey, I want climate and discrimination data as much as the next person!" As her sentiment makes clear, we cannot help but be members of the scientific alliance.

How do we move forward in this sobering new reality and nurture our pro-science momentum?

**Communicate** your scientific research to the public. As any good Communication scholar will tell you, we need to apply

(Continued on p. 5)

UMass Amherst Marchers in Boston represented faculty, graduate students, and staff from almost every college on our campus (SBS, CNS, CICS, School of Education, HFA, Isenberg, the Library, and Engineering) with a wide range of departmental representation, including: Sociology, Education, Electrical Engineering, Communication, History, Political Science, Comparative Literature, Journalism, Communication, Environmental Conservation, Legal Studies, Food Science, Biology, Biochemistry & Molecular Biology, Economics, Psychology, Microbiology, Landscape Architecture and Regional Planning, Anthropology, Management, Architecture, Linguistics, Women's Studies, English, Physics, and Civil Engineering.



# MSP Highlights

## Here are some highlights of the MSP's very busy year:

- Phone banking, canvassing, and organizing to defeat Question 2 (lifting the cap on charter schools) – leading to a huge state wide victory
- Reception for new members in September
- Visits to most departmental meetings in the fall
- Bargaining survey dissemination and analysis
- Preparation for bargaining with bargaining team and support committees
- Weekly contract negotiations with administration
- Successful campaign to save the UMass Amherst Labor Center
- Two open forums to discuss negotiations and contract proposals
- Monthly meetings with the Chancellor and Provost
- Weekly meetings of the MSP Board and/or Executive Committees
- Regular meetings of the UMass Amherst campus labor coalition, with AFSCME, USA, PSU, GEO
- Regular meetings with leadership of UMass and higher education union leaders across the state
- A membership meeting visioning future funding under the Fair Share Amendment
- MSP and MTA delegations marching at the Women's March in January
- Representatives at GIC meetings in Boston to advocate for fair health insurance
- Faculty and librarian delegation lobbying at the State House for Higher Education Advocacy Day in March
- Regular meetings of MSP members with state senators and state representatives, along with MTA Senate District Coordinators and Legislative and Political Action Teams
- Bus loads of MSP members marching at the Boston March for Science in April
- A general assembly and emergency meeting on faculty governance
- A large group of non-tenure-track faculty testifying during contract negotiations about professional improvement leave and other NTT issues
- A large group of librarians and faculty testifying in negotiations about the need for a new process for anomaly increases
- Several grievance hearings with large numbers of faculty and librarians attending as witnesses and supporters
- Hosted state wide Summit Meeting of Mass United, coalition of non-tenure-track faculty, created new website and supported the coalition's advocacy goals
- Planning of an Immigrant Rights Rapid Response Network to support students, faculty, staff, or community members who are threatened with investigation or deportation
- MSP delegates to attend the state wide MTA annual meeting in Boston in May
- Members to attend the Rally for Public Education on May 20 in Boston, sponsored by the Mass. Education Justice Alliance as well as MTA and others
- Partnerships with organizations including Jobs with Justice, Hampshire-Franklin Labor Council, Pioneer Valley Workers Center, US Labor Against the War, Climate Action Now, Mass Divest, and others

### THE MSP PUZZLE

The puzzle for the previous issue asked you to take the letters from elizabeth warren and make as many possible four-letter or more words from the letters without repeating letters. I'm sure you did your due diligence, but you forgot one thing: to send in your entries. I do know that one really good word was found: hibernate. This issue's puzzle is one suited for the numerophiles among us. It is about number sequences. For example, the 4-number sequence 1, 2, 3, 4 has a rather obvious next number: 5. The sequence 1, 1, 2, 3 may not be as obvious, but it's next number is 5 because this is the start of the Fibonacci sequence in which the next number is the sum of the previous two. Other sequences can be more obscure, like 64, 46, 54, 47, ... for which the next number in the sequence is 70. (These are the ages at swearing-in of the last 5 US presidents.) Your job is to figure out the next number in the sequence shown below. Send your entries to MSPpuzzle@gmail.com by midnight, May 31. The entry with the highest score wins a \$25 gift card. In case of a tie, the first correct entry submitted wins the prize. Decision of the judge is final. Open to all MSP members. You can't win unless you enter! And now, for the sequence:

**12, 1, 2, 15, ?**

### Marching for Science, continued

the science of Communication to the communication of science. One way to get help doing this is to become a UMass [PEP Fellow](#) where you will gain expertise in crafting op-eds and press releases about your scientific research, and learn how to communicate your findings to policy-makers and government officials. Work regularly with the UMass [Office of News and Media Relations](#), which will send out layperson-friendly overviews of your findings upon the publication of your scientific articles and post your bio and expertise area on their website for journalists.

**Get involved** in local science activism. Current threats to science are leading to the [revitalization](#) of the once-flourishing [Science for the People](#) (SftP) movement. Along with MIT, University of Michigan and Columbia, UMass Amherst just started its own SftP chapter. At our first gathering we viewed the documentary film *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* and discussed how to keep scientific information from becoming distorted and silenced by profit motives. To join ongoing meetings, contact Professor [Sigrid Schmalzer](#).

**Vote** scientists and scholars into political office. Tired of feeling helplessly angry, some scientists are preparing to run for local office. At the Boston march, one sign read "SCIENTISTS: WE NEED YOU IN CONGRESS." In fact, if you want to run for local office, sign up here to get training in doing so: <http://go.314action.org/page/s/run>.

**Write** local and national officials about scientific issues you care about. These days, electronic communication makes this easy. You can identify your representatives and submit a ready-made message with ease through this portal: <https://save-science.org/#/>. Write your representatives about the importance of NIH and NSF funding, your concerns about the silencing of climate change science in the EPA, NASA and the Department of Energy, and demand a 2017 budget that funds science.

In closing, I'll impart the phrase I heard so often chanted during the March for Science: **Science, Not Silence!** ■

## The MSP Grant Program

### Applications due June 30, 2017

Applications are now being accepted for MSP's Grant Program. This program provides support for activities that advance the mission of the MSP.

Successful grants will enhance the union's work in areas such as membership involvement, political action, improving working conditions, internal organizing, coalition building and addressing diversity issues. Funding can be used to support events and campaigns, as well as research projects. MSP members are eligible to apply.

A 3-5 page grant application must be received no later than June 30, 2017. Grants will be awarded in July 2017. All projects are to be completed by June 30, 2018, and a six-month status report must be received by December 31, 2017. Upon completion of the project, MSP and the grantee will discuss how the results of the project are to be disseminated, and how the work has advanced the union's mission. Recipients of a grant award must serve on a future MSP Grant Committee.

Complete applications will include:

- Your name, title and department
- A description of the research and/or other activity the grant will support (2-3 pages)
- Explanation of how the project specifically advances MSP goals (1 page)
- An itemized budget that clearly shows how requested funds are to be used
- Plans for publication/dissemination of the results

Complete applications must be sent to [mSP@umass.edu](mailto:mSP@umass.edu) by June 30, 2017.



A small part of the crowd at the Boston March for Science. The sign at the right says "Set of Irrationals" and has in the box  $\pi \sqrt{2}$ , picture of Donald Trump.



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## IN THIS EDITION

From the President's Desk .....	1
Update on Contract Bargaining .....	2
Marching for Science in Boston .....	3
MSP Highlights.....	4

The MSP Puzzle .....	4
The MSP Grant Program.....	5